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## Ungovernability of Sustainable Global Democracy ?

### Towards engaging appropriately with time

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Prepared on the occasion of political upheaval in Arab countries, potential destabilization of Europe through default on public debt in Greece and other eurozone countries, problematic military outcomes in Afghanistan and Libya, and failed response to climate change challenges

#### Introduction

Recognition of ungovernability

Major current indications of inherent ungovernability

Secondary indicators of ungovernability

Arrogant cultivation of the pretence of successful governance

Dependence of viable governance on extrajudicial initiatives

Successful secret governance?

Societal grooming as a key to sustainable governance?

Rendez-vous of governance with time

Conclusion

References

## Introduction

The assumption is readily and naturally made that global society is "governable", just as the assumption is made with regard to individual countries and local authorities. This assumption is fundamental to many strategic initiatives with global intentions. It is quite unclear whether the assumption is valid or has been adequately explored. It is however very clear that there is every indication, from the track record of initiatives and policy frameworks, that current approaches to governance are less than adequate to the challenges foreseen and those whose possibility is suspected.

Any argument implying inherent ungovernability is of course considered questionable in the light of the relative stability of many governments and the relative success of some strategic initiatives, whether global, regional or national -- namely their viability in the relatively short-term. The possibility that such relative success may be obscuring fundamental weaknesses and incapacity -- in the longer term -- is therefore readily denied.

The possibility of intrinsic "ungovernability" of systems as complex as global society is further increased by arguments relating to abuse of power and indications of misleadership, as previously discussed (*Abuse of Faith in Governance*, 2009; *Emergence of a Global Misleadership Council: misleading as vital to governance of the future?* 2007).

To these may be added the question of collective inability to comprehend or explain the phenomena with which governance is expected to deal (*Engaging with the Inexplicable, the Incomprehensible and the Unexpected*, 2010). Perhaps even more problematic is, not only the assumption that a degree of consensus can be achieved to enable sustainable governance, but that the very nature of any such consensus may be a fundamental delusion, however assiduously cultivated (*The Consensus Delusion: mysterious attractor undermining global civilization as currently imagined*, 2011).

Curiously these questions at a global level are echoed in the crises widely experienced at the family level. There are many conflicting recommendations as to how a family should be "governed" for the good of all. It is however evident that, whether or not these are effectively implemented, the incidence of family breakdown, domestic violence, and alienated youth, are all indicative of a challenge to the capacity of governance -- even within the families of the governors. (*Divorce rates data, 1858 to now*, *The Guardian*, 18 February 2011; US Census Bureau, *Census Bureau Reports 64 Percent Increase in Number of Children Living with a Grandparent Over Last Two*

*Decades*, 29 June 2011). As described for the UK, traditional concepts of the family have disintegrated; marriage rarely comes first and increasingly does not happen. Levels of cohabitation have trebled, the number of babies born outside marriage has quintupled, and the number of single-parent families has trebled (Madeleine Bunting, *Family Fortunes*, *The Guardian*, 25 September 2004).

Further considerations relating to the following argument have been developed in a complementary document (*Strategic Embodiment of Time: configuring questions fundamental to change*, 2010).

## Recognition of ungovernability

Although seemingly not widely discussed, ungovernability has been a focus for studies in recent decades (Andrew Herod, et al., *An Unruly World? Globalization, Governance and Geography*, 1998; William J. Olson, *The New World Disorder: governability and development*, 1993; Robert Y. Fluno, *The Floundering Leviathan: pluralism in an age of ungovernability*, *The Western Political Quarterly*, 1971). Of particular interest is that arising from the 'Challenges of Global Ungovernability Project' (initiated in 1992 and largely completed by 1994), undertaken by the US [National Strategy Information Center](#) (NSIC) and led by [Robert H. Dorff](#). The latter provided what is seemingly the only available account of it (*Democratization, Failed States, and Peace Operations: the challenge of ungovernability*, *Parameters (US Army War College Quarterly)*, Summer 1996).

There would appear to be a more active debate regarding the nature of misgovernance, especially from a developing country perspective (Abhijit V. Banerjee, *A Theory of Misgovernance*, *The Quarterly Journal of Economics*, 1997; Sayantan Ghosal and Sharun W. Mukand, *Globalization and the (Mis)Governance of Nations*, 2011; Minhaz Merchant, *Tackling the blight of misgovernance*, *The Economic Times*, 19 March 2011; Aijaz Ashraf Wani, *(Mis)governance and the Arab Crisis*. *Greater Kashmir*, 8 April 2011). These would all appear to assume that appropriate governance is possible in the current context, rather than challenging that assumption.

As defined by Olson (1993), ungovernability is "the declining ability of governments worldwide, but particularly in the Third World, to govern, to carry out the many and various responsibilities of managing a modern state in an increasingly complex environment". It includes territorial and border disputes, civil war and ethnic strife, chaos and anarchy -- or collapse into despair and hopelessness. In more mature societies noted threats from ungovernability include terrorism, computer hacking leading to the ruin of institutions, paramilitary groups. Given the increasing worldwide incidence of depression the intimate relationship between individual and planetary despair merits attention (*Implication of Personal Despair in Planetary Despair*, 2010).

Dorff notes the three main components of the problem of increasing global ungovernability, as identified by the NSIC study, include:

- the growth of **transnational organized crime**. Criminal elements have expanded their reach, upgraded and perfected their methods of operation, and increasingly established links that cut across borders and entire regions of the globe.
- the explosive resurgence and growth of **ethnic and religious conflict** have fueled the pressures toward further fragmentation within countries. Moreover, the apparent intractability of ethnic and religious differences contributes to the "erosion of effective government and of public confidence in government...."
- general trends and developments in economic and financial **markets**, and the pervasive influence of **technology**, have also eroded the effectiveness (both real and perceived) of formal governments to perform those tasks essential to the orderly functioning of society.

Subsequently Martin Hewson and Timothy J. Sinclair (*Approaches to Global Governance Theory*, 1999) argued that:

Within the discourse of global governance theory there really is no place for ungovernability. This might be how we are to understand Rosenau's claim that anticipating governance in the future means "to search for order in disorder, for coherence in contradiction, and for continuity in change". What might count for some ungovernability at one point in time would naturally be transformed into dysgovernance, that is challenges to existing forms of governance. Governors would need to devise new forms of better or good governance, or step aside to make room for new governors who could offer these reforms or inventions.

The problem with this logic is not only that it allows nothing to roam outside the governance grid, since everything moves to dysgovernance. It also assumes that all governance, if it survives, is effective, and that ultimately it is good. This, of course, allows for the analyst or policymaker to insert any set of values s/he may want into the governance grid to produce a sense of good governance. (p 37-38)

It might readily be assumed that the influential (and controversial) US neoconservative [Project for the New American Century](#) (PNAC), active from 1997 to 2007, in fact emerged in part from the strategic framework articulated by the NSIC study.

The paradox of the current situation is to be noted in the contrast between Belgium (whose year-long world record for having no government recently exceeded that of Iraq), and the following abstract of a 30-year old study (Richard Rose, *Ungovernability: is there fire behind the smoke?* *Political Studies*, September 1979)

Ungovernability is a catchword of the moment, but analytically the term is a nonsense. A modern Western society can no more do without political authority than it could do without money. This paper defines the supposed threat to governability as the prospect of a fully legitimate government losing its effectiveness, losing popular consent, or both. One threat to effectiveness is an imbalance of resources, with the fiscal dividend of growth failing to keep up with the inertia growth in the costs of public policy. Another is an accumulation of government organizations, losing efficiency by increasing costs of coordination and losing effectiveness by adopting contradictory objectives or ends without known means. Authority is only seriously jeopardized by citizens growing increasingly indifferent to an ineffectual government, turning their backs on government and relying upon other major institutions of society to provide for their needs

More recently the question of ungovernability has been addressed by a range of authors (James N. Rosenau, *Governing the Ungovernable: the challenge of a global disaggregation of authority*, *Regulation and Governance*, 1, 2007; Richard Rose, *Ungovernability: is there fire behind the smoke?* *Political Studies*, 27, 2006; *America the Ungovernable*, *Newsweek*, 25 January 2010). Regionally specific articulations include: *Political Knowledge in an Era of Ungovernability: Obama, GOP and Tea Baggers* (*In Current Events, Politics*, 20 February 2010), *Central America The Nation-State Crisis: Ungovernability* (*Envio*, April 1991). "Ungovernability" was the theme of a seminar led by R. Pardo-Maurer at New York University (Fall 2007) using New York itself as a case study and raising the issues:

- why is it easier to destroy than to build?;
- 'governability' as an elemental assumption of 'governance';
- ungovernability as the 'dark matter' of governance;
- prescriptive issues: 'what can be governed' as not being identical with what 'should be' governed, or how

## Major current indications of inherent ungovernability

**Questionable "governance" of the global financial system:** There has been extensive coverage of the inadequacies of the response to the global financial crisis, the determination of the causative factors, and the implementation of regulatory measures and especially the failure to do so. It has been widely remarked that, for those most closely implicated and responsible, it is now "business as usual", despite the obscene level of profit-making and the disastrous consequences for many deeply affected by the crisis.

The incompetence in the governance of the financial system is now highlighted by the crisis in Greece, and to a lesser degree in some other eurozone countries, with the wider threat of economic destabilization. As noted by the [lead editorial](#) of *The Economist* (25th June 2011):

The European Union seems to have adopted a new rule: if a plan is not working, stick to it. Despite the thousands protesting in Athens, despite the judders in the markets, Europe's leaders have a neat timetable to solve the euro zone's problems....The euro will be saved and the world will applaud....That is the hope that the EU's leaders, gathering in Brussels as *The Economist* went to press, want to cling to. But their strategy of denial -- refusing to accept that Greece cannot pay its debts -- has become untenable, for three reasons.

- First, the politics blocking a resolution of the euro crisis is becoming ever more toxic...
- Second, the markets are convinced that muddling through cannot work...
- The third objection to denial is that fears of contagion are growing, not receding.

It might be simply stated that those most implicated in governance of the financial system were simply indulging in a high level of risk with other peoples money. There was no more coherence to this than that of a skilled gambler. This was exemplified in the case of the financial crisis by the role of a questionable metric and the extent to which many were uncritically complicit in such risk taking. These indicators are suggestive of a similar mindset in other arenas (*Uncritical Strategic Dependence on Little-known Metrics: the Gaussian Copula, the Kaya Identity, and what else?* 2009).

Despite claims to the contrary, there is little evidence that governance capacity is being enhanced -- although there is every reason to suspect that the pattern of "business as usual" reasserts itself with the complicity of the governors. But, as cautioned in the old business policy warning, the danger is: *Having lost sight of our objectives, we have redoubled our efforts.*

The formal response in the USA to inadequate regulation, which had resulted in the greatest [financial crisis](#) in recent history, has been the [Dodd-Frank Wall Street Reform and Consumer Protection Act](#), signed into law by [President Barack Obama](#) on 21 July 2010 as a product of the [financial regulatory reform](#) agenda of the new Congress. However, over a year later the situation has not improved (Poten and Partners *Resurgent Wall Street winning lobby battle: Banks pour cash into fight against post-crisis shakeup Republicans block funds for market watchdogs, Silobreaker*, 27 June 2011; Dominic Rushe, *Wall Street and Republican lawmakers thwart US financial reforms*, *The Guardian*, 26 June 2011). For Rushe:

Of the 380 rules that were supposed to have been written for the bill by the end of next month, only 30 have been finalised. And the biggest most contentious areas, including the regulation of derivatives and what makes an entity "too big to fail," remain in flux. Regulatory experts don't expect any resolution before mid-2012 and many expect a watered down bill to be further diluted by furious lobbying from an increasingly confident Wall Street.... But to hear Wall Street's finest, the financial system doesn't need new rules... [Charles] Geisst said all this lobbying will have its impact but eventually new rules will be passed: "I think legislation will be implemented. But probably not across the board, and the places where it isn't passed are the places where the next crisis will show up," he says.

**Questionable ability to bring military intervention to successful fruition:** This has been remarkably illustrated by the USA in Iraq and Afghanistan, following the expenditure since September 2001 of some \$1.3 trillion. Widely cited as a major strategic error, even courageously declared to be illegal by the former Secretary-General of the United Nations, it remains unclear as to what has been achieved -- other than securing oil supplies from Iraq, and extensive field testing of new weaponry.

The figures relating to the [number killed in Iraq](#) are unreliable but range from 150,000 to 1,000,000. As with Iraq, there is no single official figure for the overall [number of civilians killed by the war in Afghanistan](#) since 2001. Little is said about the number of wounded

and the disruptions of lives and livelihoods -- including those occasioned by traumatised returning veterans.

In the current announcement of the troop "draw down" by the USA, immediately echoed by similar announcements of coalition governments, claims have been made that the objective of the military endeavour has been achieved with the extrajudicial execution of Osama bin Laden. Another [Mission Accomplished?](#) This would make the operation the most costly manhunt in recorded history -- effectively enshrining Osama bin Laden as the most powerful man in history (according to conventional economic measures). Of course history is likely to rate it as the greatest example of political and military strategic incompetence on record (*Transforming the Unsustainable Cost of General Education: strategic insights from Afghanistan*, 2009).

History will note the level of massacre associated with the [Great War of Africa](#) in the Congo region -- ignored during that same period. By 2008 that war and its aftermath had killed 5.4 million people, mostly from disease and starvation, making the Second Congo War the deadliest conflict worldwide since World War II. The United Nations -- following its "intervention" on the occasion of the [Rwanda genocide](#), the [Srebrenica massacre](#), and that by the [Khmer Rouge](#) -- has proven unable to act, although resolutions have been honourably formulated deploring the situation.

Despite extensive use of military might, there is a widely remarked inability to apply military resources to bring about successful resolution of the campaign. People of the desert, like those of mountain fastnesses, have demonstrated their capacity to resist the most sophisticated and inhumane weapons that humanity has imagined -- including those controlled by people without the courage to meet their opponents face-to-face.

**Questionable ability successfully to implement and manage major technology-based projects:** At the time of writing, this governance deficit is evident in the case of:

- the [Fukushima nuclear reactor disaster](#), notably marked by a pattern of assurances, denials, promises, retractions -- with the emerging reality of widespread radioactive fallout and its consequences for years to come, as discussed separately (*Anticipating Future Strategic Triple Whammies In the light of earthquake-tsunami-nuclear misconceptions*, 2011)
- the major environmental disaster resulting from offshore drilling for oil in the Gulf of Mexico, known as the [Deepwater Horizon oil spill](#)
- inability to reach agreement regarding sufficient restriction of emissions by various technologies exacerbating climate change, leading to a recommendation for exploration of massive geo-engineering (*IPCC asks scientists to assess geo-engineering climate solutions*, *The Guardian*, 15 June 2011). Leaked documents, ahead of a key Lima meeting, suggest that the UN body is looking to slow emissions with technological fixes rather than talks. The problematic nature of such technology, and the probability of "extrajudicial" unilateral action, are discussed separately (*Geo-engineering Oversight Agency for Thermal Stabilization (GOATS)*, 2008).
- issues that have become apparent in relation to the [Three Gorges Dam](#) on the Yangtse River. These include (unforeseen) [environmental impacts](#), problems relating to [flooding](#), concerns regarding the [resettlement of residents](#). Such issues have been long foreseen -- and are systematically sidelined by dam builders (Patrick McCully, *Silenced Rivers: the ecology and politics of large dams*, 2001).

The question to be asked is whether humanity's institutions have the capacity to manage major technological projects without unforeseen consequences -- whose disastrous and unmanageable nature is only recognized subsequently. A reason for vigilance is that claims for such capacity are typically made by those who have most to gain from investment in them and who are most blinkered in their evaluation of them. Their ability to manipulate the debate has long been evident in the case of the nuclear industry. The process has notably been studied in relation to the suppression of alternatives threatening such interests (Naomi Oreskes and Erik M. Conway, *Merchants of Doubt: how a handful of scientists obscured the truth on issues from tobacco smoke to global warming*, 2010).

**Questionable ability to avoid disaster-prone planning:** This is a more general framing of the previous point. It has been argued that it was bad planning -- notably deliberately ignoring evidence regarding risk levels -- which led to the disasters highlighted there. This is most clearly the case with respect to the siting of nuclear reactors in areas of risk. At the time of writing, the pattern of cover-up in response to such disasters is evident in the case of the Fort Worth and Fort Calhoun nuclear reactors (Deborah Dupre, *Fort Calhoun Nuclear Flood Emergency: hours from core damage*, *Examiner.com*, 26 June 2011; Peter Behr, *A Nuclear Plant's Flood Defenses Trigger a Yearlong Regulatory Confrontation*, *New York Times*, 24 June 2011). It is unclear to what extent recent media revelations concerning the security of nuclear reactors in France has been suppressed.

The planning issue has been made evident in the case of authorities according building permission on land known to be subject to flooding. This has been most recently highlighted in the case of [flooding in Australia](#) (*Disastrous Floods as Indicators of Systemic Risk Neglect: implications for authoritative response to future surprises*, 2011). Extensive [flood damage on the Atlantic coast of France](#) occurred in 2010. Building permissions are now being reissued for construction in areas that were then disastrously flooded.

**Questionable ability to ensure future availability of vital resources:** Concerns have recently been widely expressed regarding the availability of a number of key resources, variously recognized in the UN [Millennium Development Goals](#), agreed in 2000 by 192 United Nations member states and at least 23 international organizations. to be achieved by the year 2015:

- [Goal 1: Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger](#)
- [Goal 2: Achieve universal primary education](#)
- [Goal 3: Promote gender equality and empower women](#)
- [Goal 4: Reduce child mortality rates](#)
- [Goal 5: Improve maternal health](#)
- [Goal 6: Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria, and other diseases](#)
- [Goal 7: Ensure environmental sustainability](#)

- [Goal 8: Develop a global partnership for development](#)

At this point in time, [progress towards achievement of these goals](#) is creating concern that many of these goals will not be achieved as envisaged. Of notable concern are:

- **water:** In western Europe the recent heat wave has drawn attention to the vulnerability of agriculture to lack of water. One of the eight goals above, to halve the number of people without access to basic sanitation by 2015 will now be missed (Fiona Harvey, [Donor aversion to 'unsexy' water projects threatens development goal](#), *The Guardian*, 27 June 2011)
- **food:** A recently published Oxfam report forecasts that a billion people will go undernourished this year ([Food: A hungry world](#), *The Guardian*, 8 June 2011). Prices are forcing many into poverty ([Food price rises pushing millions into extreme poverty](#), *World Bank warns*, *The Guardian*, 14 April 2011). The current global food crisis is expected to extend far into the future ([Speculation, hunger and the global food trade](#), *The Guardian*, 8 June 2011; [Global food crisis: the speculators playing with our daily bread](#), *The Guardian*, 2 June 2011). According to Oxfam [food prices are expected to double by 2030](#). A [recent report](#) has noted that the oceans, as a source of food, are rapidly rapidly degrading with many species expected to become extinct.

Clearly, as with any services, the issue is not with the availability and delivery to the few, but rather the availability and capacity to deliver to the many.

**Increasing social unrest from recognition of inadequacy of social safety nets:** A measure of governance is to be found in those social surveys now including indications of public perceptions as to whether services are "well run" -- police, health, press, broadcasting, trade unions, banks. The latest such survey for the UK makes sobering reading for public institutions -- trust in all of them has fallen ([Social attitudes survey](#), *The Guardian*, 13 December 2010).

At the time of writing there is considerable social unrest in western Europe consequent on the recognition of the failure of social safety nets, whether in relation to health care, shelter or pensions. These issues have been highlighted by the austerity measures being imposed in many countries to reduce the national debt. Of particular concern is the manner in which social contracts, in terms of which people have worked for much of their lives, are now being arbitrarily "reframed" at their expense. Unrest is all the greater in that it is recognized that the austerity measures are designed to fund debts incurred to those who have benefitted most from a poorly regulated financial system.

To striking public servants, the UK Prime Minister states simply that they are wrong to strike in response to the reduction in their pensions and the requirement that they work longer ([These strikes are wrong](#), *Cameron tells public sector workers*, *The Guardian*, 28 June 2011). **It is curious that the social "contract" with the working population can be so readily modified by governments -- totally lacking in any ability to review the "contracts" of those who have benefitted most from the recent crises.** Nothing is said about the "wrong", and those responsible for it, which resulted in the remedial efforts now upheld as an appropriate response of responsible governance to the financial crisis. Governments focused on their short-term obligations naively express surprise and indignation at the failure of the public to respond with understanding and acceptance to the severe austerity measures imposed as a consequence of failure of appropriate long-term thinking by those governments in the past.

## Secondary indicators of ungovernability

Aside from the more general sense of chaos and the ongoing, much-publicized struggle to govern the crisis-prone, global financial system, the nature of ungovernability can be highlighted by the many factors detailed separately ([Abuse of Faith in Governance](#), 2009). Especially significant at the time of writing are:

**Weapons development, manufacture and sale by Permanent Members of the UN Security Council:** It is a widely recognized that it is those countries which are Permanent Members of the [UN Security Council](#) (the primary body charged with the peaceful governability of the world) which are amongst the top ten largest arms dealing countries in the world, including weapons of mass destruction (Anup Shah, [The Arms Trade is Big Business](#), *Global Issues*, 23 November 2009). Given their acknowledged role in preserving global peace, as defined by the UN Charter, there is a strong case for reframing this apparent contradiction within a more coherent framework. Just as governability of a country can apparently only be assured by enabling citizens to arm themselves, as illustrated by the USA, clearly an analogous principle in support of global governability needs to be enshrined and promoted in a Charter "amendment".

**Affirmation that a democracy can only be governed sustainably by enabling citizens to arm themselves.** This principle is fundamental to the US Constitution where it is enshrined as the [Second Amendment](#). The US Supreme Court was recently called upon to determine whether the Second Amendment applies to individual states within the USA. The ruling, issued on 28 June 2010, affirmed that any banning of handgun possession in the home violates the Second Amendment, as does its prohibition against rendering any lawful firearm in the home operable for the purpose of immediate self-defense. Within the USA, this ruling has been hailed as historic by defenders of the Amendment. Critics, overruled, have argued otherwise (Carl Bindenagel, [Ignoring Half of the Second Amendment](#), *The Globalist*, 28 June 2010). Of potentially far greater significance is the implicit recognition that, in systemic terms, the USA (as the most powerful country of the world) considers itself to be ungovernable without such a constitutional provision. The apparent necessity of this facility, despite efforts to disarm citizens in the course of "spreading democracy" around the world, has been separately argued ([Arming Civil Society Worldwide: getting democracy to work in the emergent American Empire?](#) 2003). Can individuals also claim "legitimate" rights to act "extrajudicially" in defence of their home(land) security?

**Incarceration rates:** The need to imprison a portion of a country's population is an important indicator of the measures required to ensure the governability of that country, especially of a democracy faced with criminality. *Wikipedia* provides a [List of countries by incarceration rate](#). At five times the world average, the USA is top-ranked with 760 prisoners per 100,000 population (see also [Incarceration in the United States](#)), followed closely by Russia (626), Rwanda (593) and Cuba (531). In 2001 it was estimated, in the

case of the USA, that 5.6 million adults had served time in prison, namely 2.68% of the adult population [more]. Some 2.3 million live in prisons, more than in any American city other than New York, Los Angeles or Chicago. One in every 31 Americans is under some form of correctional control.

In the case of the United Kingdom, following a change of government in 2010 the Home Secretary Kenneth Clarke, noted that the prison population in 1993 for England and Wales was 44,628, but was currently 85,000. Given the two-fold challenge of space in overcrowded prisons and the modest benefits to society of incarceration (the record prison population and crime rate there are now among the highest in Western Europe) he questions the value of incarceration as a form of punishment and means of re-education (Alan Travis, *Ken Clarke to attack 'bang 'em up' prison sentencing*, *The Guardian*, 30 June 2010). Half of all crime in England and Wales is committed by previous offenders.

**Reneging on policing commitments:** A vital indicator to individual citizens of the governability of their country is the ability of security forces to limit criminality and to respond to citizen appeals when threatened. In the case of the UK, a [National Policing Pledge](#) was made by the UK government in 2008, notably including a commitment to answer emergency calls within 10 seconds, and to reach the caller within 15 minutes (urban areas) or 20 minutes (rural areas). For lack of resources, and despite rising levels of violence, the subsequent government decided not to be held to its provisions (Alan Travis, *Theresa May scraps Labour police beat pledge*, *The Guardian*, 29 June 2010).

**Continuing failure of "virtual wars":** A summary of such "wars", official and unofficial, is detailed separately (*Review of the Range of Virtual Wars: as a strategic comparison with the global war against terrorism*, 2005). As noted there, with respect to the official "virtual wars", it is clear to all that they are not being won with the current strategies:

- the **"war on drugs"** provides the most striking example [more | more]. Labelled a "tragic failure", in the USA it has lasted over 30 years [more | more] -- gradually evoking new thinking from those who engage in it [more | more | more]. The same is true in the UK (cf Alan Travis, *Revealed: how drugs war failed*, *The Guardian*, 5 July 2005). One curious side effect of the "successful" USA-UK attack on Afghanistan was that drug production, constrained by the Taliban, began to flourish anew. Given the continuing military operations there, it might be argued that both "wars" have proven to be a failure.
- with respect to the **"war on cancer"**, one report indicates "30 years ago, the United States declared war on cancer. Three decades later, we're still fighting and dying" [more] Another report asks why access to alternative cancer treatment is so vigorously prevented [more]
- with respect to the **"war on poverty"** launched in the USA by Lyndon Johnson in 1964: "Since then, the federal government has created vast new bureaucracies and raised taxes to a staggering level not seen since World War Two. L.B.J. helped create welfare..., Medicare, Head Start, the Job Corps, and Medicaid. Worst of all, most of L.B.J.'s War on Poverty was a failure". [more | more]. There is also criticism of the World Bank's approach to the "war on poverty" [more]
- with respect to the **"war against hunger"**, one FAO report indicates: "Given the rate at which hunger has declined since 1990 on average, the World Food Summit goal of reducing the number of undernourished people by half by 2015 cannot be reached. After falling by 37 million during the first half of the 1990s, the number of hungry people in developing countries increased by 18 million in the second half of the decade". [more]

**Questionable ability to respond to organized crime:** Beyond widely recognized issues of endemic corruption, the inability to eliminate organized crime is evident in both developed and developing countries. Many cities are characterized by "no go" areas into which police - as front-line representatives of the governance of law and order -- are reluctant to venture. A recent issue of *The Economist* notes that whilst Central America's leaders and their neighbourhoods are at last starting to cooperate, it is the mafias of the region which continue to lead the way in "regional integration". In 2009 the isthmus was witness to nearly 19,000 murders -- 45 per 100,000 people, making it the most violent place in the world.

**Reneging on poverty-related commitments:** The G8/G20 groups are increasingly seen as substituting for the global governance previously assumed to be focused through the United Nations. As with the latter, commentators have noted the failure of G8/G20 countries to fulfil [commitments to relieve poverty in developing countries](#) -- exemplars of problematic governability (*G8 seeks to divert attention from broken Gleneagles aid pledge*, *BBC News*, 25 June 2010). Fulfillment is tracked by the [Africa Progress Panel](#) and by the [G8 Information Centre \(Analytical and Compliance Studies\)](#). In the case of the UN system, much was made of a range of strategies of the form: *Health for All by the Year 2000*, *Food for All by the Year 2000*. *Peace in our time*, *Make poverty history*.

**Questionable ability to respond to increasing social inequality:** This is perhaps of greatest concern and one of strongest indicators of ungovernability over time (Dietmar Henning, *Study reveals growing social inequality in OECD countries*, 8 January 2011; Michael Conachy, *UN Human Development Report finds: Social inequality and poverty increasing worldwide*, 6 August 1999; Daniel H. Cole, *Graphic Evidence of Increasing Inequality and Social Stratification in the US*, June 2011).

## Arrogant cultivation of the pretence of successful governance

A notable response to the challenge of the recent financial crisis has been the process of [quantitative easing](#) -- the previously questionable practice of effectively printing money, creating it "out of nothing". Separately it is argued that an equivalent process is evident through what might be termed moral easing (*From Quantitative Easing (QE) to Moral Easing (ME): a stimulus package to avert moral bankruptcy?* 2010). As with progressive devaluation of educational standards, this might be understood as a reduction in the standard of what is upheld as successful governance. Some of the arguments there are summarized in the following forms of pretence at effective governance:

**Focus on appeals and formulation of declarations:** These take the form of solemn and vigorous assertions that some condition is "unacceptable" and that "something should be done about it". This is an approach much favoured by heads of state and institutions

claiming moral authority and a prominent leadership role. Its main advantage is that it implies the need for further action without any commitment to enabling it. At the same time it offers a clear indication of a highly moral position being taken by the highest authority, thereby providing a degree of easement for others in the expectation that something appropriate may thereafter be done. It is a palliative measure.

Following a declaration, one of the simplest forms of moral easing is the appeal, typically framed as a call for action. An appeal has the great advantage of:

- positioning the person or institution making the appeal at a focus of explicating moral concern, recognizing the urgent need for action
- easing the consciences of those appreciative of the appeal that there is attention to their concern
- avoiding any firm promise or pledge whose inadequacies might be subsequent cause for criticism
- possibly gathering contributions for the use of which little strict accountability is expected
- placing any responsibility for its inadequacies on those who have failed to respond to the appeal

Such appeals are frequently made, most notably by the leaders of international institutions and by the Pope. What is most interesting is the lack of learning from the process, or even the desire for such learning (*Collective Learning from Calls for Global Action*, 1981). From this it may be concluded that the appeal process serves a function of moral easing in its own right, even if only as a token.

The recent Conference of the Parties to the [Convention on Biological Diversity](#) (COP-10) concluded in Nagoya with a declaration proclaimed widely as a great success: "historic", a "landmark", and "a much-needed morale booster". In a commentary on that declaration, [George Monbiot](#) notes the problem that none of the journalists making such claims had actually seen the declaration (*We've been conned: the deal to save the natural world never happened*, *The Guardian*, 2 November 2010). Their claims were based on a 3-page press release that Monbiot argues was virtually content free.

In 2002, the signatories to the convention agreed something similar: a splendid-sounding declaration which imposed no legal commitments. They announced that they would 'achieve by 2010 a significant reduction of the current rate of biodiversity loss'. Mission accomplished, the press proclaimed, and everyone went home to congratulate themselves. Earlier this year, the UN admitted that the 2002 agreement was fruitless: 'the pressures on biodiversity remain constant or increase in intensity'.

**Focus on token achievements -- resolutions:** Especially noteworthy is the pattern of formal resolutions recognizing issues, and possibly encouraging action in response to them, or even establishing plans and structural innovations (discussed below). As noted decades ago by Chadwick F. Alger, with the exception of some specialized technical agencies, intergovernmental assemblies have become an arena in which developing countries are placated and contained by encouraging them to spend endless hours in formulating toothless resolutions with little hope of implementation: "The analysis has shown that only 53 of some 2000 (less than 3%) decisions in the assemblies and executive bodies of the UN, ILO and WHO created new activities in the years 1955, 1960 and 1965" (Chadwick Alger, *International Associations*, 1972. p. 461-464).

Of greater relevance is the lack of systematic effort subsequently to determine whether resolutions have given rise to the action envisaged. What institution of governance would be actually receptive to such information -- rather than claiming so to be?

**Focus on plans and structural innovations:** At the time of writing *The Economist* offers the example of the situation in France ([Les Quangos: the French have an unusually large number of pointless committees](#), 23 June 2011):

According to a little-publicised appendix to the 2011 budget, France has no fewer than 697 such commissions. Unlike statutory quangos, such as the anti-discrimination authority or the competition commission, these bodies mostly give advice...The commissions do not break down their budgets, and provide no information on hours spent or salaries paid. Although the government has abolished some of the most pointless, new ones keep cropping up. 'Whenever there is a difficulty,' says Mr Mallié, 'we just create committees.' In the 1960s Charles de Gaulle deplored the French tendency to set up a committee to work out what to think about anything.

As with the resolutions which enable such innovation, little effort is made to evaluate their effectiveness in response to the issue for which they were created -- and on whose mitigation the results of such deliberations may in fact depend. That the issue is debated in committee, or recognized in the plans formulated, is typically cited as an adequate institutional response. Cynically the process might be described as "palliative care".

Unfortunately a crisis meeting does not in itself constitute "governance" of the crisis -- although it may delude its participants, and others, into believing that it is.

**Focus on awarding achievement:** Various bodies create awards and promote them as exemplifying the highest achievement. Extreme examples include current efforts at the fast-track beatification of past popes -- under whose aegis sexual and other abuse was seemingly endemic. More conventional examples are illustrated by the controversies noted with certain attributions of the Nobel Peace Prize, which might otherwise imply a lack of due diligence, but point to the possibilities of a systematic programme of moral easing:

- [Henry Kissinger](#) (1973): On that award the distinguished musical satirist [Tom Lehrer](#) decided that he could no longer perform. "It was at that moment that satire died...There was nothing more to say after that." The [International Campaign Against Impunity](#) maintains a watch on Kissinger for his alleged role in crimes against humanity (see also Christopher Hitchens, *The Case against Henry Kissinger*, *Harper's Magazine*, Feb, 2001)

- [Yasser Arafat](#) (1994): The award was made despite various authorities having explicitly associated him with terrorism
- [Barack Obama](#) (2009): One telling criticism was that the award had been not for achievement but for the promise thereof and the expectations thereby created. (Michael Binyon, *Absurd decision on Obama makes a mockery of the Nobel peace prize*, *The Sunday Times*, 9 October 2009)

Medals are systematically awarded to military personnel for the most questionable reasons.

**Focus on public relations and being "positive":** A conventional response to any call for new approaches to governance is to consider that such a framing exemplifies "negativity" with respect to past initiatives. The dangers of simplistic "positive thinking" have however been variously summarized (*Being Positive Avoiding Negativity: management challenge of positive vs negative*, 2005; *Credibility Crunch engendered by Hope-mongering*, 2008). Most notable is the argument of [Barbara Ehrenreich](#) (*Smile Or Die: how positive thinking fooled America and the world*, 2010).

The question is how to enable appropriate "critical thinking" (*Web resources: Critical thinking vs. Specious arguments*, 2001). Curiously sugar is used metaphorically as an indication of all that is "sweet", "nice" and "desirable" -- rather than "negative" and "critical" -- and the lifestyle preferences for those qualities. This suggests the probability that preference for "good news" information (in contrast to a more challengingly rounded "information diet") may increase vulnerability to an information analogue to diabetes and associated obesity. The potentially problematic character of public relations "sweeteners" in such an information diet may be powerfully illustrated by the increasing recognition of the health risks of omnipresent artificial sweeteners and their suspected links to cancer (*Memetic and Information Diseases in a Knowledge Society*, 2008). The irony is all the greater, with current pressures for austerity, given the very recent indication that Type 2 diabetes, thought to be incurable, may be remedied with a very low calorie diet (Sarah Boseley, *Low-calorie diet offers hope of cure for type 2 diabetes*, *The Guardian*, 24 June 2011).

**Focus on soliciting public suggestions and support:** As a feature of public relations, consequent on appeals and declarations, efforts may be made to mobilize public opinion and engagement through formal solicitation of feedback and suggestions. In a web environment such systems are readily created and easily managed -- promoted as "public consultation". These take their most cynical form when the intention is simply to be able to claim to gather "feedback" -- and then to ignore it (as originally intended). This may be disguised by publicizing, through the media, one or two responses "of the thousands received". Use may be made of feedback forms which bias the responses and preclude other perspectives. Claims may then be made that "all the options" have been considered, irrespective of what has been deliberately ignored (*Considering All the Strategic Options -- whilst ignoring alternatives and disclaiming cognitive protectionism*, 2009). As acts of tokenistic public relations, no critical evaluation of these processes is made. This is especially significant in the case of the response to emergencies (*Enabling Collective Intelligence in Response to Emergencies: illustrated by the case of deep oil spill containment*, 2010).

The current challenge has been well described by [John Ralston Saul](#) (*Voltaire's Bastards: the dictatorship of reason in the West*, 1992; *The Unconscious Civilization*, 1995), but most succinctly as a form of *Le Chatelier's Principle* by [Stafford Beer](#) (*The Cybernetic Cytoblast: management itself*, 1969) in the following terms:

Reformers, critics of institutions, consultants in innovation, people in sort who "want to get something done", often fail to see this point. They cannot understand why their strictures, advice or demands do not result in effective change. They expect either to achieve a measure of success in their own terms or to be flung off the premises. But an ultrastable system (like a social institution)... has no need to react in either of these ways. It specialises in equilibrational readjustment which is to the observer a secret form of change requiring no actual alteration in the macro-systemic characteristics that he is trying to do something about (Chairman's Address to the International Cybernetics Congress, September 1969)

As implied above, the situation is further bedevilled by the level of public relations claiming that everything is under control. Ironically, in a so-called knowledge society based on "hypertext", it is the **hyperbole** ("hype") that most characterizes those presenting governance in this light -- with press releases most appropriately to be understood as "hypertext". **So completely does the plot appear to have been lost, that those in authority would appear to be incapable of even working out -- with any credibility -- how to achieve consensus on what is problematic and how to respond to it.**

Notions of truth, duly authorised by authority, have become increasingly questionable -- most notably by other authorities. The context of claim and counter-claim makes the possibility of coherent governance increasingly impossible in the light of current understanding.

## Dependence of viable governance on extrajudicial initiatives

Discussion of the [legality of "torture"](#), [extraordinary rendition](#), and [extrajudicial execution](#), is making it increasingly clear that Western democracies, and especially the USA, are unapologetically dependent on these processes as a means of defending their "way of life" and a certain understanding of democratic governance. It now appears that formal recognition has been given to an understanding that viable democracy is only sustainable by undertaking extrajudicial initiatives.

The distinction between the "illegality" of torture and the "illegality" of "extrajudicial" processes is increasingly unclear. According to this logic, can terrorists make a "legitimate" claim to be acting "extrajudicially" -- as freedom fighters? It is of course the case that the media are encouraged to "groom" the public, through a regular diet of movie scenarios, into acceptance of the necessity of extrajudicial "torture" and assassination -- systematically exploiting the **"ticking bomb scenario"** to enhance the **"culture and politics of fear"**.

With the extrajudicial execution of Osama bin Laden on the territory of another sovereign nation, such formal recognition was highlighted

by the announcement of the President of the United States that "Justice has been done". Officials have announced that "extrajudicial measures" may be taken if [Julian Assange](#) is not extradited to the USA. The survival of "democracy" is now dependent on such measures.

Much legal subtlety has been devoted to framing recent US military operations as being in conformity with the Geneva Conventions -- despite careful critical analysis of the authorization for the treatment of prisoners in [Guantanamo Bay](#) and [Abu Ghraib](#). Instructions issued for the seemingly "necessary" extrajudicial espionage on members of the UN Secretariat have also proven to be controversial (*Alleged Breach of UN Treaty Obligations by US*, 2010). This matter would seem to have been resolved through the unopposed re-election of [Ban Ki-moon](#) as Secretary-General on 21 June 2011 -- an appointment valid until 31 December 2016. This is despite strong criticism from the [United Nations Office of Internal Oversight Services](#), the UN internal audit unit, to the effect that the secretariat, under Ban's leadership, is "drifting into irrelevance" (*Ahlenius End of Assignment Report*, *Foreign Policy*, 14 June 2010).

The pattern has become evident with respect to [NATO intervention in Libya](#) -- increasingly viewed as of questionable legality. It has been argued that with respect to Libya the US President is subverting provisions requiring a vote in Congress and is in breach of the Constitution (Tom Rogan, *Obama's subversion of war powers*, *The Guardian*, 17 June 2011). However the legality has been reframed by clarifying that drone attacks anywhere, for example, do not require such authorization (*Senate Committee Passes Resolution Authorizing US Intervention in Libya*, *Voice of America*, 28 June 2011). As indicated by Rogan, the Obama administration is engaging in "legal spin" of the worst kind.

The argument is reinforced at the time of writing by the revelation that France had been arming the rebels in the conflict in Libya -- apparently in contravention of the provisions of the enabling Resolution 1973 of the UN Security Council (Nick Hopkins, *Nato reviews Libya campaign after France admits arming rebels*, *The Guardian*, 29 June 2011).

It is of course the case that many countries, claiming legality and "innocence", benefit from the importation of products (most notably petroleum) mined or manufactured in other countries under conditions totally contrary to those provisions -- a systematic dependence on extrajudiciality for which they admit no responsibility (Alan Taylor, *Nigeria: The Cost of Oil*, *The Atlantic*, 8 June 2011). Surrogates under distant legal regimes are used -- "extrajudicially" -- to be able to claim the legality of the products imported and sold at lower cost. The use of child labour to this end has received significant publicity in relation to manufacture of clothing.

The current framing of "extrajudiciality" can however usefully be better understood as a euphemism for a wider range of processes. Many engage in processes, especially in times of austerity, which can be said to be "extrajudicial". These range from purchase of products and services "in the black" -- most obviously with the employment of domestic servants (even by the "governors" themselves). Recreational drugs may need to be purchased in this way, as with alcohol. For those engaging in such transactions, would a degree of quality of life be sustainable otherwise? The [black economy](#), as usefully categorized by the *Wikipedia* entry, exemplifies the extrajudicial and its forms. The entry cites the *Black Market Products Index*, estimating the global value at \$796 billion. The question is whether global society could function without such processes and the extrajudicial employment they offer -- a question long raised with respect to specific countries, notably Italy. Given the framing of adultery in many legislations, is it also to be understood as an extrajudicial process fundamental to the viability and "governance" of interpersonal relations?

Ironically, especially for those legislations which view "nongovernmental" organizations as effectively unauthorised, many civil society organizations could well be considered "extrajudicial" -- acting outside the approved legal framework. This is especially the case with the conflation of definitions of such bodies with those potentially to be suspected of terrorism by innovative anti-terrorism legislation. The ambiguities are evident in comparative exercises (*Cultivating Global Strategic Fantasies of Choice: learnings from Islamic Al-Qaida and the Republican Tea Party movement*, 2010). It is however also the case that governance is increasingly dependent on "civil society" to take on tasks which government agencies cannot manage effectively (*Interacting Fruitfully with Un-Civil Society: the dilemma for non-civil society organizations*, 1996).

## Successful secret governance?

**"Unsaid"**: Little is necessarily said about what is "unsaid" in society -- what occurs "under the table" or "behind closed doors" (*Global Strategic Implications of the Unsaid*, 2003; *Varieties of the Unsaid in sustaining psycho-social community*, 2003). The extent of this phenomenon may be fruitfully compared with the "dark matter" of which the physical universe is composed. It is more obvious through the quantity of documents it is necessary to "classify". Their troubling content and scope has been highlighted by the [WikiLeaks dissemination of US diplomatic cables](#) --0 but especially by the [US reaction to the embarrassing nature of such disclosures](#).

**Conspiracy theories**: Consistent with such "official secrets", [conspiracy theories](#) abound regarding the existence and nature of secret governance. These include:

- esoteric extremes:
  - an "invisible" [spiritual hierarchy](#) enabling the development of humanity
  - a secret group of [Illuminati](#) manipulating the development of humanity for questionable ends
- governance influenced by [secret societies](#), including those of Catholic persuasion, the Freemasons, and a variety of secret "brotherhoods"
- unaccountable secret branches of government, financed from unexplicated security budgets and secretive extraction of funds -- most notably in the USA, but also purportedly a feature of NATO (Sherwood Ross, *Unaccountable Secret Government: most serious constitutional crisis in American history*, *Global Research*, 15 September 2008; Bill Moyers, *The Secret Government: the Constitution in crisis*, *Global Research TV*, 12 August 2010; Richard Boylan, *The Secret Shadow Government: a structural analysis*)

- manipulation of human development by extraterrestrials, whether benevolent or otherwise
- influence of the secretive [Bilderberg Group](#) and what are cited by conspiracy theorists as its more visible clones -- the Club of Rome, the World Economic Forum, the Council on Foreign Relations, and the Trilateral Commission.

**Locus of secret governance?** The epitome of secretive power and influence, according to its own claims, is the Bilderberg Group. The most recent documentation of the Bilderberg initiative is that of Andrew Gavin Marshall (*Bilderberg 2011: The Rockefeller World Order and the "High Priests of Globalization"*, *Global Research*, June 16, 2011). As an example, he cites David Rockefeller to the effect that:

We are grateful to the *Washington Post*, *The New York Times*, *Time Magazine* and other great publications whose directors have attended our meetings and respected their promises of discretion for almost 40 years. It would have been impossible for us to develop our plan for the world if we had been subjected to the lights of publicity during those years. But the world is more sophisticated and prepared to march towards a world government. The supranational sovereignty of an intellectual elite and world bankers is surely preferable to the national auto-determination practiced in past centuries.

Marshall notes the extent to which key appointments, such as that of Herman Van Rompuy as President of the European Council, are claimed to follow from a form of "interview" at Bilderberg meetings. The appointment of Christine Lagard as Director of the IMF is then to be seen as following the same pattern.

**Agenda of secret governance?** The question which any such "secret governance" raises is the nature of its achievement over the past decades and the fruitful influence which it is held to be exerting on the decades to come. Those sympathetic with such a worldview would readily claim its influence over positive achievements -- if not every achievement deemed positive. This is a characteristic of many religions committed to their own rapid growth, a role in the corridors of power, and fulfillment of the [Great Commission](#) of Christianity - or its equivalent in Islam and Judaism. Unfortunately, many bodies freely make competing claims to be influencing the course of events in this way. Fellow-travellers and sympathizers readily confuse themselves by believing too readily in the inflated narrative, image building and mystification with which such initiatives are cloaked and by which their governance may be primarily sustained. Few such initiatives are embarrassed by false modesty in making claims for their primary role in the course of events.

How is any acclaimed achievement by secret governance to be set against the current and foreseen chaos? Various narratives have their degrees of credibility to different constituencies:

- the success of governance is not in question because any perceived "chaos" is in fulfillment of divine will
- the chaos is itself being secretly well-managed to achieve appropriate change -- consistent with a secret plan
- the disastrous consequences for many are necessarily irrelevant to the emergence of an appropriate new order

**Achievements?** Taking the facts of the chaos at their face value -- systematic killing, rape, pillage, destruction of the environment, widespread hunger, resource shortages, etc -- it could be readily concluded that those most responsible for such secret governance have above all been successful in maximizing inequalities. They would be completely indifferent -- lip service aside -- to suffering and loss of human life, and to the progressive degradation of the living environment. The cost is considered to be "worth it" -- as specifically articulated by US Secretary of State [Madeleine Albright](#) in commenting on the death of 500,000 children in Iraq as a result of sanctions: "*we think the price is worth it*". The pattern has been evident in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Their influence, if any, in enabling such loss is appropriately to be set against their total incapacity to manage such challenges in a less harmful manner. Is their success in governance to be assessed rather in terms of their ability to cultivate their continuing power and influence -- whatever its relation to reality -- most notably to maximize their own self-indulgence, especially through cultivation of their own self-importance in munificent gatherings designed to that end? Unfortunately munificence does not equate with excellence, however much some may be fooled into believing this is the case.

Clearly anyone can claim to be successfully engaged in global governance -- in secret. The manner of their "institutionalization" and "traction" is another matter.

## Societal grooming as a key to sustainable governance?

**"Grooming" of the population:** In contrast with the long tradition of physical repression as a key to viable governance, it is useful to note the extent to which the population to be governed is rendered "malleable" by what can be identified as the creation of a high degree of dependence -- in what amounts to a process of "grooming". This can of course be seen as the explicit objective of many social and religious movements in seeking adherence to their worldview and the marginalization and exclusion of perspectives framed as misguided and disruptive.

The use of the media by governments and corporations to mould public opinion in the pre-internet era has been well documented by [Edward S. Herman](#) and [Noam Chomsky](#), (*Manufacturing Consent: the political economy of the mass media*, 1988). The pattern of posturing of wannabe "governors" before Rupert Murdoch is an indication of a continuation of this pattern -- as with the vital importance attached to advertising in "cultivating" a customer base.

**Social networking:** The process has however taken a more powerful form through the manner in which it is now enabled and facilitated by web technology. Many of its implications have been the subject of extensive commentary with respect to [social networking](#) (Facebook, Twitter, and the like) and the central role it now plays in the psychosocial lives of emerging generations. The role of such facilities in facilitating social protest in the Mediterranean region has been widely cited, although its significance has been challenged by [Evgeny Morozov](#) (*The Net Delusion: the dark side of internet freedom*, 2011). Related concerns have also been expressed (Eli Pariser, *The Filter Bubble: what the internet is hiding from you*, 2011).

**Cloud computing:** The issue of dependence is highlighted by the recent announcements of a new relationship with [cloud computing](#) technology. These have emphasized the manner in which the previous generation of "personal computers" will now become obsolete. "Everything" can now be stored "in the cloud" -- including all personal information, addresses, bank account details, passwords, etc. (Richard Waters and Chris Nuttall, *Cloud threatens to end PC's reign*, *Financial Times*, 10 June 2011). The new devices required by individuals to benefit from this facility will merely be simple "interfaces to the cloud" -- now envisaged as being extended to the [Intercloud](#), namely a "cloud of clouds". As with operating systems sold worldwide from the USA, there are no constraints against little known provisions for "back door" entry to such applications.

**Dependence and vulnerability:** With respect to this innovation, little if anything is mentioned with respect to the nature of the dependence created when all personal information is so stored, with their associated applications. Specific vulnerabilities include:

- access to such information in the event of failure of electrical systems, namely [blackouts](#) of whatever scope and including those arising from increased sunspot activity (*Amazon EC2 Cloud Outage: Hiccup or Wakeup Call?* 25 April 2011)
- termination of access by a local ISP, for whatever reason, including pressure from security authorities (if only as a temporary, precautionary measure)
- termination of access by a domain registrar, where relevant, again possibly under pressure from security authorities
- exposure to more massive and systematic forms of hacking, as has been repeatedly demonstrated on the largest scale in recent months and with supposedly the most secure and technologically sophisticated systems
- termination of access "for commercial reasons" by the agency hosting access to the cloud facility
- termination of access in the event of social disruption, warfare, or the predicted cyberwars
- planting in user files of "evidence" (porn, security sensitive information, etc) to be used against them when convenient

These trends with respect to cloud computing follow from the existing pattern of cultivated dependence on regular (and invasive) "updates" of applications on user machines -- purportedly to increase their resistance to viruses and malware. Who is able to distinguish malware from planted tracking applications?

The interesting question is **not** the various forms of such vulnerability but rather the complete absence of commentary on the degree of dependence created. Ironically web users might be said to be in process of being "shepherded into the cloud" -- willingly -- as in the tale of the [Pied Piper of Hamelin](#). No more computer worries? This must be heaven?

As with a phase in camera marketing, there is even the possibility that the simple interface device may be given away "free" to those entering the cloud -- a device perhaps to be known ironically as a HARP (Hypermedia Access Round-the-World Portal?) to reinforce the heavenly associations,. This would need to be carefully distinguished from the little known [HAARP](#) (High Frequency Active Auroral Research Program) which is the focus of so many [specific conspiracy theories](#) -- and by which the cloud might well be rendered inoperable whenever it is deemed secretly to be appropriate.

**Security provisions:** The "behind the scenes" reality of any individual or collective exclusion "from the cloud" is illustrated by the recent example of the official pressures on Amazon to terminate access to the WikiLeaks site on their cloud facility, as stated by John Naughton (*Wiki Leaks row: why Amazon's desertion has ominous implications for democracy*, *The Guardian*, 11 December 2010): *Amazon's decision to abandon WikiLeaks sends out a clear message: you can publish what you like - as long as it meets with the government's approval.*

Since many of the computer server farms basic to cloud computing are located in the USA, they are necessarily subject to secretive, government-specified, readily-deniable security provisions, which include the right to search the data so held "in the interests of national security". It has already been alleged that this provision is active with respect to the e-mail and search facilities offered by Google -- which has created a worldwide pattern of dependence, prior to full implementation of cloud computing. It is impossible for such services to prove that they are not discretely used in this way.

The existing scope surreptitious applications was recently highlighted by "discovery" that the iconic Apple [iPhones](#) were systematically tracking and reporting the physical movement of users (Charles Arthur, *iPhone keeps record of everywhere you go*, *The Guardian*, 20 April 2011). This is consistent with the recognized extent to which records of emails and web usage are retained by ISPs as a legal requirement imposed by security legislation.

**Controlling the internet:** To what extent are social networking facilities then to be recognized as the emerging equivalent of the "[front organizations](#)" operated by both sides during the Cold War -- "web fronts"? The pattern is already evident to a degree in [astroturfing](#), namely an organized semblance of grassroots participation, potentially augmented by the use of a multitude of artificial "participants" simulated by [intelligent agents](#)? These "drones" are conceived as offering a means of moulding internet discourse in chat rooms and the like. Following the apparent failure and discrediting of the neocon [Project for a New American Century](#) and its plans to "control the internet", notably through a program of [Total Information Awareness](#), are social networking and search engine query tracking to be recognized as a more comprehensive and subtle fulfillment of that objective -- worthy of the envy of surveillance networks down the centuries? Who could deny that those undemocratic objectives have been successfully ensured with the enthusiastic participation of its "victims" deluded by the semblance of democracy?

**Institutionalized social grooming:** It is appropriate to note the excellent articulation with regard to "public order" and the cultivation of "predisposition" -- well before the internet (Myres S. McDougal, Harold D. Lasswell and W. Michael Reisman, *The Intelligence Function and World Public Order*, *Temple Law Quarterly*, 1973):

Dissemination is the final step in the intelligence process. In it the receiver is identified, his needs are assessed and appropriate information is transmitted... dissemination may be an extremely complex operation in which a flow of data about the predispositions of the target is appraised and possible outgoing messages are reformulated accordingly. Different outputs, for

example, may be prepared for diplomatic or ideological strategies...

The sequence between an event in the environment and the perception of that event as part of an interdependent world is no simple straight-line path. It depends on the readiness of the responder and his predispositions; and these predispositions include expectations about the consequences in terms of value indulgence or deprivation for adopting a comprehensive viewpoint. The network of expectation patterns which affects the intelligence operation is particularly complex, for intelligence is an activity in which the individual psyche is the primary mediator.

In broader perspective, the sustained disposition of effective power has a much larger ramification for intelligence purposes, for it permits elites to create predispositions within the rank-and-file favoring the voluntary contribution of intelligence to specified elite targets and internalizing in each personality a value scale according to which the suppression of information is experienced as evil and triggers autopunitive measures....

Intelligence policies aim at raising and sustaining the quality of two overlapping streams of information; one is primarily directed to the adult audience, the other is mainly aimed at the young. The function of the latter is to cultivate predispositions that enable members of the world audience to utilize information effectively, and to exert continuous pressure on public and civic organizations for the adequate performance of the proper tasks of intelligence.

This paper represents a chapter in a larger study prepared by the authors and intended for publication under the title *World Constitutive Process and Public Order* -- a process described by Frederick Samson Tipson (*The Lasswell-McDougal Enterprise: toward a world public order of human dignity*, *Virginia Journal of International Law*, 14, 535, 1973-1974). The paper seems later to have appeared in Myres S. McDougal, Harold D. Lasswell and Lung-chu Chen (*Human Rights and World Public Order: the basic policies of an international law of human dignity*, 1980)

Is it inconceivable that the principles enshrined in the much acclaimed conventions and legislation regarding human rights are now being skillfully used as a "veil" to obscure recognition of questionable agendas? In protesting the burkha, do these instruments now effectively serve as a burkha (*Burkha as Metaphorical Mirror for Imperious Culture?*, 2009)?

**If these developments are to be understood as the institutionalization of grooming, to what extent should participants in the emerging knowledge society be understood as being deliberately groomed into dependence by these facilities** -- maintained non-transparently by parties with ill-stated agendas? How naive is it to consider them trustworthy -- rather than open to every commercial and other temptation in the advancement of their own interests? Is this to be understood as a form of "factory farming" adapted to the knowledge economy of global society?

**Displacement of attention into "virtual reality"**: Following the pattern of the "circuses" so vital to Imperial Rome, it is extraordinary to note the extent to which collective attention has been "displaced" away from concerns with "real world" challenges into those of a variously constructed "virtual reality". This is evident in the energy and attention association with:

- media coverage of competitive sports and games
- engagement with [virtual worlds](#)
- participation in interactive web games ([multiplayer real-time virtual worlds](#))
- media-cultivated celebrity scandals
- usage of alcohol, drugs and similar substances
- cultivated preoccupation with imagined enemies

Arguably these offer contexts in which "governance", or its appearance, is in each case reframed into a form with a manageable range of parameters. There is a degree of irony in the increasing concern with ensuring the "traction" of global initiatives when it is into "distraction" that a proportionately far greater investment is made. Appropriate to this argument, a highly popular online role-playing game with 11.4 million subscribers, is now to be offered free (*World of Warcraft offered 'free'* *BBC News*, 30 June 2011). As has been noted, the operation of drones for military purposes in the "real world" now differs little from the operation of vehicles in virtual reality. Such online games are now used as simulation environments to train drone operators for whom "real world" killing has become virtually indistinguishable from killing in interactive games -- with both requiring the same level of courage.

**Dangerous oversimplification**: Given the aversion to complexity, in a world in which governance is challenged by complexity, **is "dumbing down" public discourse a viable approach to governance?** Is the "secret" endeavour to enable governance according to the [KISS Principle](#) -- Keep It Simple Stupid? Is this the reason for the uncritical promotion of single slogans: "Terrorism", "Democracy", "Peace", "Love", etc -- to be questioned only at the price of being framed as "part of the problem" by those seeking to ensure that everyone "sings from the same hymn sheet"? What is to be done with competing songs (*All Blacks of Davos vs All Greens of Porto Alegre: reframing global strategic discord through polyphony?* 2007)?

**Erosion of collective memory capacity**: Whilst this dependence may facilitate a form of governance, there is a more insidious factor arising from the nature of many of the cloud-facilitated web applications and the manner in which they engage attention. This is epitomized by the explosion in the use of Twitter -- now arguably of greater psychosocial significance to governance than the United Nations, itself now fading into "irrelevance" (as noted above).

**The insidious factor lies in the reinforcement of progressive reduction of attention span and the associated intolerance of extended chains of reasoning.** This is curiously consistent with a collective form of [attention deficit hyperactivity disorder](#) (*Societal Learning and the Erosion of Collective Memory*, 1980; *Emerging Memetic Singularity in the Global Knowledge Society*, 2009). A related articulation is that of Nicholas Carr (*The Shallows: what the internet is doing to our brains*, 2011).

## Rendez-vous of governance with time

**Time as a resource:** The current challenge of time has been well articulated by [Jeremy Rifkin](#) (*Time Wars: the primary conflict in human history*, 1987). Time has been well-recognized as a resource. Time, for humanity at least, is not an infinite resource -- as had also been mistakenly assumed regarding the resources of the oceans. It continues, however, to be treated as such.

Initiatives, especially in governance, may be preoccupied with "buying time". The futures market is specifically focused on ensuring the availability of commodities at some future time. Many processes are designed on the "just in time" delivery principle -- and have then proven to be highly vulnerable in crisis situations. For some, humanity is "running out of time". Much is made of crises foreseen for the immediate future, whether in relation to resources, social unrest or the environment.

Understood in this way, governance may be understood as the art of managing time -- offering rosy promises for the future, choosing the moment to escape the consequences of their problematic fulfillment, blaming others for having to deal with the consequences of past initiatives, juggling resources and demands on resources, etc. Those preoccupied with governance pride themselves on being very "busy", with little time for whatever has not been predetermined as a priority.

Despite this context, the tendency to forget the experiences and learnings of the past is remarkable -- especially in governance. It might be said that the \$1.3 trillion investment in the Afghanistan/Iraq exercise resulted from ignorance of recent history and arrogant assumptions regarding the capacity to do better. The remark of [George Santayana](#) is exceptionally relevant: *Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it.*

**Short-term focus:** If the art of governance is held to be the art of manipulating expectations in time, is the capacity of governance to articulate credible proposals ultimately determined by the ability to ignore longer term consequences. In a form of "temporal gerrymandering", these are then treated as "externalities" to be borne by future generations irrespective of how they will damn the present. In effect the shorter the time scale the easier it is to formulate "credible" proposals -- especially if any failure then becomes the responsibility of any opposition whose views are currently framed as misguided and irresponsible.

A difficulty with this conception of governance is that the consequences of misleadership then lead to various forms of "borrowing time" and "buying time" -- artfully presented in euphemistic language -- as has been only too evident in the recent and current financial crises. From whom is money borrowed -- from the "lenders" -- meaning those that had to be bailed out as too big to fail? Who bailed them out? Is it not those who are then effectively forced into [debt bondage](#) (as "bonded labour") for generations to come? Is this to be construed as "bullshit" -- as defined by philosopher [Stephen Law](#) (*Believing Bullshit: how not to get sucked into an intellectual black hole*, 2011). How then to name and respond to such bullshit in governance (*Viable Global Governance through Bullfighting: challenge of transcendence*, 2009)?

This approach to governance is challenged by:

- dramatic "surprises" arising from reliance on problematic principles and assumptions on which apparent short-term successes are based, as became evident in the financial crisis, as noted above (*Uncritical Strategic Dependence on Little-known Metrics: the Gaussian Copula, the Kaya Identity, and what else?* 2009).
- the consequences of systemic neglect in preparing for surprises, again as noted above (*Disastrous Floods as Indicators of Systemic Risk Neglect: implications for authoritative response to future surprises*, 2011), or more speculatively (*Spontaneous Initiation of Armageddon: a heartfelt response to systemic negligence*, 2004).

**Preference for crises:** Curiously, however, systems of governance tend to pride themselves on their capacity to deal with emergencies. This is precisely because the complexity -- the number of parameters to be carefully considered -- is radically reduced to a level consistent with preferences for simplistic decision-making. Crisis management and "fire-fighting" offer a curious "comfort zone", allowing any insurmountable challenges and other mistakes to be blamed on external factors -- even on "Acts of God". The threat of "terrorism" may be seen in this light (*Promoting a Singular Global Threat -- Terrorism: Strategy of choice for world governance*, 2002).

Beyond collective catharsis, there is a clear sense that major global disaster is welcomed because it enables and justifies simplistic responses. This may explain failure to prepare adequately for such possibilities. A popular variant of this mindset is the current focus on the [predicted "crisis" of 2012](#).

**Shift into "dreamtime":** Whether 2012 or some other date, global governance may be assumed to have a "rendez-vous" with time -- a moment when the "chickens come home to roost". But what is the nature of the "time" with which a new form of engagement may be required?

Prior to the explosion of the kind of collective dreaming facilitated by multimedia, [Michael Ventura](#), in a commentary on "*Welcome to the Dreamtime*", argues:

Now the fact of so much choice makes everyone a transient *all* the time.... How can it not make them more and more uncertain? Hence they crave for certainty in all the wrong places: in politics, which has always been uncertain; in metaphysics, which by its nature is uncertain; in love and in sex, where nothing's ever certain.... once they were prisoners of time and space, and they will never be prisoners of them again, and they miss those prison walls desperately. How long will it take them to become accustomed to timelessness? This has become the crucial historical question. For until they acclimate themselves, they will continue to want reactionary solutions that can only increase the chaos. ([James Hillman](#) and Michael Ventura, *We've Had a Hundred Years of Psychotherapy -- and the world's getting worse*, 1992, p. 118)

Since that comment however, the explosion in the use of narcotic and other substances has become ever more apparent. Many are

seemingly escaping into dreamtimes of their choice.

What is the "real world" with which, in a time of multiple crises, governance might be expected to engage -- and to engage electors? Will the crises offer the "real" face of "real", or will they offer the occasion to reframe fantasies, as separately argued (*Cultivating Global Strategic Fantasies of Choice: learnings from Islamic Al-Qaida and the Republican Tea Party movement*, 2010; *Relevance of Mythopoeic Insights to Global Challenges: cognitive integration implied by the Lord of the Rings*, 2009).

**Nature of time:** The latest research in fundamental physics is finding every reason to question conventional understandings of spacetime, in order to achieve a more coherent understanding of the reality we live in (Craig Callender, *Is Time an Illusion?*, *Scientific American*, June 2010; George Musser, *"Twistor" Theory Reignites the Latest Superstring Revolution*, *Scientific American*, June 2010).

**There may therefore be a case for questioning the comprehension of spacetime with respect to the governability of global civilization.** Do the challenges of governability and sustainability depend, in ways one may only suspect, on a correspondingly radical "metaphysics"?

The argument is given a further twist in the light of the fundamental (if not primary) importance attached to conceptual models and theses as intellectual property in a global knowledge society in which many are scrambling to stake exclusive claims to cognitive turf as the basis for the sustainability of their careers (*Einstein's Implicit Theory of Relativity -- of Cognitive Property? Unexamined influence of patent office procedures*, 2007).

**Blinkered insights into complexity:** It is most curious that the indulgence of science in explanations and hypotheses of the most extreme complexity is enabled with public funding -- when the relevance of that research to the current challenges of governance is tenuous in the extreme. This is upheld as worthy advance of human knowledge. On the other hand explanations, regarding the psychosocial dynamics by which the coherence of governance is repeatedly called into question, are the focus of explanations and hypotheses which are totally simplistic by contrast. Curiously, for those aspiring to a Theory of Everything, those dynamics are considered too complex or otherwise unworthy of attention, as argued separately (*Mind Map of Global Civilizational Collapse*, 2011).

The paradox is evident in the case of the dynamics undermining a coherent response by science to climate change (*A new row about the IPCC: a climate of conflict -- the world's climate experts must work harder to avoid conflicts of interest*, *The Economist*, 23 June 2011). The dynamics are brought into focus by the UK Minister of State for Energy and Climate Change, **Gregory Barker** (*Climate change arguments incite 'weird religiosity', says Greg Barker*, *The Guardian*, 28 June 2011). More curious than his observation is that science is apparently completely incapable of understanding the dynamics between opposing parties in a more fruitful manner -- too complex. This is of course reflected in the unresolved challenges of interdisciplinarity.

**Exclusion of the wrong:** More curious however is that those upholding divergent views regarding the governance of society are considered eminently justified in judging those who disagree with them as simple "wrong" -- and ultimately worthy of marginalization, even elimination, to ensure global harmony. Their opponents of course view the matter in the same light. There are no explanations for this dynamic -- which are not themselves subject to being simplistically interpreted as "right" or "wrong". Efforts to explain this, of a complexity analogous to that accepted as necessary by the fundamental sciences, are held to be "too complex" to be worth consideration.

Ironically those in the fundamental sciences in quest of a Theory of Everything are unable to explain the dynamics between the various hypotheses upheld in that quest. They even cultivate a curious category termed "Not Even Wrong" (M. Shermer, *Wronger Than Wrong*, *Scientific American*, 2006; Peter Woit, *Not Even Wrong: the failure of string theory and the search for unity in physical law*, 2007).

Might it be appropriate to interpret the multiple approaches to governance as equivalent to the competing approaches to string theory -- especially since the "string" metaphor is shared with "threads" of discourse relevant to governance (*Interweaving Thematic Threads and Learning Pathways*, 2010)?

**Time and governance of sustainability:** Given the above review of "ungovernability", such considerations call for an exploration of how "governability" and collective identity might be reframed in relation to time -- understood as the essential dimension in terms of which viability and sustainability need to be comprehended.

Is it the case that humanity has simply "run out of time", long before the most-cited resource shortages come into play? Is the "rendezvous of governance with time" the "crisis of crises" first named by John Platt (*What we must do; a mobilization of scientists as in wartime may be the only way to solve our crisis problems*, *Science*, 28 November 1969)? A "perfect storm" in time -- a "temporal storm"?

This argument follows from various earlier considerations (*Psychology of Sustainability: embodying cyclic environmental processes*, 2002; *Emergence of Cyclical Psycho-social Identity: sustainability as "psychically" defined*, 2007; *The Isdom of the Wisdom Society: embodying time as the heartland of humanity*, 2003; *Geometry, Topology and Dynamics of Identity*, 2009).

It is some such reframing which would clarify the nature of entrapment in what amounts to the temporal equivalent of a "shell game". 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 the possibility of a new approach to time, transcending confidence trickery, effectively implicit in the financial understanding of "currency" -- but calling for a new engagement with its temporal dimension, as argued separately (*Primary Global Reserve Currency: the Con? Cognitive implications of a prefix for sustainable confidence*, 2011).

## Conclusion

This argument raises various questions. Is there any real intention on the part of any collective, secret or otherwise, that the world should indeed be "governable" -- as this might currently be understood? Is it "ungovernability" which is effectively being cultivated in order to enable forces in place to "step in" unchallenged when things get too bad -- meaning "bad enough"?

Expressed otherwise, is "ungovernability" essential to justify ever increasing investment in arms, security and surveillance -- and the arming of citizens in anticipation of threat (and the "excitement" it offers)? Is it a prime requisite for the justification of extrajudicial activity -- seemingly essential to current understanding of governance in so many ways. These include those intimately related to the expression of national character and identity -- the values by which society lives.

Does appreciation of boundary-crossing capacity, associated with integrative "out-of-the-box" innovation, obscure the extent to which this shares characteristics of extrajudicial capacity -- supposedly deprecated? Financial scandals (such as the [Enron](#) scandal of 2001) have highlighted the problematic nature of "creative accounting". Are the justifications for the current pattern of extrajudicial activity to be recognized as based on a dubious form of "creative legality" -- as with the reframing of "torture". As with creative accounting, these appear to follow the letter of the rules of standard legal practice, but deviate from the spirit of those rules -- being characterized by excessive complication and the use of novel presentations of arguments with the intent of influencing others towards the interpretations desired by the authors.

More controversial is the question of how then to distinguish governance dependent on extrajudicial processes from that of organized crime -- which traditionally has its own challenges of sustainable governance. Is extrajudicial governance then to be equated with innovative "out-of-the-box" governance -- thereby enacting a new paradigm?

Given the many seemingly influential people and groups, how is it that they can claim -- with the greatest arrogance -- that they know how to govern and what to do, following disasters demonstrating so clearly that they do not, and have learnt little from the past? Might it be concluded that they do not in fact have a clue as to what to do and are primarily concerned with maintaining the pretence that they do -- if only to fool themselves all the time, as the first category of Abraham Lincoln's famous declaration as President of the USA:

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

Is it the case that the "governors", and those complicit with their agenda, are simply fooling themselves "systematically"?

Dwight Eisenhower, in his last declaration as President of the USA, famously warned against the influence of the "military-industrial complex". Its problematic influence on governance is currently evident (Simon Jenkins, *Eisenhower's worst fears came true: we invent enemies to buy the bombs*, *The Guardian*, 17 June 2011). This has been notable in relation to recent wars and technological disasters -- as with the current switch in attention to geo-engineering.

Potentially more problematic is the role of those heavily complicit in the current uncritical framing of governance, most evidently in relation to regulation of the financial system. Who are these people? How is it that they are so insensitive to the emerging future? Are they those which the Bilderberg Group is held (or claims) to have so successfully groomed? Is it due to that "groupthink" mindset that their expertise is so problematic and unapologetic -- as is implicit in the argument of Dan Gardner (*Future Babble: why expert predictions fail, and why we believe them anyway*, 2011)? If all they have is a hammer, does every problem of governance look like a nail?

Clearly the network of schools of business and management is responsible for training individuals seemingly best qualified as some dangerous combination of uncritical, totally opportunistic, incompetent and future-blind? More generally, in the case of governance, it would be the schools of public administration and the policy think tanks created as environments for their graduates (*Tank-thoughts from Think-tanks: constraining metaphors on developing global governance*, 2003; *Meta-challenges of the Future: for networking through think-tanks*, 2005). Are these to be considered more uncritically arrogant than those emerging as ambitious technocrats from technology institutes -- totally indifferent (lip service aside) to any social responsibility or the unforeseen consequences of their ill-considered actions? *Quis custodiet ipsos custodes?*

This argument highlights **the seemingly unexamined question of what sustainable governance might look like** if it could be collectively comprehended -- and in the absence of enemies to justify enthusiasm for simplistic decision-making. Would crises need to be invented? How would peaceful governance function democratically and sustainably past short-term celebration of togetherness? How is the "appropriateness" of such governance to be comprehended and rendered comprehensible (*Comprehension of Appropriateness*, 1986)? How to distinguish between:

- sustainable governance, as so widely acclaimed and sought
- hyped claims that the governance in place, or advocated by its opponents, is appropriate
- fire-fighting and crisis management, framed as necessarily appropriate in response to emergencies

But how is sustainable governance to be distinguished from a hope-mongering Ponzi scheme? (*Credibility Crunch engendered by Hope-mongering*, 2008). Is governance as currently promoted and comprehended as curiously based on confidence, as exemplified by the recent financial crisis (*Varieties of Confidence Essential to Sustainability*, 2009). Are the strategies advocated necessarily characterized by a high degree of unexamined fantasy (*Globallooning -- Strategic Inflation of Expectations and Inconsequential Drift*, 2009);

*Cultivating Global Strategic Fantasies of Choice*, 2010).

There would appear to be a sense in which society is caught between the insights from two classic tales -- *The Emperor's New Clothes* (exemplifying those complicit in the tailored reality of governance as currently promoted) and *The Boy Who Cried Wolf* (exemplifying the response to the doom-mongers). The rendez-vous of governance with the perfect storm of temporal disaster can then be understood in memetic terms (*Entangled Tales of Memetic Disaster: mutual implication of the Emperor and the Little Boy*, 2009; *Emerging Memetic Singularity in the Global Knowledge Society*, 2009).

Where are the exemplars of sustainable democratic governance -- beyond the short-term? As an oft-promoted "ideal", should California, with its myriad advantages and intellectual skills, be seen as such -- or as an exemplar of ungovernability? A commentary on this ideal is offered in the current issue of *The Economist* (*California's budget crisis -- Kabuki without end: State legislators go unpaid as California reverts to dysfunctional type*, 23 June 2011).

So there they are. The new fiscal year starts on July 1st, and California had no budget as *The Economist* went to press. Standard and Poor's, a rating agency, says that California's credit, at A- already the worst among the 50 states, is 'at a crossroad'. Voters are angry. So are legislators.

Does this contrast appropriately with other countries where legislators are paid munificently -- even in time of austerity crisis and public demonstrations (*Euro politicians vote to keep world's best salaries and perks*, *Eideard*, 11 April 2011; Jonathan Kent, *MPs' pay: how does it really compare?* *The Guardian*, 25 June 2011)?

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