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Gruesome but Necessary: Global Governance in the 21st Century?

Extreme normality as indicator of systemic negligence

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Introduction

How are people to think of the [massacre of less than a hundred Norwegians](#) -- in a global society characterized by daily reporting of instances of tragic deaths of every kind and number? What might who do about it and why?

The concern here is with distinguishing the set of possible responses in the light of the range of other instances of deliberate or inadvertent enabling of death.

The most obvious approach is to recognize it as a totally repugnant incident calling for appropriate punishment of the person directly responsible. This however raises the question as to whether others enabling similar degrees of violence should be treated according to the same logic. And, if not, why not?

A further possibility is to endeavour to elicit learnings from the incident of relevance to both other incidents and to other forms and patterns of violence. This however raises the question of how the case for some of these other forms of violence is legitimized and rationalized -- and whether any degree of moral equivalence should be recognized.

There is as yet a further possibility by endeavouring to "hear" what the perpetrator was claiming to seek in vain to communicate. This is problematic in that it suggests the possibility that there may be some "point" to the perspective so repugantly emphasized. Listening after the fact may then be understood as condoning the violence in some way.

Aside from the immediate challenge for Norwegians, there is nevertheless a challenge for those elsewhere. One cautionary argument is however offered from a UK perspective by Simon Jenkins (*The last thing Norway needs is illiberal Britain's patronising*, *The Guardian*, 26 July 2011), arguing that *"hysterical British reaction poses a greater threat to democracy than Anders Breivik's meaningless and random acts of violence"*. With respect to wider learnings from the incident, the print copy version of that same article was titled *"Breivik is of interest to brain scientists, but not to politics"*. Despite valuable insights in the article, the titles would seem to preclude further learnings of any value.

Curiously however the Norwegian was an enthusiast of online war games -- *World of Warcraft* and *Modern Warfare 2* -- in which millions engage daily, often for many hours at a time (*Norway Terrorist Used World Of Warcraft As A Training Simulator*, 27 July 2011; *Terrorist Anders Behring Breivik Used Modern Warfare 2 as "Training-Simulation"*, 23 July 2011). More curiously, the justification offered for the slaughter by [Anders Behring Breivik](#), through his lawyer, was that it was *"gruesome but necessary"*. That phrase figures prominently (some 75,000 hits, at the time of writing) in any web search relating to *World of Warcraft* -- prior to any reference to Breivik. It would appear to be recognized as a slogan.

If the Norwegian incident is to be considered a "wake up call", as has been argued, the phrase "gruesome but necessary" (used in the title of this article) is presented here as a potentially fruitful way of framing the currently implicit approach to governance in the 21st Century. It recalls the controversy associated with the thinking during the Cold War of military strategist and systems theorist [Herman Kahn](#)

(*Thinking About the Unthinkable*, 1962; *Thinking about the Unthinkable in the 1980s*, 1984).

The question raised by any "wake up call" is the nature of the "unthinkable" which society may find it disastrously convenient not to think about (Karen A. Cerulo, *Never Saw It Coming: cultural challenges to envisioning the worst*, 2006; Joshua Cooper Ramo, *The Age of the Unthinkable: why the new world disorder constantly surprises us and what we can do about it*, 2009; Charles Handy, *The Age of Unreason: new thinking for a new world*, 1989). Is civilization indeed "unconscious"? -- as argued by John Ralston Saul (*The Unconscious Civilization*, 1995).

What indeed to do about the unthinkable? How indeed to engage with it? -- as separately discussed (*Engaging with the Inexplicable, the Incomprehensible and the Unexpected*, 2010; *An Inconvenient Truth -- about any inconvenient truth*, 2008)? In his efforts to "make a point", and his articulated frustration that people "**Don't understand his point of view**", do Breivik's actions raise questions about how it is possible to do so effectively by non-violent means in a democratic society? The abstract metaphorical notion of "point making" then merits careful attention.

In that regard, does the proximity and intense media coverage of the horrific Norwegian incident offer a well-personalized opportunity through which to engage with known phenomena from which unknown numbers of people suffer daily?

Varieties of basic response to massacre

In considering the following responses it is appropriate to note that, for those focused primarily on one, any argument for recognizing another tends itself to be held to be highly problematic. This is in accordance with a wider tendency evident in politics where any openness to consideration of a different perspective amongst adherents of one party is immediately held to be evidence of suspicious covert allegiances to another -- being "soft on communism", a "fellow traveller", etc. It is a wonder that those who study the views of "others" are not automatically condemned for upholding their worldviews.

The responses to incidents of violence can be tentatively clustered as follows.

Focus on the individual responsible: The individual may be categorized as:

- **Inherently evil:** This is necessarily a very common response, typically upheld and promoted by those of religious persuasion. It is however problematic in that "evil" is variously understood and dismissed, even though it is assumed to invite consensus as being commonly recognizable -- despite inadequacies of interfaith dialogue. It is noteworthy that the adherents of any other religion are readily held to be in some way implicated in "evil". Religions have proven incapable of overcoming this tendency. One difficulty with "evil" as a description is that it is frequently used in faith-based governance as a description both of those of a different political persuasion and those of cultures adhering to other religions. The others riposte in kind. Despite its elusive and controversial nature, "evil" has been given an unusual legitimization in Norway:
 - The Norwegian prime minister, Jens Stoltenberg, told a remembrance service for the 76 people killed by Anders Behring Breivik that his country had been "struck by evil" (*Norway prime minister urges nation to 'embrace freedom'*, *The Guardian*, 30 July 2011)
 - Barack Obama provided a much-cited affirmation that "evil exists" in his [acceptance speech for the 2009 Nobel Peace Prize](#). Also noteworthy is the very extensive review of four recent studies of evil in the *Financial Times* ([Julian Baggini, *The Faces of Evil*, FT, 5-6 June 2010](#)).
- **Fundamentally deranged:** Irrespective of any categorization as "evil" (and even to avoid that language), the irrational actions of the perpetrator may readily be seen as due to possible severe derangement of some kind (as discussed below) -- as with the case of a sociopath or psychopath. The legal defence of the actions of Breivik are now expected to rely on a plea of insanity. He has been widely privileged as "insane" prior to the scheduled psychiatric testing. It has been claimed that some of the instances cited below are indicative of equivalent "insanity". It is a descriptor typically used of "successful" dictators -- going back to Caligula and Nero.

As author of *What is Madness?* (2011), [Darian Leader](#) points out that the relationship between madness and responsibility is complex (*Anders Behring Breivik and the logic of madness*, *The Guardian*, 29 July 2011). He notes: *The paranoid has located a fault or malignancy in the world, he has named it, and has a message to deliver about it. For Breivik, the conviction is that Europe is rotten, that the name of this rottenness is Islam and that it is his mission to expose and excise it.*

- **Obviously criminal:** The nature of the actions necessarily evokes a judicial response in framing them as illegal and therefore necessarily to be handled within the framework of the law.
- **Ideologically or otherwise misguided:** Here the focus is on the abnormal and extremist worldview which engendered such acts -- a worldview which may be readily considered fundamentally unacceptable in its own right. Again there is a difficulty with achieving any degree of consensus on the nature of "extremism" -- when many with acceptable worldviews are so framed from other perspectives (*Norms in the Global Struggle against Extremism: "rooting for" normalization vs. "rooting out" extremism?* 2005).

The challenge is all the greater with the proposed focus by the UK Prime Minister on "non-violent extremism" (Mehdi Hasan, [So, prime minister, are we to call you an extremist now?](#) *The Guardian*, Thursday 9 June 2011; Unmesh Desai, [No, you cannot treat violent and non-violent extremism separately](#), *The Guardian*, 14 June 2011). A particular difficulty, given the language of political

discourse, is distinguishing one party from another in their respective complicity in "non-violent extremism". For a political party, any perspective other than its own is necessarily abnormal and therefore extremist in some respects.

- **Mistaken activism in fulfillment of a socio-political agenda:** Here the focus is on the totally unacceptable tactical and strategic means used irresponsibly to articulate and promote a (minority) concern. Again incidents cited below have been considered to be fundamentally mistaken -- especially given the loss of lives they have occasioned.

Use of any combination of these categories offers a means of providing a conceptual "box" to achieve a degree of closure -- precluding the necessity for any fundamental questioning. All that then remains is to ensure that the "contents" of the box are disposed of and the probability of any recurrence is severely reduced (if not eliminated). It is only in the latter sense that any learning is to be derived from the incident. In contrast to the following, this mode is characterized by highly focused antipathy.

Focus on social impact and community reaction: Attention, notably as articulated by the media, may focus primarily on those affected:

- **Wounded and traumatized:** Especially their pain, despair and appreciation of heroic assistance in the face of evident tragedy to which they were directly exposed
- **Relatives and friends:** Especially the effect on those who have lost loved ones in a situation beyond their control or comprehension
- **Wider community expressing solidarity:** Especially in the concern to avoid succumbing to patterns of behaviour which undermine their basic values

This is necessarily a mode through which others associate strongly -- typically vicariously -- through sympathy and empathy with those affected through their time of grief. This ready response raises concerns at personal and collective inability to respond to the many suffering daily "elsewhere" from similar violence -- most notably the millions raped and killed in the Eastern Congo over the past decade (Frank Humphreys, *Sensationalism or silence in the Congo: rape, death and the media*, *worldandmedia.com*, 26 May 2011).

Focus on inhibiting such behaviour in future: This characterizes the formal societal response to such incidents in general, rather than the particular event:

- **Formal inquiry:** In support of the following measures, efforts may be made to investigate the incident as a source of learnings with respect to the inadequacies of various services (police, ambulance, etc).
- **Legislative measures:** Notably with respect to firearms, explosives, censorship of hate-related communications, prohibition of extremist groups
- **Security measures:** Notably including surveillance of internet communications, of purchases of dual-use products, and of bodies and people deemed a potential security risk
- **Educational campaigns:** Notably in schools and through the media
- **Deployment of agents:** Notably social workers and others to detect and counteract emergent behaviour deemed susceptible to engender violence

The track record of such measures with respect to past incidents around the world suggests that these measures are difficult to deploy effectively. Typically they result in repressive measures, reducing the quality of life of others, whilst failing to prevent new incidents from emerging on occasion. Such measures also provide an unfortunate opportunity for those who welcome a repressive society as a means of advancing their agenda.

Focus on socio-political context engendering such behaviour: This endeavours to elicit insights from the incident as a means of enabling institutional and community learning to preempt such behaviour:

- Identification of psychosocial conditions engendering such behaviour
- Identification of (minority) views effectively ignored in engendering a context evoking such behaviour

Given assumptions regarding the perpetrator of a repugnant act as an "other" of the most alienating kind, some insights are to be gained by using the perpetrator as a form of "mirror", as argued in another highly publicized case (*Looking in the Mirror -- at Josef Fritzl? Global conditions on reflection*, 2009). The question is how the traumatic individual situations of all involved might be related to the trauma currently experienced by people everywhere (*Implication of Personal Despair in Planetary Despair*, 2010).

As an essentially research-oriented focus, there is a disconnect between the insights garnered and the capacity to implement effective responses to constrain such developments in the future. Ironically, as with Breivik, it is likely to be difficult for those so engaged to "make a point" and to be heard. The approach is readily framed as insensitively abstract and an "honourable" means of avoiding action. One consequence may however be the promotion of more sensitive responses to potential perpetrators and their concerns. This can be readily and cynically exploited and can be framed as creating vulnerabilities to the emergence of such incidents in a society already challenged by tensions it is unable to handle with much skill.

Situating violence in a wider context

Such incidents are naturally experienced as extremely unwelcome surprises -- an offence against the normality of community life, especially in the case of privileged areas and regions where such behaviour is totally uncharacteristic. Their unpredictable nature is highly problematic, as with their social consequences (Nassim Nicholas Taleb, *The Black Swan: the impact of the highly improbable*, 2007).

It is then easy to lose sight of conditions to which people are variously and frequently exposed through the media -- a form of virtual normality which may itself be both habit-forming and predispose to a degree of acceptance of such behaviour. The phenomena are well-known "from elsewhere" and the excitement of exposure to them may even be cultivated through the media. Clearly these effects may be

far greater in the case of an individual in some way disposed to give expression to them in physical reality rather than in virtual reality.

Examples usefully cited include:

- **Interpersonal and domestic violence** (including rape): This is widely known and experienced. In one form it is recognized as [domestic corporal punishment](#), typically, children punished by parents or guardians. It extends to [school corporal punishment](#). It includes exposure to [bullying](#) at school and in other institutions -- where it may be "institutionalised", as with [male rape in prisons](#). The phenomenon and experience of [rape of women](#) is of widespread concern, as with [domestic violence](#). As with "wife-beating", and if only as a means of maintaining order, in various cultures this violence is readily framed as "[gruesome but necessary](#)" (Jane O'Reilly, *Wife Beating: the silent crime*, *Time*, 5 September 1983).
- **Mutilation**: Cultural pressures enforcing mutilation, most notably [female genital cutting](#). It could be argued that cultural pressures also encourage fashionable mutilation, in the form of [body piercing](#) and cosmetic surgery. Would some of the violence of this kind be described as "[gruesome but necessary](#)"?
- **Violence on visual media**: A daily diet of TV, watched with various degrees of enthusiasm, typically includes numerous fictional portrayals of torture, murders and even massacres. Without such "fare", programmes may be readily perceived to be lacking in interest and focus. It has proven difficult to create viable programmes which exclude violence in all its forms. Efforts to do so may be experienced as exercises in banality and "dumbing down". People then turn elsewhere "for kicks" -- notably to various forms of violence, including pedophilia. The conclusions of [research into media and violence](#) remain controversial with some arguing that violence on the media has no effect whatsoever on behaviour in reality. Is such violence "[gruesome but necessary](#)"?
- **Violence in video and online games**: Many widely available video games, especially in their online interactive form, feature levels of virtual violence far in excess of that perpetrated physically in the Norwegian incident. These games constitute a major market and focus of daily activity for many. As of 22 January 2008, *World of Warcraft* had more than 10 million subscribers worldwide (more than 2 million in Europe, more than 2.5 million in North America, and about 5.5 million in Asia). *Modern Warfare 2* sold approximately 4.7 million units in both the USA and the UK in the first 24 hours of its release. The argument that enthusiastic participation in such gaming does not predispose users to a degree of tolerance of violence, or a predisposition to it, stretches credibility. Breivik wrote in his manifesto:

I just bought *Modern Warfare 2*, the game. It is probably the best military simulator out there and it's one of the hottest games this year. I see MW2 more as a part of my training-simulation than anything else

It may however be argued that such games offer a form of "inoculation" against physical violence. Again it has proven difficult to develop virtual activities of equivalent interest from which violence is excluded. Is such violence "[gruesome but necessary](#)"?

It is noteworthy that games which are simply "competitive", as in sport, typically encourage metaphorical language such as "slaughtering" the other competitors. Some indeed involve unusual degrees of violence -- a tradition dating back to Imperial Rome.

- **News reporting of perpetrated violence elsewhere**: This is the "meat" of news coverage and the epitome of "happenings" worthy of such coverage. A typically regular news diet will include:
 - interpersonal and domestic violence, notably including rape
 - individual murders and muggings
 - murders by gangs
 - mass shootings by individuals
 - violence perpetrated by minorities
 - violence perpetrated against minorities

Despite the case for focusing on "[good news](#)", is the focus on such violence nevertheless "[gruesome but necessary](#)" in order to provide a valued degree of contact with reality elsewhere?

- **Incitement to violence**: This is a well-known characteristic, which in its extreme form is recognized as "[war-mongering](#)" and may be criminalized. Examples include:
 - political leaders, as with building the case for the coalition attack against Afghanistan and Iraq. Special calls for assassination may be made, as with those against Fidel Castro over decades
 - religious leaders, as with the concerns expressed regarding calls by Islamic fundamentalists for *jihād*. The attack against Iraq was framed by George Bush as a "crusade" -- and described as the [Tenth Crusade](#). Another Christian example is offered by a former US presidential candidate, Reverend [Pat Robertson](#), speaking to 7 million viewers of the evangelical [Christian Broadcasting Network](#) on 23 August 2005 [[more](#)], he 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](#)]

Extreme violence may be encouraged against those active in abortion clinics, judged from some religious perspectives to be guilty of murder.

- via the internet, as with the rhetoric on websites of various political and ideological persuasions, whether extreme left or extreme right.

Would those inciting to violence in this way, especially people of faith, not argue that such violence is nevertheless "*gruesome but necessary*"?

- **Celebration of historical violence:** Past violence, whether experienced as a victory or a defeat, is often the focus of periodic celebration, commemoration and acts of remembrance. As manifestations of heroism and betrayal, both may offer a framework for the celebration of honour (*Honour Essential to Psycho-social Integrity: challenge to the nameless of dishonourable leadership*, 2005). Particular characteristics include:
 - in the region, recognizing local massacres, notably as in the case of the massacre of indigenous tribes under former colonial regimes
 - elsewhere, as with the various forms of worldwide recognition accorded to the Holocaust, the Killing Fields of Cambodia, and the like
 - commemoration of revolution through which freedom was achieved
 - celebration of valour as represented by medals and veterans
 - tribal and family feuds, continuing for generations in some cultures. Striking examples are offered by the [Orange walks](#) -- a series of parades held annually by members of the [Orange Order](#) during the summer in Northern Ireland and elsewhere.

Is the celebration of such past violence -- especially for the younger generation -- to be understood as "*gruesome but necessary*"?

- **Demonstrations engendering violence:** Popular demonstrations, especially when widely reported, may degenerate into violence and death -- whether provoked by police or by agitators. Many may be traumatized by their experiences, especially when police brutality goes unpunished.

Is the risk of such violence, and both the exposure to police brutality and the police response, to be seen as "*gruesome but necessary*"?

- **Violence against animals:** It is not to be forgotten that for some the mistreatment of animals is to be compared with the mistreatment of humans. Of particular concern is both the general cruelty to animals as variously used by humans, but also the millions of [animals used in experiments](#) -- notably involving forms of [vivisection](#).

More controversially still is the treatment of animals in slaughterhouses with a view to their consumption. Are all these practices also to be understood as "*gruesome but necessary*" to the treatment of disease and the nourishment of humanity?

- **Freedom fighting by liberation movements:** Efforts to achieve independence, or freedom from the yoke of some authority perceived as undemocratic, may give rise to violence variously perceived as legitimate. Many countries have achieved their independence through such violence. The distinction between "legitimate" violence and "illegitimate" violence in that respect remains controversial. Typically the threatened authority frames such violence as terrorism, however honourable it may be subsequently framed to be by those who achieve their independence thereby. Widely honoured presidents of many newly independent countries have previously been condemned as terrorists.

At the time of writing, representatives of the [Mau Mau](#) of Kenya, who acted so violently at the time, are making an apparently legitimate claim against the British government for the extreme violence, especially torture, to which they were exposed in British prisons (*Mau Mau torture claim Kenyans win right to sue British government*, *The Guardian*, 21 July 2011). [Jomo Kenyatta](#), subsequently first president of Kenya, had been arrested in 1952 and indicted with five others (the [Kapenguria Six](#)) on the charges of "managing and being a member" of the Mau Mau Society. A similar case was made against [Nelson Mandela](#) as leader of [Umkhonto we Sizwe](#), the armed wing of the [African National Congress](#) (ANC). There continues to be debate as to whether George Washington was a terrorist, or would be so defined by current legislative measures (Joanne Mariner, *Was George Washington a Terrorist?* *Counterpunch*, 27 March 2008).

Is such violence "*gruesome but necessary*" -- in the quest for freedom and independence and their defence?

- **Corporate violence** (deliberate and inadvertent): Extensive documentary evidence exists regarding the violent actions of (multinational) corporations in endeavouring to advance their commercial interests, most recently in developing countries. Striking examples are offered by the highly controversial operation of oil companies. Examples of inadvertent violence, resulting from corporate negligence, include that of the [Bhopal disaster](#) (1984) and the [Fukushima Daiichi nuclear disaster](#) (2011).

Are the possibilities of such risks to lives and livelihoods to be considered "*gruesome but necessary*" given the benefits for humanity elsewhere?

A curious feature of the security follow-up to the Norwegian massacre has been the immediate focus on the corporation which provided the fertilizer for the bomb used. No reference has been made to the corporations which made or sold the arms used. Nor has any reference been made to the many banks which issued credit cards enabling the operation to be financed -- an echo of the procedures giving rise to the financial crisis?

- **State-authorized violence** (possibly invoking the "just war" argument), whereby governments (or government agencies) authorise forms of violence which may, or may not, be covered by the Geneva Conventions -- but are treated as legitimate by the perpetrator. Examples include:
 - **enhanced interrogation**, creatively but questionably, framed as "not-torture" -- as in the continuing debate regarding the treatment of prisoners suspected of terrorism (Philippe Sands, *Torture Team: Rumsfeld's Memo and the Betrayal of American Values* 2008)
 - **judicial corporal punishment**, for an offence, as the result of a sentence by a court of law, may include **flogging**, **caning**, **birching**, **whipping**, or **strapping**. In its most extreme form this may include **capital punishment**, namely the sentence of death upon a person. Under *sharia* law, punishments for serious crimes (*hudud*) may take the form of **amputation** of hands or feet or **stoning to death**.
 - **experimentation on humans**, typically conducted with a degree of secrecy on parties unable to defend themselves. A useful summary is offered by the *Wikipedia* entry with regard to *Unethical human experimentation in the United States*, indicating:

Many types of experiments have been performed including the deliberate infection of people with deadly or debilitating diseases, exposure of people to biological and chemical weapons, human radiation experiments, injection of people with toxic and radioactive chemicals, surgical experiments, interrogation/torture experiments, tests involving mind-altering substances, and a wide variety of others. Many of these tests were performed on children and mentally disabled individuals. In many of the studies, a large portion of the subjects were poor racial minorities or prisoners. Often, subjects were sick or disabled people, whose doctors told them that they were receiving "medical treatment", but instead were used as the subjects of harmful and deadly experiments. Many of these experiments were funded by the United States government, especially the Central Intelligence Agency, United States military and federal or military corporations

Cases currently cited include those resulting from testing of nuclear weapons in the course of **Operation Grapple** on Christmas Island (1956-1958) with the consequent **health effects** of those exposed to the radiation (Owen Bowcott, *British nuclear test veterans take cancer claims to supreme court*, *The Guardian*, 28 July 2011). Also noteworthy, having been recently declassified, are the US-led **syphilis human experiments in Guatemala** (1946-1948).

- **targetted killing** as the deliberate, specific targeting and killing, by a government or its agents, of a terrorist or of an "unlawful combatant" (i.e., one taking a direct part in hostilities in the context of an armed conflict) who is not in that government's custody. The prime example of this was the killing of Osama bin Laden, following an expenditure of \$1.3 trillion with that as its declared main objective.
- **massacres**, under responsibility imputed to governments or their agents. These include those by the Khmer Rouge (**Killing Fields**), by the Serbs (**Srebrenica massacre**), in Rwanda (**Rwanda genocide**), those associated with World War II, and those of indigenous tribes (as in **Australia** and the **USA**).

Of relevance to this argument is the **My Lai Massacre** of 347-504 unarmed citizens in South Vietnam on 16 March 1968, conducted by a company of the US Army. All of the victims were civilians and most were women, children (including babies), and elderly people. Many of the victims were raped, beaten, tortured, and some of the bodies were found mutilated. **Colin Powell**, subsequently US Secretary of State, was in a unit that was responsible for My Lai but got there after the event. He was partially responsible for investigating the incident -- and did so in a manner later characterized by some observers as "whitewashing" those atrocities. As the responsible US Army officer, **William Calley** was convicted as a war criminal for the murder of 109 Vietnamese on that occasion; he served less than 4 years of house arrest on his military base and was thereafter released by a federal judge. His commanding officer, **Ernest Medina** was acquitted of war crimes charges relating to the deaths of more than 500 civilians, although recent discoveries, and actual declarations of survivors and soldiers of his platoon, acknowledge his culpability in the massacre. The trial deliberations lasted approximately 60 minutes.

It might be asked whether this example resulted in a judicial pattern of response to military impunity in matters of collateral damage.

- **disproportionate violence** is a term used to describe an unjustified response by governments in handling those resisting them. It has notably been applied to the response of Israel to Palestinians on various occasions and to US-UK action in **Fallujah** (2004). It raises the question as to how to determine a proportionate response (*Proportionate Response in the Eye of the Beholder*, 2006).

- **collateral damage**, typically regretted in the course of "legitimate" operations. The term is now recognized to be primarily used as an euphemism for civilian casualties of a military action. Appropriate to this argument are the following contrasting uses:
 - **Timothy McVeigh**, convicted U.S. bomber (and Gulf War veteran), in an interview before his execution, referred to the deaths of 19 children killed in the government office building during the April 1995 **Oklahoma City bombing** as "collateral damage"
 - **Jamie Shea**, spokesman of **NATO** during the **NATO campaign** against the **Federal Republic of Yugoslavia**, achieved notoriety for using this phrase in comments about civilian casualties killed by NATO.

It is of course the case that there continue to be huge investments in the development, testing, manufacture and trade in arms in response to the potential of such violence -- investments which may well need to be justified by provoking violence in which these can be used either by the "forces of law and order" or by those defined as disrupting the peace in some way. It remains the case that the principals in this process continue to be the permanent members of the UN Security Council.

Would it not be readily argued that in many of these cases such violence is "**gruesome but necessary**" -- however much it may be subsequently deplored?

- **State-authorized tacit violence as a deliberate policy (of neglect):** This can take a variety of typically subtle and readily deniable forms:
 - **structural violence**, namely the systemic ways in which a given social structure or social institution harms people by preventing them from meeting their basic needs. Institutionalized elitism, ethnocentrism, classism, racism, sexism, adultism, nationalism, heterosexism and ageism are some examples of structural violence.
 - tolerating the perpetration of violence by others, as with the actions of one group against another, turning a blind eye to organized criminality, violence and brutality in prisons or in the military
 - withholding aid to those who will suffer thereby. A striking example is offered by the admission by **Madeleine Albright**, then the US Secretary of State, was asked on national television in 1996 what she felt about the fact that 500,000 Iraqi children had died as a result of US economic sanctions. She replied that it was "a very hard choice", but that, all things considered, "*we think the price is worth it*". Considering the Vatican as a state, it might be asked in what way it effectively authorises (as an agent of God) the fate of those currently in danger of death by starvation in Africa, as previously discussed (*Humanitarian Disaster or Act of God -- Dangerous Implication in Practice?*, 2011).
 - delaying aid for political convenience, as currently noted by *The Economist* (*The Horn of Africa: Chronicle of a famine foretold Did the world react too late to signs of famine in Somalia?* 30 July 2011):

Quite apart from the death toll and the misery, this is criminally wasteful. When famine threatened Niger in 2005, the cost of help was put at \$7 a head. No one did much; the famine struck; the cost of help ended up at \$23 each. Economic incentives and early-warning systems say donors should act early. But the political incentives advise delay -- until it is too late.

Is it not evident, as exemplified by the statement of the US Secretary of State, that such violence is considered to be "**gruesome but necessary**"?

- **Purportedly inadvertent systemic negligence:** As an extension of the previous category, systemic negligence may include ineffectual or non-existent government response to:
 - **trafficking in persons**
 - **homelessness**
 - **refusal of refugees**

Given the severe constraints on public resources, and the urgent nature of higher priorities, would such violence not be held to be "**gruesome**", however unfortunately "**necessary**"?

This range of forms of violence is helpful as a means of placing the acts of Breivik in Norway in context. Again, it is not a matter of condoning those acts but rather of recognizing the degree to which global society effectively constitutes a **global culture of violence** -- one in which violence is tolerated, promoted, and celebrated (if not glorified) as a source of daily popular entertainment for which no adequate substitutes have yet been found. The culture of violence necessarily permeates daily discourse and the responses which it determines, as separately argued (*Enhancing Sustainable Development Strategies through Avoidance of Military Metaphors*, 1998).

Rationalization and legitimation of violence

Many constituencies are of course extremely righteous in their use of violence -- euphemistically termed "force" (framed as an expression of the values of "law and order") -- in their response to opposing forces in their environment. The following arguments can be

distinguished:

- **Security threat:** Promoting the threat to security by whatever means continues to be a preoccupation of what President Eisenhower labelled as the "[military-industrial complex](#)". There is rarely any legitimate excuse to reduce military budgets, even in the face of extreme austerity. There is every reason to suspect the promotion of such threats, and of [fear politics](#), as being an acceptable "marketing" tool for that complex (*Promoting a Singular Global Threat -- Terrorism Strategy of choice for world governance*, 2002). The [just war](#) argument remains a classic matter of controversy and long-standing debate in framing an opponent as an enemy constituting a threat calling for action by responsible governance. Arguably viable governance is now dependent on the existence of a perceived threat (*Needing Evil Elsewhere*, 2001). Is the engendering of such threats then to be construed as "*gruesome but necessary*"?
- **Virtual war:** Whilst the term [virtual war](#) is now increasingly used to refer to the separation of the attacker from the attacked using technology, as with the use of drones, it may also be used to qualify metaphorically a variety of strategies which use the term "war" (*Review of the Range of Virtual Wars: a strategic comparison with the global war against terrorism*, 2005). Examples include the [war on drugs](#), the war on hunger, the war on crime (Jonathan Simon, *Governing Through Crime: how the war on crime transformed American democracy and created a culture of fear*, 2009).
- **Encroachment:** Perception of territorial encroachment is one of the classic justifications for violence at every level of society, from the neighbourhood to regional "spheres of interest" (*Varieties of Encroachment*, 2004). Encroachment may be physical in form as continues to be evident in [boundary disputes](#) and contested waterways -- again at every level of society. The whole process of colonisation may be understood as one of encroachment. More recent forms of economic encroachment then justify the label "[neo-colonialism](#)".

More subtle, but experienced as more insidious, are forms of cultural encroachment, notably by those of different religious persuasion and/or style of behaviour. This may only be a perceived consequence of immigration for economic reasons, but it may also be framed as a deliberate form of cultural invasion (as noted below). It is this concern which is reported to have figured prominently in the worldview of Breivik and motivated his actions. Hence his argument that his actions were "*gruesome but necessary*".

- **Protection of interests:** Recognition of constraints on the future supply of commodities defined as vital to national security, food and a viable economy may well constitute an underlying motivation for war. This has been well illustrated by the declaration of [Alan Greenspan](#), subsequent to his role as Chairman of the US Federal Reserve, that the invasion of Iraq was motivated primarily by the need to secure oil reserves (Graham Paterson, *Alan Greenspan claims Iraq war was really for oil*, *The Sunday Times* 16 September 2007). There is every expectation that access to water flowing across boundaries will be a future justification for war -- "[water wars](#)" (Alexander Bell, *World at war over water*, *New Statesman*, 28 March 2010). Under such circumstances, would not war be readily framed as "*gruesome but necessary*" for survival?
- **Demonstration of power preempting future threat:** Apparently gratuitous violence may be undertaken, notably by "great powers", to "teach other countries a lesson". This is a strategy typically adopted by imperial powers and those with imperial ambitions. Such demonstrations may be undertaken as [covert operations](#), accompanied by a discrete warning. They may well be framed by those promoting such strategies as "*gruesome but necessary*" in "thinking the unthinkable".

There is of course an extensive literature of conspiracy theorists articulating this possibility -- even with respect to 9/11 (***). The strategy may be used to provoke conflict in order to re-establish and consolidate and sphere of influence.

- **Profit:** Engaging in violence may be readily seen as the royal road to acquiring resources and ensuring profitability. This is evident in urban violence and criminality, racketeering, and the like. It is also evident in the "protection of interests" as discussed above. Engaging in military action may however be seen as immensely profitable in its own right for those manufacturing arms, most notably the permanent members of the UN Security Council and their allies. Commercial competition, and the quest for competitive advantage, may well take violent forms, framed and reinforced by the widespread use of military metaphors -- as in "wiping out the competition".

As mandated defenders of world peace, would the permanent members of the UN Security Council not defend their implication in the arms trade and its bloody consequences as being in some way "*gruesome but necessary*"?

- **Fulfillment of divine injunction:** In a context of faith-based governance, it is however appropriate to note the fundamental injunction of the [Great Commission](#) in the Christian tradition to spread the teachings of Christianity around the world through missionary work -- thereby justifying use of force if resisted (by the "forces of evil"), as with the [crusades](#) and the doctrine of the [church militant](#). As a driving commitment it bears comparison with the [Aleinu](#) as the fundamental expression of duty in Judaism and with the commitment of Islam to extending *sharia* through *jihad*. As with the adaptation of military language to non-military "campaigns", use of "crusade" is to be noted as the justification of a form of metaphorical violence -- necessarily in a cause beyond criticism. Again the "crusade" language featured prominently in the worldview of Breivik and motivated his actions.

Would those engaging in such slaughter consider such action in fulfillment of divine will as being "*gruesome but necessary*"?

- **Obedience to orders:** As a justification for violence, this has been the subject of extensive commentary (Luther N. Norene, *Obedience to Orders as a Defense to a Criminal Act*, 1971; Jacob G. Hornberger, *Obedience to God or Obedience to Orders?* 2009). It is a characteristic of the so-called [Nuremberg Defence](#) used by some of the Nazi war criminals during the 1945-1946 [Nuremberg Trials](#). A curious feature of many humanitarian disasters is the manner in which they are enabled by obedience to "orders" as these may be variously understood -- notably in the light of religious injunctions and spiritual inspiration, as separately discussed (*Obedience to orders in enabling humanitarian disaster*, 2011; *Perplexing Symmetries in Obedience to Orders*, 1998).

Would men of conscience not indeed claim to regret their implication in effecting "*gruesome*" actions defined by their superiors to be "*necessary*"?

It is readily argued that none of these constitutes an adequate justification for violence. Such arguments are however just as readily set aside in a global culture of violence. **The process of righteously deploring one form of violence is just as likely to be evident in those indulging -- righteously -- in another form of violence.**

Making a point in a democratic society

It is most curious that violence may be understood as undertaken in order to "make a point". As noted by Jamie Doward (*Anders Behring Breivik: motives of a mass murderer*, *The Guardian*, 23 July 2011), citing David Wilson (*A History of British Serial Killing*, 2011): "*This man was making a point that was very clearly thought through*".

As an abstraction, it is unclear as to what significance is to be attached to this. Within what "space" or "geometry" is a metaphorical "point" being made? In endeavouring to communicate the worldview of Breivik to the media, his lawyer indicated his frustration that people "*Don't understand his point of view*". As noted above, given that it was his failure to "make a point" by non-violent means, this curious abstraction merits careful attention.

Discounting point-making by the insane? The argument, cited above, of Simon Jenkins (*The last thing Norway needs is illiberal Britain's patronising*, *The Guardian*, 26 July 2011), with respect to wider learnings from the incident, as indicated by the title of the print copy version of that same article ("*Breivik is of interest to brain scientists, but not to politics*") should therefore be set aside. It is as foolish as the execution of [Saddam Hussein](#), from whom much might possibly have been learned. This would be consistent with the old strategic adage: "*Know thy enemy*" -- and to which it might be added "*Do not assume that you do*". Jenkins however asserts:

The Norwegian tragedy is just that, a tragedy. It does not signify anything and should not be forced to do so. A man so insane he can see nothing wrong in shooting dead 68 young people in cold blood is so exceptional as to be of interest to criminology and brain science, but not to politics. We can sympathise with the bereaved, and with their country in its collective sense of loss. But the tragedy does not signify. No, Anders Breivik does not tell us anything about Norway. No, he does not tell us anything about "the state of modern society".

It could well be argued that this "insanity" bears comparison with the indulgence in many of the forms of violence cited above.

Commentary critical of Jenkins argument subsequently included (Letters, *The Guardian*, 28 July 2011):

- Tørbjorn Skinnemoen Ottersen (Oslo): Anders Behring Breivik's actions were political through and through and, for someone not averse to mass violence, a more or less "rational" outcome of the arguments of all too many in this country.
- Brendan Kelly (Dublin): I don't agree that someone who "can see nothing wrong in shooting dead 68 young people in cold blood" is "insane". Conflating insanity with badness stigmatises the mentally ill and dilutes individual responsibility. Involving insanity when we are confronted by particularly offensive behaviour is often a defence against an unpalatable truth: sane people sometimes do very, very bad things.

Clearly Simon Jenkins was somewhat unsuccessful in "making his point"! However, for Seumas Milne (*In his rage against Muslims, Norway's killer was no loner*, *The Guardian*, 28 July 2011):

The Norwegian mass killer's own lawyer has branded him "insane". It has the advantage of meaning no wider conclusions need to be drawn about the social context of the atrocity... In fact, however deranged the bombing and shooting might seem, studies of those identified as terrorists have shown they rarely have mental illness or psychiatric abnormalities.... the continuum between the poisonous nonsense commonplace in the mainstream media in recent years, the street slogans of groups like the EDL and Breivik's outpourings is unmistakable.

Milne concludes:

For those who failed to deliver decent jobs, wages and housing, and encouraged employers to profit from low-wage migrant labour, how much easier to scapegoat minority Muslim communities than deal with the banks and corporate free-for-all that triggered the crisis? The attempt to pathologise last Friday's slaughter [in Norway] and separate it from the swamp that spawned it can only ratchet up the danger to all of us.

In this light it is not Breivik that is of any interest but rather the collective mindset by which his worldview has been engendered -- and which has not disappeared as a result of his actions.

Opportunities available for point-making: In considering these it is useful to note how the "point" is received, handled, registered, represented, and possibly discounted and forgotten. The opportunities include:

- **Petition:** Typically in the form of a collection of signatures and its submission to an appropriate authority. It is unclear how this largely symbolic gesture is then taken into account. With regard to the recently announced launch of a petition website in the UK - for those petitions having gathered 100,000 signatures -- the point was made that the current written petition system is little understood and appreciated. Once received, written petitions are "put in a plastic bag behind the chair of the Speaker" of the House of Commons -- a fate that is claimed speaks volumes for the seriousness with which petitions are taken in that exemplar of democratic institutions (*Speaker backs launch of e-petition website, The Guardian, 2 August 2011*)
- **Demonstration:** These may need to be "authorized" and those involved may be marshalled, filmed, registered on a police file and arrested. The "point" may be well-registered in security records and briefly echoed through the media. It is unclear how the "point" is registered by those who might be expected to act on it, even when reinforced by thousands of signatures
- **Media happening:** The focus on media amplification of the "point" can be partially ensured by unusually dramatic events for which Greenpeace is renowned. This keeps the issue alive but it remains unclear how the "point" is taken up thereafter.
- **Academic paper:** This offers a means of articulating and channelling a "point" through a peer reviewed journal, then to be registered in the libraries and information systems of the world. The quality and bias of the filtration system offered by the peer review process continues to be challenged as reinforcing conventional thinking. It would certainly eliminate any unusual "points"
- **Internet facilities:** These include:
 - establishing a website
 - maintaining a blog
 - active use of social networking facilities (Facebook, Twitter, etc)
 - crowdsourcing initiatives, notably with increasing recognition of the potential of collective intelligence
- **Advertising:** In media where resources permit, but otherwise by distribution of handouts or use of posters
- **Feedback processes:** These may be variously encouraged and elicited and include:
 - "letter writing" as to a periodical or to a duly elected (political) representative, and increasingly via internet
 - "phone in"
 - video submission
- **Formal submission:** As may be invited for a "public consultation" process, or as part of other (governmental) consultative procedures
- **Conference activity:** These may include:
 - theme and workshop proposals
 - commenting on, and questioning, speakers and panelists
 - submitting a formal resolution
 - subsequent addressing of the resolution to some authority
- **Direct action:** This may include activities variously viewed as illegal and attracting wider attention for that reason:
 - graffiti
 - "liberating" animals
 - kidnapping
 - shootings
 - immolation
 - suicide bombing

Curiously the use of "projectiles" in their physical form -- most notably bullets -- offers the most focused method for "making a point", both literally and metaphorically. The design of weapons to deliver bullets to a chosen point for maximum effect merits consideration in this light. Related language is used as in "targetting" those to receive the points -- as in any marketing campaign. Considerable importance is attached to "penetration" (as in market penetration) and "impact" on the target.

There is a degree of irony to the fact that many strategies of government are articulated using a widely-marketed software package to enable point-making, namely Microsoft *PowerPoint*. The points made with it are readily described as "bullet points" -- **from points to bullet points to bullets**. This suggests the possibility of exploiting the military metaphor even further (*Conversion of Strategic Bullets into Global Accomplishment, 2009; Cognitive Ballistics vs. Derivative Correlation in Memetic Warfare: suicide bombing as a weapon of mass distraction? 2009*).

Procedures for discounting points made: As noted in passing, most of the above procedures for making a point have their counterparts in procedures for avoiding or ignoring the points made -- if they are even allowed to be made. In summary these include:

- discouraging or inhibiting point-making initiatives, as by censorship and cultivating a culture of fear
- ignoring or discounting points made (possibly by framing it as beyond the scope of the inquiry)
- enthusiastically inviting them as an exercise of public relations, only to discount them thereafter
- selection of isolated points to be cited as demonstrating that all points (then to be ignored) are being appropriately taken into consideration
- indicating that the number of points made is so great that procedures are not available to process them
- identifying those making the points to ensure that their future point-making is curtailed by some means
- investment in public relations claiming that account is taken of feedback

Reference to bullets is again useful given that extensive consideration has been given to the technology for protection against bullets and other devices. This may include securely fortified establishments, counter-measures, security personnel and procedures, and body armour -- a deployed in embassy construction (*Designing buildings for America's diplomats is getting ever trickier, The Economist, 30*

July 2011). Their metaphorical equivalents may also be developed. Of interest is the need for ever more powerful "bullets" to penetrate such defences -- a concern for any marketing campaign.

Failure of non-violent point-making processes

This theme has been variously explored separately:

- *Enabling Collective Intelligence in Response to Emergencies: illustrated by the case of deep oil spill containment* (2010)
- *Framing the Global Future by Ignoring Alternatives: unfreezing categories as a vital necessity* (2009)
- *Considering All the Strategic Options -- whilst ignoring alternatives and disclaiming cognitive protectionism* (2009)

Systemic evaluation of point-making: It is of particular interest that no effort seems to be made whatsoever to track the efficacy of point-making. If voting is to be considered a form of point-making, it is striking the attention given to verification and other procedures -- compared to the absence of such procedures to ensure the validity and protection of other forms of point-making. There are no "feedback lawyers". There is no capacity to distinguish arbitrary "filtration points" at which feedback gets "spiked", nor to distinguish genuine feedback from that which is analogous to "ballot box stuffing" or other classic forms of manipulation of the voting process. Especially interesting is the incapacity to distinguish use of artificial identities now planned as a means of facilitating [astrourfing](#).

Point-holding facilities: Of particular interest are the lack of facilities to collect and hold points made in any systematic integrative manner. Failure of point making in a democratic society may be effectively ensured by encouraging dispersion of effort -- "divide" the point-making opportunities and "rule" by variously ignoring them.

An ironic exception to this is of course the assiduous collection by security and intelligence services of points made, as recently noted with respect to ECHELON (Sherwood Ross, *ECHELON: The Global Eavesdropping Scheme Dwarfs Murdoch's "News of the World" Global Research*, 20 July 2011). Speculatively it may be asked whether ECHELON could be "turned around" to make intelligent use of the points made for the benefit of humanity as a whole (*From ECHELON to NOLEHCE: enabling a strategic conversion to a faith-based global brain*, 2007)

An effort to respond to the lack of holding facilities was made over several decades through the *Encyclopedia of World Problems and Human Potential* with its databases of tens of thousands of profiles of "points made" by international constituencies with respect to the "problems" they perceived and the "strategies" they advocated -- as well as the systemic and other relationships between them as a complex network (cf. *Global Solutions Wiki*, 2009).

Dysfunctional point-making exemplified by commemoration processes: It is appropriate that horrific massacres should elicit commemoration for the lost and the grieving. There is however a case for questioning the extent to which such processes are misused to obscure the vital points to be taken for the future.

The "rolling coverage" of the aftermath of the Norwegian massacre by the media is regretted (*Norway attacks rolling coverage*, *The Guardian*, 24 July 2011). that coverage can be compared with the weekly coverage in passing of the "collateral damage" to Afghanistan and Libyan civilians, variously slaughtered by NATO forces (with or without Norwegian involvement) -- with or without "regret".

There is virtually zero media coverage of the unnumbered, nameless thousands killed or wounded, of the families torn asunder, or of the livelihoods destroyed. This pattern is evident in military operations over decades. Whilst there are always "military war graves" and memorials ("Lest We Forget"), and commemorative ceremonies, there are no "civilian war graves" -- and no "memorials to the Unknown Civilian". The pattern is especially evident with respect to the slaughter of tribal populations by colonial forces (as in Australia and elsewhere). If the violence is considered to be "proportionate" -- and especially if it is not -- should the "condolences" and "commemoration" not also be proportionate?

Curiously also, whilst returning soldiers -- dead or alive -- are accorded full honours, nothing is said of the numbers of dead (or wounded) for which they may be personally responsible -- especially the "collateral damage" for which they are known to be directly responsible. Nor is any support available for their dependents.

Children of veterans are offered no knowledge of the deaths for which a parent may have been responsible, however extensive the documentation provided (J. W. B. Judge, *Airfield Creation for the Western Desert Campaign Introduction*, 2009). The situation is all the more poignant when memorials are erected to celebrate the animals used in military operations -- as with those for carrier pigeons.

Is "collateral damage" to be understood as a modern form of "human sacrifice"?

Requisite human sacrifice for effective point-making

Human sacrifice and social transformation: Given a global culture of violence, it is valuable to review social change in the light of the "*gruesome but necessary*" drama of "human sacrifice". It can be argued that nearly all legislative innovations have only been brought about following an appropriate level of human sacrifice -- if only as a consequence of systemic negligence.

This is the case whether the legislation concerns the safety of children's toys, mercury pollution, or the independence of a country. To put it very bluntly, children have to be sacrificed before it is accepted that safety regulations on children's toys should be formulated. (It would not be impossible to count the number of such sacrifices associated with each piece of social change legislation.). Leadership too may call for personal sacrifice -- as with current arguments relating to austerity measures consequent on abysmal failures of governance.

New understandings of the widespread traditional practice of [human sacrifice](#), especially as a means of placating divinity (under past regimes of faith-based governance), may provide a way of reframing the repugnant nature of disproportionate response. A prime example is [human sacrifice in Aztec culture](#) in which 84,400 were sacrificed over the course of four days in 1487.

Current variants of human sacrifice: In the light of the examples cited above, the following phenomena may be understood as modern variants of human sacrifice, as previously discussed (*Contemporary reformation of ritual "human sacrifice"*, 2006):

- **Abortion:** The pro-life movement legitimately frames this as a form of human sacrifice to the god of convenience, whatever the implications of birth for the mother or the subsequent life of the child
- **Withholding contraceptives:** This can be understood as ensuring that many are born, notably to most impoverished circumstances where a high rate of infant mortality is guaranteed
- **Withholding health care:** The consequences have been evident in relation to the millions who face an early death, notably in Africa
- **Withholding the possibility of voluntary euthanasia:** This maximizes the level of suffering, lack of dignity and meaninglessness, and the benefits to the medical profession
- **Withholding food:** This has long been evident in the inadequate response to mass starvation
- **Withholding protection from those subject to violence:** Again the consequences have long been evident in the inadequate response to those subject to genocidal acts -- notably Srebrenica, Rwanda, Cambodia, Darfur and Eastern Congo.
- **Massive investment in weaponry:** Whether in the form of small arms, landmines, cluster bombs, or weapons of mass destruction, this ensures the increasing quantity and effectiveness of human sacrifice (far in excess of Nazi gas chambers), notably to the financial advantage of the principal manufacturers and purveyors of such weaponry (who happen to be the permanent members of the UN Security Council)
- **Suicide bombing:** This is certainly to be understood as a form of voluntary human sacrifice by the individuals involved, but especially by their supporters and mentors.
- **Holy wars:** Whether as [crusades](#) or [jihads](#), these offer every opportunity for personal sacrifice and for sacrificing others in one's cause
- **Indiscriminate military intervention:** This can be usefully understood as sacrificing humans (notably civilians) in order to make some political point. Again it is noteworthy that it is typically the permanent members of the UN Security Council, as major purveyors of arms to combatants, that are most active in inhibiting initiatives towards the early termination of such conflicts.
- **Inhibiting preventive action on future causes of human sacrifice:** This is most evident in the case of climate change and global warming with their expected exacerbation of resource issues on which people's lives are dependent (from reduction of arable land through rising sea levels and constraints on fresh water supplies)

Current analogue to the Aztec sacrificial pyramid?

It is understandable that in historical terms humanity would traverse mutual mistreatment in its spatial (territorial, *habeus corpus*) manifestations before becoming sensitive to its more elusive temporal analogues (*Presenting the Future: an alternative to dependence on human sacrifice through global pyramid selling schemes*, 2001).

Pyramid selling: It is useful to recognize the extent to which the current manipulation of space-time -- based on forms of [pyramid selling](#) -- is indeed dependent on human sacrifice, whether literally or metaphorically. The present has been turned into an unrecognized altar on which people are sacrificed to the future. This is typified by the worst of assembly line and sweatshop practices, and the enshrined drudgery of the housewife.

Many people are effectively being subject to a form of pyramid selling through the manner in which they are encouraged to buy into a future -- sacrificing the present -- in a process that offers no response to their well-being in the moment. The calls for investment in the future -- repeatedly neglecting any investment in the present -- increasingly parody the pitches of "snake oil" salesmen.

Ponzi scheme: Many contemporary proposals are difficult to distinguish from variants of a [Ponzi scheme](#) in which people are called upon to invest psychological or material resources in ways that benefit the few "in the present" without any guarantee of benefit to the many "in the future" (*Are Insurance Companies Just Big Ponzi Schemes? Beating Broke*, 19 May 2010; *The Ponzi Scheme That Is Health Insurance*, *Medscape*, 3 December 2009; *Pension Ponzi Scheme Dwarfs Madoff Scam*, *Pension Pulse*, 21 December 2008; *Economic Aspects Of The Pension Problem, Deflation Threat and Ponzi Pensions*, *The Market Oracle*, 3 January 2010).

Would it be possible to distinguish a difference between the pattern of the rhetoric of an Aztec priest arguing for such sacrifice and that of a national leader now arguing for an austerity programme -- and whatever is required for "growth" as the ultimate sustaining value?

As many commentators have remarked with regard to the financial crisis, there has been a degree of complicity on the part of major institutions in what can only be said to be a confidence trick -- a massive Ponzi scheme of historically unprecedented proportions. What has yet to be clarified is the extent to which promotion of "development" and "growth" is a feature of the process whereby this Ponzi scheme continues to be sustained. Perhaps most ironically, "sustainable development" is in some measure to be seen as a process of sustaining the Ponzi scheme -- being promoted as such with the greatest cynicism.

Ponzi demography: There is the suspicion that western economic logic only "works" (for the west) when the pool of disadvantaged is constantly replenished. It is difficult for many to distinguish between this logic and pyramid selling or Ponzi schemes, except in terms of scale -- and especially when rather similar selling techniques are employed, and the same classes of people seem to benefit disproportionately.

As argued separately, it is some such reframing which would clarify the nature of entrapment in what amounts to the temporal equivalent of a "shell game" (*Ungovernability of Sustainable Global Democracy ? Towards engaging appropriately with time*, 2011). The difficulty of detecting it from a conventional mindset has been highlighted by the success over time of the [largest Ponzi scheme in history](#), as operated by [Bernard Madoff](#).

Might the universal preoccupation with economic growth come to be seen as essentially a form of Ponzi scheme -- for which future

generations will have to meet the cost? (Bob Lloyd, *The Growth Delusion, Sustainability*, 2009). In this respect the former Director of the United Nations Population Division [Joseph Chamie](#), argues that:

Bernie Madoff's recent Ponzi scheme has drifted out of the world's headlines. However, there is another even more costly and widespread scheme - 'Ponzi Demography' - that warrants everybody's attention. While it may come in many guises, Ponzi demography is essentially a pyramid scheme that attempts to make more money for some by adding on more and more people through population growth. (*Is Population Growth a Ponzi Scheme? The Globalist*, 4 March 2010).

Is there then a sense in which, as with the Aztec's, the global culture of violence considers it only too appropriate to induce people to climb to the top of a pyramid where they can be appropriately sacrificed? Cognitively and symbolically, is this process to be understood in some way as a bizarre collective analogue to the para-surrealist allegorical tale by [René Daumal](#) (*Mount Analogue: a novel of symbolically authentic non-Euclidean adventures in mountain climbing*, 1952)?

How many real human bodies are required to "make a point" in a global culture of violence?

Gruesome but necessary prospects for global governance?

At this time of writing, the level of unacknowledged incompetence with respect to global governance will be for history to judge in the light of:

- a minimalistic regulatory follow-up to the financial crisis
- a strategically unproductive costly intervention in Iraq and Afghanistan, enabling a culture of fear to emerge elsewhere
- millions starving in Africa and elsewhere
- many suffering from the consequences of natural disasters, possibly aggravated by poor planning
- hundreds of thousands of underprivileged seeking to migrate to countries with their own social inadequacies
- increasingly evident shortages of commodities of every kind
- inability to respond effectively to climate change challenges, offering the prospect of irresponsible, unilateral geo-engineering initiatives
- rapid degradation of ecosystems from which food stocks are derived (overfishing, etc)
- multiple threats to social safety nets, health schemes, and pension schemes (where they exist)
- increasingly blatant social inequality, with the complicity of those in governance benefitting from perks and privileges
- probability of civil strife resulting from application of austerity measures consequent on incompetent governance

Within such a turbulent emerging context it is reasonable to conclude that the capacity to absorb, and process creatively, the "point-making" of multiple actors is manifestly inadequate to the challenge. The credibility of authority of any kind is increasingly called into question (*Abuse of Faith in Governance*, 2009).

Global governance, to the extent that it can be claimed to exist, is more and more likely to be forced into a combination of four modes:

- **blinker advocacy** of particular agendas, ignoring the questionable assumptions on which they are based
- **repressive measures**, most notably using force and encouraged by the availability of military resources
- extensive use of **news management** ("spin") to frame the situation as otherwise -- in a vast programme of "hope-mongering"
- **systemic negligence** in the form of a more or less conscious policy of *laissez aller* indifference and carelessness

The result will be readily described as both "*necessary*" and "*gruesome*".

Conclusion

Like it or not, there are some really angry people "out there". They may be starving or perceive themselves to be the victims of injustice. Is it the failure of due process in politics that encourages those endeavouring "to be heard" to "make a point" by other means?

Efforts to declare them insane or to criminalize them -- in order to safeguard the increasingly cocoon-like comfort zone of a nanny society -- can only be successful in the short term. And, like it or not, they are likely to muster good reasons to be angry: unemployment, inequality, social security, misgovernance, perks and impunity of government agents, miscarriage of justice, etc.. As remarked by Abraham Lincoln:

You can fool all of the people some of the time, and some of the people all the time, but you cannot fool all of the people all of the time.

However, as previously argued, it would appear that the capacity of governance to respond proactively and coherently to the angry -- as a silent minority (?) -- would seem to be very limited (*Ungovernability of Sustainable Global Democracy?* 2011). Successful application of "**just in time**" business models to the unpredictable challenges of global governance should not be considered an indication of competence -- as many disasters now demonstrate. As noted by *The Economist* (*The absence of leadership in the West is frightening -- and also rather familiar*, 30 July 2011):

A government's credibility is founded on its commitment to honour its debts. As a result of the dramas of the past few weeks, that crucial commodity is eroding in the West. The struggles in Europe to keep Greece in the euro zone and the brinkmanship in America over the debt ceiling have presented investors with an unattractive choice: should you buy the currency that may

default, or the one that could disintegrate?

In the early days of the economic crisis the West's leaders did a reasonable job of clearing up a mess that was only partly of their making. Now the politicians have become the problem. In both America and Europe, they are exhibiting the sort of behaviour that could turn a downturn into stagnation. The West's leaders are not willing to make tough choices; and everybody—the markets, the leaders of the emerging world, the banks, even the voters -- knows it. It is a mark of how low expectations have sunk that the euro zone's half-rescue of Greece on July 21st was greeted with relief. As *The Economist* went to press, it still was not clear on what terms America's debt limit would be raised, and for how long. Even if the current crises abate or are averted, the real danger persists: that the West's political system cannot take the difficult decisions needed to recover from a crisis and prosper in the years ahead.

It might be said that **the creative skills in designing processes to facilitate "point-making" in a democratic society have been displaced onto the physical process of delivery of bullets and other missiles** -- rather than explore their psychosocial analogues of which there is every metaphorical trace (*Missiles, Missives, Missions and Memetic Warfare: navigation of strategic interfaces in multidimensional knowledge space*, 2001). As exemplified by the Norwegian massacre, **even more relevant is the constrained capacity to "take a point" -- again displaced defensively onto physical protective mechanisms -- unless the "point" is accompanied by sufficient (sacrificial) bodies**, as argued above.

There is an irony to the manner in which the younger generation worldwide, as with Breivik, have focused so enthusiastically on interactive wargames through which they "make" and "take" virtual points -- however "gruesome" it is considered "necessary" for the visual simulations to be to offer a degree of authenticity. As many have remarked, they may well be developing the skills and mindsets necessary for the "gruesome" reality of the future -- the operation of drones being but one example.

There remains a possibility for transforming such gaming applications (*Playfully Changing the Prevailing Climate of Opinion: climate change as focal metaphor of effective global governance*, 2005). Given the associated enthusiasm for music, it is appropriate to recall the argument of Jacques Attali that governance in any one period tends to reflect the style of music of the period that preceded it (*Noise: the political economy of music*, 1977/1985). It is then worth exploring whether musically-enhanced gaming offers neglected implications for governance in the emerging turbulent society (*A Singable Earth Charter, EU Constitution or Global Ethic?* 2006).

The challenge would seem to be to recognize the "geometry" of a "space" in which the variety of "points" is expressed. Assumptions that that "space" can be framed such as to include only those held to be "normal" are dangerously naive in the current context. On the other hand it could be argued that the art of governance is to act with blithe naivety on the assumption that events, especially disasters of every kind, will "decide" those matters beyond the scope of current strategic reflection and decision-making. The consequences may well be **"gruesome" -- but "necessary"**, given the current governance capacity. In the face of such neglect by humanity, the corrective measures elicited from Gaia -- as governor of last resort -- will indeed merit recognition as both **"necessary"** and **"gruesome"** (James Lovelock, *The Revenge of Gaia: why the Earth is fighting back - and how we can still save humanity*, 2006; *The Vanishing Face of Gaia: a final warning: enjoy it while you can*, 2009).

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