laetus in praesens

Alternative view of segmented documents via Kairos

15 March 2022 | Draft

United Nations as a Potemkin Institution faced with Potemkin Crises?

Potential of AI to enable a transformative dynamic through meta-discourse

- / -

Introduction

As noted previously, the current global campaign of sanctions against Russia curiously recalls the psychosurgical procedure of lobotomy -- much favoured in the USA and the UK subsequent to World War II during the Cold War period (*Severing the Russian Hemisphere as Problematic Global Lobotomy?* 2022). Later versions of that document were amended to include sections presented separately here for convenience (and partially reordered and extended) to highlight the challenge of institutional façades and the potential role of artificial intelligence. The introductory arguments of the earlier document can therefore be understood as a context for those developed here -- which could well have been presented as an annex to that document.

This amendment was triggered by the voting procedure and acclaimed results condemning Russia in the emergency special session of the UN General Assembly (2 March 2022). The question raised here is whether the non-secret ballot of the General Assembly renders such resolutions vulnerable to a high degree of coercion and intimidation, tantamount to vote-buying. Any perception by "We the Peoples" that this is the case transforms the General Assembly into a façade -- and therefore effectively a "Potemkin institution". Suspicion is potentially all the greater if the logistics of the emergency require the use of electronic voting with its own vulnerability to abuse. Commentary on the resolution makes no reference to these issues and may be seen deliberately to avoid any reference to them.

In a period in which much is made of a global knowledge-based civilization, and the implied emergence of an AI-enhanced global brain, the relevance of lobotomy as a means of "severing connections" in the global brain merits exploration. This is especially the case when there is no lack of commentary on the "mental disorders" from which civilization currently functions (*Memetic and Information Diseases in a Knowledge Society: speculations towards the development of cures and preventive measures*, 2008; *Comprehensive Pattern of Psychosocial Diseases and the Eases they Imply*, 2015). As previously argued, this concern is notably evoked with respect to the leadership of society's institutions (*Psychosocial pathology of leadership -- and of electorates?*)

There is no lack of reference to fake news, misinformation and propaganda -- all to be understood as characteristic of façades as explored here. Much advertising can be seen in this light, however justified as puffery (*Varieties of Fake News and Misrepresentation*, 2019). The particular concern here is the manner in which institutions, conferences and summit dialogues -- purportedly designed to respond to crises -- can be seen to function as façades in their own right, as with the United Nations and its conferences..

Crises themselves then acquire characteristic of façades, if only in the eyes of some, or for the purposes of disinformation:

- P. Gosselin: *Fake Crisis: Experts Conclude In New Book "Today's Climate Change Neither Dramatic Nor Unprecedented"*, *NoTricksZone*, 25. April 2021)
- Vernon Coleman: *The Next Fake 'Crisis' Has Been Planned*, (20 November 2020)

- Marty Jacobsen: *Fake Crises desensitizes all of us from the real issues affecting us* (17 February 2014)
- Stephanie Sarkis: *Trump And Other Gaslighters/Narcissists Create Crises And Then Act Like They Solved Them* (*Forbes*, 9 June 2019)
- Miklos Sebök: *The Politics of Manufactured Crisis* (*Intersections*, 5, 2019, 3)
- Ryan Cooper: *Fake crises are distracting us from really serious ones* (*The Washington Post*, 17 October 2013)
- Ed Driscoll: *The Potemkin Leader Meets His Potemkin Crisis* (*PJ Media*, 19 June 2010)
- Andrew Lichterman: *Potemkin Missile Crisis* (*DisarmamentActivist.org*, 2 July 2006)
- Jamie McIntyre: *Fake Pandemic, Fake Crises Actors, Fake Death Tally, Fake Cases but Real Deadly Experimental Drugs* (*Sunshine Coast National Review*, 28 August 2021)
- Timothy P. Buchanan: *Real Problems versus Fake Crises*
- *Real Versus Fake Crises: concealing the risk of an all out nuclear war* (*Global Rights*, September 2010)

However it may be deprecated as misinformation, this questionable perspective is relevant to the war on terror, to climate change and to the current pandemic -- as well as to other crises that readily fall "under the radar" of political discourse and "off the table" of strategic priorities. Potentially most controversial is the manner in which conventional strategies -- business as usual -- is called into question when framed by "Potemkin":

- Lance Roberts: *Potemkin Economy: costs and consequences* (*Investing*, 4 February 2022)
- Brett Stevens: *The Potemkin Economy* (*Amerika*, 31 December 2015)
- Alan Farago: *The Potemkin Village Economy* (*CounterPunch*, 26 February 2010)
- Max Schulz: *California's Potemkin Environmentalism* (*City Journal*, Spring 2008)
- Anthony L. Hall: *Trump Strikes Potemkin Nuclear Deal with Kim Jong-un* (*The iPinions Journal*, 13 June 2018)
- John Shade: *COP21: Another Meeting of the Potemkin Society for Climate Agitation?* (*Climate Scepticism*, 29 November 2015
- *Science and Potemkin Science* (*The Inquisition of Climate Science*, 2011)
- Kurt Schuler and George A. Selgin: *Replacing Potemkin Capitalism* (*Policy Analysis*, 7 June 1999)
- G. Pascal Zachary: *Potemkin Capitalism* (*Mother Jines*, January/February 1999)

Hence the exploration here of "Potemkin institutions" faced with "Potemkin crises" -- ironically exacerbated by the mediating role of Facebook with the facile facilities of its "facial" emphasis. The argument concludes with the proposal that pretending pretence may indeed prove to be a viable option.

Democracy, equality and coercion?

The earlier paper offered a *Precautionary clarification regarding any remedy* which highlighted the problematic "knee-jerk" institutional response to crises, exemplified by the Ukraine-Russia conflict, with arguments noting the manner in which international law is breached:

- Noam Chomsky: *The Russian invasion of Ukraine is a major war crime, ranking alongside the U.S. invasion of Iraq and the Hitler-Stalin invasion of Poland in September 1939, to take only two salient examples.* (C.J. Polychroniou, *Chomsky: US Military Escalation Against Russia Would Have No Victors*, OtherNews, 2 March 2022).
- Jeremy Scahill: *The fact that Putin is trying to justify the unjustifiable in Ukraine does not mean we must ignore the U.S. actions that fuel his narrative.* (*Putin's Criminal Invasion of Ukraine Highlights Some Ugly Truths About U.S. and NATO*, The Intercept, 8 March 2022)

Reasoned overviews from a historical perspective, ignored by the mainstream narrative, are very usefully offered by:

- Diana Johnston: *For Washington, War Never Ends* (*Consortium News*, 16 March 2022)
- Chris Hedges: *Waltzing Toward Armageddon with the Merchants of Death* (*Other News*, 16 March 2022)

For Boaventura de Sousa Santos, for example:

> We are living in an extraordinarily stressful moment, the repercussions of which are being made plain by the intense media focus on the Ukraine crisis, notably along the North-Atlantic axis, including Australia, Japan and Brazil. In other parts of the world, the Ukraine crisis tends to be placed in context, either because it involves the kind of armed aggression (invasions, bombings, the death of innocent civilians) of which those regions have long been the victims, or because the regions in question are currently being faced with problems that they consider to be more serious or, at least, more urgent (e.g. hunger, lack of water and vaccines, jihadist violence).... In turn, the polarization of opinions in the North-Atlantic axis is such that it is no longer possible to bring complexity into the debate. What we have instead is **a knee-jerk response** that is very similar to the situation in which we found ourselves in the period immediately following 9/11. Any position that seeks to contextualize or problematize is automatically viewed as treasonous.(*Ukraine: Complexity and War: Is it still possible to think? Other News*, 11 March 2022) [*emphasis added*]

As also noted by de Sousa Santos, forms of inequality have been highlighted:

> If the people in these regions see the Ukraine crisis as taking on dramatic relevance at all, it is because of issues that are invisible or devoid of meaning when seen from the point of view of public opinion in the North-Atlantic axis. Thus, for example, the African Union has just issued a strong statement against the "shockingly racist" behavior of the authorities on the Ukrainian-Polish border. They accuse them of discriminating against African citizens living in Ukraine who have been subjected to unequal treatment on account of their color as they tried to flee the war. On 2nd March 2022, members of the African bloc accounted

for 17 -- i.e., one third of the African countries -- of the 35 countries that abstained from voting on the UN General Assembly resolution condemning Russia for the invasion of Ukraine.

International law, precedents and "whataboutism"

International law: Also known as the law of nations, this is the set of rules, norms, and standards generally recognized as binding between nations. It establishes normative guidelines and a common conceptual framework for states across a broad range of domains. International law aims to promote the practice of stable, consistent, and organized international relations. Sources of international law include treaties, international customs, general widely recognized principles of law, the decisions of national and lower courts, and scholarly writings. They are the materials and processes out of which the rules and principles regulating the international community are developed.

Despite consensus on the breach of international law by the Russian military intervention in Ukraine, considerable difficulty arises from the manner in which that framework is respected or ignored, A particular issue is presented by Caitlin Johnstone (*International Law becomes meaningless when applied only to US enemies*, *Consortium News*, 17 March 2022)

> Neither George W. Bush nor Tony Blair are in prison cells at The Hague where international law says they ought to be... When you point out this obvious plot hole in discussions about the legality of Vladimir Putin's invasion you'll often get accused of "whataboutism", which is a noise that empire loyalists like to make when you have just highlighted damning evidence that their government's behaviors entirely invalidate their position on an issue. This is not a "whataboutism"; it's a direct accusation that is completely devastating to the argument being made, because there really is no counter-argument.
>
> The Iraq invasion bypassed the laws and protocols for military action laid out in the founding charter of the United Nations. The current U.S. military occupation of Syria violates international law. International law only exists to the extent to which the nations of the world are willing and able to enforce it, and because of the U.S. empire's military power — and more importantly because of its narrative control power — this means international law is only ever enforced with the approval of that empire...
>
> Simple observation of who is subject to international law enforcement and who is not makes it clear that the very concept of international law is now functionally nothing more than a narrative construct that's useded to bludgeon and undermine governments who disobey the U.S.-centralized empire.

Johnstone notes that in consequence those indicted and detained by the International Criminal Court (ICC) are always from weaker nations -- overwhelmingly African. The USA is however able to sanction ICC personnel if there is any suggestion that American war crimes should be investigated. As famously indicated by Noam Chomsky: *If the Nuremberg laws were applied, then every post-war American president would have been hanged* (*If the Nuremberg Laws were Applied...* ca. 1990).

From the perspective of international law, what are alleged to be "war crimes" require conviction through due process. In that sense -- whether it be George Bush, Henry Kissinger, Tony Blair or Vladimir Putin -- they are not "war criminals" (as widely alleged) until duly convicted. Any assumption of the valdity of trial-by-media in the court of public opinion is however necessarily questionable. Ironically the question can be explored from a historical perspective, given continuing debte on whether George Wsshington could be seen as a war criminal (*George Washington: War Hero or War Criminal?* 17 May 2020; Jeremy Kuzmarov, *Biden Compared Indicted War Criminal to "George Washington"*, *CounterPunc*h, 2 July 2020).

The highly controversial leakage of US diplomatic cables has resulted to the as yet unresolved case against Julian Assange, who could well be framed as a "war criminal" -- one implicated in the exposure of "war crimes" (Marjorie Cohn, *Assange Faces Extradition for Exposing US War Crimes*, *Truthout*, 11 October 2020). Ironically this resulted in extensive coverage of alleged US espionage at the United Nations (*Alleged Breach of UN Treaty Obligations by US: press coverage and commentary following WikiLeaks cable dissemination*, 2010).

With reference to war crimes allegedly committed by Russia in Ukraine, Amy Goodman and Denis Moynihan cite Andrew Bacevich:

> Not for an instant would I want to minimize the horrors that are unfolding in Ukraine today and the deaths and the injuries inflicted on noncombatants,... But let's face it, the numbers are minuscule compared to the number of people that died, were displaced, were injured as a consequence of the U.S. wars in Iraq and Afghanistan… in the vicinity of 900,000 deaths resulted from our invasion[s]. I understand that Americans don't want to talk about that, don't want to remember that, the political establishment wants to move on from that. But there is a moral dimension to the Ukraine war that should cause us to be a little bit humble about pointing fingers at other people. (*War Criminals Must Be Held Accountable, Whether in Russia, the U.S. or Elsewhere*, *Democracy Now*, 17 March 2022)

In contrast to the delays of months (if not years) with respect to other cases, the haste with which the International Court of Justice ruled on a complaint by Ukraine against Russia calls into question the appropriateness of its processes. Such haste was evident in the investigation by the Prosecutor of the International Criminal Court (ICC) of war crimes, crimes against humanity and genocide in Ukraine -- bypassing the usual months-long authorization process, thereby raising a similar question with regard to other cases.

"Whataboutism"? As noted by Johnstone, reference to the curious term -- whataboutism (or whataboutery) -- is now acquiring particular relevance to discussion of the Ukraine-Russia crisis. As a form of the *tu quoque* logical fallacy, past use of it has been extensively documented by the *Wikipedia* entry (from its origins during the Irish troubles in the 1970s). There it is noted as a tactic

which had been specifically associated with the USSR, as stated by Edward Lucas:

> Soviet propagandists during the cold war were trained in a tactic that their western interlocutors nicknamed 'whataboutism'. Any criticism of the Soviet Union (Afghanistan, martial law in Poland, imprisonment of dissidents, censorship) was met with a 'What about...' (apartheid South Africa, jailed trade-unionists, the Contras in Nicaragua, and so forth). (*Whataboutism - Come again, Comrade? The Economist*, 31 January 2008)

Its use, most notably in support of Russia, has been described as "a strategy of false moral equivalences" (Evan Osmos, et al, *Trump, Putin, and the New Cold War*, The New Yorker, 6 March 2017). Its use was criticized by Joshua Keating regarding's Russia's 2014 annexation of Crimea, where Putin "listed a litany of complaints about Western intervention" (*The Long History of Russian Whataboutism*, Slate.com, 21 March 2014). These instances are consistent with arguments, long made by the US, that no question of moral equivalence could be considered. The argument has been notably developed by a US Ambassador to the UN, Jeane Kirkpatrick (*The Myth of Moral Equivalence*, 1986).

Criticisms of comparisons framed by the term have been argued by:

- Catherine Putz: *Donald Trump's Whataboutism* (*The Diplomat*, 22 July 2016) to the effect that: **The core problem is that this rhetorical device precludes discussion of issues (ex: civil rights) by one country (ex: the United States) if that state lacks a perfect record**.
- Michael Koplow: *The Crisis of Whataboutism* (*Matzav*, Israel Policy Forum, 6 July 2017) concluding that the tactic did not yield any benefits, charging that **whataboutism from either the right or the left only leads to a black hole of angry recriminations from which nothing will escape**.

An extensively argued approach to the value of whataboutism, with respect to discussion of the Ukraine-Russia crisis, is however offered by Ben Burgis concluding:

> .. the "what about?" responses are a way of making a counterargument with real weight. Your enemies' transgressions don't make your cause of stopping those enemies noble if you've committed equally bad or worse transgressions yourself and your victory will enable you to commit more!
>
> If A says what B has done is wrong, and B wants to deny the charge, anything bad that A has done is just going to be irrelevant. On the other hand, if A and B are engaged in a war, whether cold or hot, and A is bringing up B's misdeeds in order to portray B as the greater evil in the struggle, a recitation of A's misdeeds is extremely relevant. In fact, you can't evaluate A's claim *without* doing that. Perhaps you'll come to the conclusion that they're both so bad that you should oppose them both equally, or you'll actually decide that B is so much worse that A *should* be supported. One way or the other, though, you can't make any determination about this subject without taking a good hard look at *both* sides of the ledger. (*Is "Whataboutism" Always a Bad Thing? Current Affairs*, 17 March 2022)

Precedence: There is considerable irony to use of whataboutism in relation to any framework provided by international law -- to the extent that this involves citation of precedent, effectively precluded when dismissed as whataboutism. Indeed precedent is typically only considered of relevance when referring to cases within the same jurisdiction. Thus precedents in other jurisdictions are ignored, except for rhetorical purposes.

Where whataboutism may refer to incidents in other jurisdictions, these too are therefore ignored. From the perspective of international law, this would be especially so if the incident had not been subject to any legal process, whether or not it had been declared to be "illegal" by a competent international authority (as with the invasion of Iraq). Of interest is how any account might be taken of such cases through analogy (Grant Lamond, *Precedent and Analogy in Legal Reasoning*, Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy). Arguably of some relevance are the controversial issues involving cases adjudicated according to the customary law of indigenous peoples (*Rule of Law vs. Rule of Lore*, 2013) or of spiritual communities (Islamic courts, ecclesiastical courts, and the like). Cases adjudicated within superceded regimes have notably explored the relationship of law and morals (H. O. Pappe, *On the Validity of Judicial Decisions in the Nazi Era*, The Modern Law Review, 23, 1960, 3).

It would appear that there is anyway a degree of uncertainty in reference to precedence in international adjudication in contrast to its prevalence within national jurisdictions (Harlan Grant Cohen, *International Precedent and the Practice of International Law*, UGA Legal Studies Research Paper No. 2015-11; *Theorizing Precedent in International Law*, Oxford Scholarship Online, April 2015; David Sugarman and Michael Likosky, *Precedent in International Law, International Courts and International Tribunals*, Precedent and the Law, January 2007).

As argued by Blethen Gage and Krause: *In short, international courts will not follow any precedent if given a chance* (*Is International Law Bound By Precedence?* 10 February 2022). This notes:

> In particular, the ICJ does not treat prior decisions as precedent in the same way as a domestic common law court, but rather attempts to maintain its decision consistency in a practical sense.

Resolutions "recalling" and collective memory: Resolutions formulated by bodies of the United Nations are typically formatted with a preamble having paragraphs typically starting with the phrases "Taking note of", "Noting" and "Recalling:", as for example:

> *The General Assembly*,
> *Recalling* its resolution 57/270 B of 23 June 2003,
> *Taking note of* the report of the Eleventh United Nations Congress on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice,
> *Noting* that countries emerging from conflict are particularly vulnerable to crime, in particular organized crime and corruption...

Through these devices the resolution formally establishes its relationship to preceding decisions and thereby positions itself within a pattern of precedents -- potentially becoming a legitimate element of international law. The devices ensure a form of connectivity usefully understood as a feature of collective memory -- at least within the United Nations. It is far less evident whether such resolutions can in practice refer by these devices to the resolutions of other intergovernmental bodies such as the European Parliament, the Assembly of the African Union, the General Assembly of the Organization of American States, the Asian Parliamentary Assembly, NATO, or OECD -- or the extent to which these bodies can refer in this way to resolutions of the United Nations.

In the case of the 11th Emergency Special Session of the General Assembly titled *Aggression against Ukraine* (A/RES/ES-11/1), the array of preambular paragraphs took the following form:

- Reaffirming (2 paras)
- Recalling (6 paras)
- Taking note of (1 para)
- Bearing in mind (1 para)
- Condemning (1 para)
- Expressing (grave) concern (3 paras)
- Recognizing (1 para)
- Welcoming (1 para)

Esepecially striking to note is that none of these paragraphs referred specifically to previous invasions on which the General Assembly might well have formulated resolutions -- thereby "recalling" those instances. The paragraphs served primarily to indicate general principles formulated in general resolutions in the past, not to resolutions specifically regarding such instances: Iraq, Syria, Lybia, Afghanistan, Vietnam, Kosovo, Panama, Grenada, for example. In the case of Grenada, the General Assembly condemned it as "a flagrant violation of international law" by a vote of 108 to 9, with 27 abstentions. (A/RES/38/7, curiously inaccessible from the UN web archive, as may be the case with other embarrassing documents). The Security Council considered a similar resolution, which was supported by 11, but vetoed by the USA.

Such failure in "recalling" (whether a draft resolutionn is adopted or not) effectively degrades the collective record and inhibits appropriate consideration as precedents in international law. Curiously the only reference possible then takes the form of whataboutism indicating informal documentation -- duly to be deprecated. Insofar as the instances cited could otherwise be considered as precedents in an international legal framework, **deprecation of whataboutism can therefore be recognized as - a device for deliberately inhibiting collective memory** (*Societal Learning and the Erosion of Collective Memory*, 1980). In contrast to "bluewashing" and "greenwashing", this can be understood as "whitewashing".

The process is exacerbated by media bias, especcially when the invasion is led by the US or the fatalities are caused by the US (Julie Hollar, *How Much Less Newsworthy Are Civilians in Other Conflicts? FAIR*, 18 March 2022; Jeff Cohen, *So This Is What It Looks Like When the Corporate Media Opposes a War. Common Dream*s, 28 February 2022).

Of considerable interest therefore is how instances cited as equivalent (if only in moral terms) can be recognized (or dismissed) as precedents in any legal case. However, given the degree to which international law is openly disregarded, any failure to consider precedent further exacerbates the erosion of its authority.

Questionable voting processes at the United Nations?

Having failed to obtain the requisite condemnation of Russia in the UN Security Council, a total of 141 countries voted in favour of an historic condemnation of Russia in the General Assembly; 5 countries voted against it, with 35 abstentions (*General Assembly resolution demands end to Russian offensive in Ukraine*, *UN News*, 2 March 2022). It is curious however that little is said of the fact that the vote was not held in secret. The UN only uses secret ballots for the election of individuals, but not for electing how to act (*UN Documentation: UN Voting*; *Voting in the General Assembly*; *Voting Practices in the United Nations, 2020*, US Department of State, 26 October 2021).

A press release noted that *For Exceptional Circumstances, General Assembly Adopts Special Decision-Making Procedure on Remote Electronic Voting* (GA/12287, 13 November 2020). It is not immediately clear whether this process was triggered for the meeting of 2 March 2022, although it can be readily assumed that it was -- given the last-minute logistical problems. No provision is made for a secret ballot. The resolution notes that:

> The votes cast by Member States will become visible to other Member States five minutes before the closure of the voting period. The voting process will be considered valid if a majority of Member States are present during the voting process, and if the votes in favour reach the required majority, the proposal will be considered adopted....

> Those who opposed the draft decision argued that electronic voting is fraught with technical and other challenges and that the adoption of a new, electronic mechanism would further disadvantage the delegations of developing countries, which already suffer from technological and logistical challenges. They also insisted that the legality of changing the rules of procedure should be discussed in the Six Committee (Legal), expressing regret that the main sponsors rushed to adopt the decision without enough consultations.

The UN practice, curiously upheld as an exemplar of democracy, contrasts with the secret ballot considered appropriate in many arenas where that is deemed essential to the spirit of democracy and equality. **A secret ballot forestalls attempts to influence the voter by intimidation, blackmailing, and potential vote buying -- to which UN voting processes are presumably highly susceptible**. Whereas the resolution was acclaimed by the UN as sending a "loud and clear" message, the extent to which many voting countries were subject to undue pressure from the USA (or its allies) is far from apparent, as suggested by past analyses:

> We obtain strong evidence that US aid buys voting compliance in the Assembly. More specifically, our results suggest that general budget support and grants are the major aid categories by which recipients have been induced to vote in line with the United States. When replicating the analysis for other G7 donors, no comparable patterns emerge. (Axel Dreher, et al, *Does US Aid Buy UN General Assembly Votes? A Disaggregated Analysis*, *Public Choice*, 136, 2008, 1/2; *Do the IMF and the World Bank influence voting in the UN General Assembly?* *Public Choice*, 151, 2012, 1/2)

A later study addressed the dilemma associated with a US stipulation dating from 1985:

> Democracies are more supportive of US positions on important votes in the UN General Assembly than of nondemocracies. Is this because democracies share common perspectives, or does this pattern reflect coercion? Since 1985, US law has stipulated that the US State Department identify important votes and that aid disbursements reflect voting decisions... In a parliament of parliaments and dictators, it is disturbing that the United States disproportionately uses changes in aid disbursements to manipulate the voting behavior of poor democracies. Further, to the degree that the legitimacy of UN decisions depends on the democratic legitimacy of its members, it is unfortunate that US foreign policy systematically coerces the votes of democracies. (David B. Carter and Randall W. Stone, *Democracy and Multilateralism: the case of vote buying in the UN General Assembly*, Cambridge University Press, 21 October 2014).

Is the UN claim of a "loud and clear" message an unrecognized instance of the misinformation which the UN otherwise claims to abhor? Some clarification of the correctives as yet to to be widely appreciated is offered from a Jamaican perspective by Ambassador Audley Rodriques in the light of voting with regard to the US invasion of Grenada in 1983 (*Great power invasions and voting at the UN General Assembly*, *Jamaica Observer*, 6 March 2022).

In that regard the Group of 77 with China submitted a resolution to the General Assembly (*Unilateral economic measures as a means of political and economic coercion against developing countries*, A/C.2/74/L.5, 19 October 2019) as promoted by civil society organizations (*Support The UN Resolution Against Unilateral Coercive Measures*, *Popular Resistance*, 3 November 2019). The resolution follows one on the same issue adopted earlier (*Unilateral economic measures as a means of political and economic coercion against developing countries: resolution / adopted by the General Assembly*, A/RES/62/183, 31 January 2008).

How many countries would have found it prudent to be seen to vote as the US had indicated? To what extent **is the pattern of votes for the resolution against Russia to be considered as effectively the result of the kind of coercion and blackmail purportedly deprecated by the UN itself as completely undemocratic?** (*The Secret Ballot at Risk: recommendations for protecting democracy*; Peter Golds, *When the secret ballot is abandoned, so is democracy*, *Anglican Mainstream*, 18 October 2021).

The issue is presented more specifically by Daud Khan:

> At Government level the choice of which narrative to accept, and what positions to take, for example at the UN, will be based on the economic, political and strategic interests of the country or of its rulers. Did Palau (population 18,000) make any objective assessment of facts before cosponsoring the UN motion condemning Russia, or did they simply go along with the wishes of Australia and New Zealand their largest trading partners and donors? Did the Government of Bangladesh, Pakistan and Sri Lanka assess the evidence or did they abstain in the General Assembly vote in order to have the option to make deals with whichever side offers better terms? (*Miles' Law and the War in Ukraine: where you stand depends on where you sit*, *Inter Press Service*, 4 March 2022)

Whilst it may indeed be naive to assume that the procedures of the General Assembly exemplify the coercion-free procedures of the democratic ideal, **failure to comment on the extent of bias inherent in such procedures is indeed an act of disinformation which merits the most severe condemnation**. Clearly the bias is manifest in national parliaments as influence peddling, partially rendered transparent there by formal indication of conflicts of interest. There would appear to be a failure to address the fundamental contradiction between UN voting procedures and those presented in the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* approved by the General Assembly:

> The will of the people shall be the basis of the authority of government; this will shall be expressed in periodic and genuine elections which shall be by universal and equal suffrage and shall be held by **secret vote** or by equivalent free voting procedures. (*UNDHR*, 1948, Article 21/3) [*emphasis added*]

A study for the future would match voting patterns of countries in the UN General Assembly with those receiving aid (from the US or its allies) as an indication of the probability of coercion and bias. With respect to the vote condemning Russia, this would offer a probability of error in commentary on the overwhelming majority as acclaimed. Without any disruption to current procedure, enabling a second vote in secret would be instructive by comparison with the first (and respectful of the spirit of Article 21/3).

These questions have implications for the current challenge by Ukraine to the legitimacy of the Security Council permanent memberships

of Russia and China (Thalif Deen, *Ukraine Challenges Legitimacy of Russia's UN Membership*, *Inter Press Service*, March 2022). **Any change to the UN Charter in that regard requires a two-thirds majority of the 193 members -- with many potentially subject to coercion**. This constraint helps to explain the decades-long delay in the reform of the Unoted Nations.

Potemkin democracies and armies?

Reference continues to be made to the façade of a Potemkin village (dating from the Crimea of 1787), but also as a metaphor, most recently with regard to the Russian armed forces (Daniel Gros, *Putin's Potemkin Military*, *Project Syndicate*, 7 March 2022; Jamie McIntyre, *Russia's Potemkin army*, *Washington Examiner*, 3 March 2022).

Given that framing, it is however strange that some variant has not been widely applied to the US army -- "retreating" from Afghanistan with allies in 2020-1 (Danny Sjursen, *America's Potemkin War in Afghanistan (and Elsewhere)*, *Military Truth*, 3 December 2019). This "withdrawal" followed an unsuccessful 20-year war, with unlimited resources, using every conventional military facility -- against an enemy defined as incompetent and in support of a construct defined using the term (Florian P. Kühn, *The Unravelling of the Afghan Potemkin Village*, *School of Blogal Studies*, 19 August 2021).

The metaphor has however been applied to NATO and to EUFOR (Ted Galen Carpenter, *NATO: The Potemkin alliance*, *Daily Caller*, 13 June 2011; Kurt Bassuener, *EUFOR: The West's Potemkin Deterrent in Bosnia and Herzegovina*, *Atlantic Initiative / Democratic Policy Analysis*, October 2015)

There is a sense in which **"Potemkin" is readily applied to any social constructs of an opponent or enemy** -- framed as fundamentally "fake", if only for propaganda purposes.

Of relevance to this argument, however, reference is widely made to "Potemkin democracy", especially in describing autocratic democracies from the perspective of Western democracy (*From Potemkin Village to Potemkin Democracy*, *Center for International Private Enterprise*, 18 July 2006; Jos Boonstra, *Eurasia's Potemkin Democracies*, *The Diplomat*, 3 February 2015). Whilst frequently applied to Russia, the term it is also applied to Ukraine (Christopher A Hartwellon, *Ukraine's Potemkin Institutions: Neglected Foundations, Collapsed Buildings*, *4Liberty.eu*, 26 June 2014)

The term features in critiques of European reform (Antoine Vauchez, *A Potemkin Democracy? Democratizing Europe*, 2016), of politics in the West (Richard A. Epstein, *Potemkin Politicians*, *Hoover Digest*, 2019, 1). Democracy in the West is mistakenly understood, as argued by Bruce Thornton:

> When progressives speak of "democracy" today, then, they don't mean the Constitutional Democratic Republic comprising diverse sovereign states, but rather concentrated technocratic rule over the masses of citizens whose diversity and interests are marginalized and ignored if they don't conform with those of the global managerial elite. It's a "Potemkin Democracy", giving us freedom over our consumer choices and private appetites and preferences, but constraining our political rights and freedom whenever they stand in the way of the technocracy's ambitions to maximize Leviathan's power. (*Our Potemkin Democracy*, *Frontpage*, 23 December 2021)

Ironically, rather than Catherine the Great for whom Potemkin allegedly erected façades, it is now "*We the Peoples of the United Nations*" for whom they erected.

Façades and facism in a global context?

These indications point to an even more general concern with the façade of politics globally in a period of unprecedented propaganda (Leif Thomas Olsen, *Our 21st Century Potemkin Democracy*, *Journal of Futures Studies*, 20 November 2018; Jim Quinn, *Living In A Potemkin World*, *The Blue State Conservtive*, 19 October 2021; David Chandler, *Potemkin Sovereignty: statehood without politics in the New World Order*, *The Monist*, 90, 2007, 1; *Globalization within a Global Potemkin Society a strategic challenge to proactive participation in society: extracts from web resources*, 2000).

There is a curious irony to the role of Facebook in crafting and sustaining this façade, especially given the associations between face, facebook, facile and façade -- and Potemkin (Alan Farago, *Facebook: A safe harbor for right-wing Potemkin Villages*, *HuffPost*, 17 January 2017; Adrienne LaFrance, *The Largest Autocracy on Earth*, *The Atlantic*, 27 September 2021; John Naughton, *Facebook's 'oversight board' is proof that it wants to be regulated – by itself*, *The Guardian*, 16 May 2020).

Especially relevant to the argument is the complicity of Facebook and political interests in the manipulation of faces and façades, as exemplified by the Facebook–Cambridge Analytica data scandal and the inquiries it evoked in relation to fake news (*Varieties of Fake News and Misrepresentation*, 2019). Reference is now made to a "Potemkin news network" set up only to give the appearance of a free press -- but appropriately understood as disseminating fake news.

Of further relevance to the argument is the role of "loss of face", especially in some cultures and institutional settings -- and hence the role of Potemkin constructs in "saving face". This has been deemed of particular relevance to the Ukraine-Russia crisis -- for both Putin and Biden:

- John Simpson: *Putin will search for a way to save face* (*BBC News*, 18 March 2022)
- J. D. Warren, *Can Putin accept peace but also save face (* *Riverside News*, 16 March 2022)
- John Craven: *We should give Putin a face-saving way out of this war* (*Yahoo News*, 16 March 2022)
- David A. Andelman: *To end Russia-Ukraine tensions, Vladimir Putin needs a way to save face* (*NBC News*, 28 January 2022)
- Joe Hoft: *Biden Frightened of Putin -- Trying to Save Face Before Much Anticipated Video Call Tomorrow* (*The Gateway*, 6

December 2021)

- *Biden Tries to Save Face Over Putin's Military Threat* (*IntegrityMag*, December 2021)
- *How can Putin save face?* (*StackExchange*, 8 March 2022)

The importance of face is all the more problematic given the curious coincidence of preoccupation with religious face-covering and pandemic masking (*Facism as Superficial Intercultural Extremism: burkha, toplessness, sunglasses, beards, and flu masks*, 2009; Chris Jesu Lee, *America's Obsession With Saving Face During The Coronavirus Pandemic*, *Plan A Mag*).

Potemkin institutions?

There is no lack of references to "Potemkin parliaments":

- Mark Steyn: *Potemkin Parliament* (*National Review*, 18 October 2013; *Steyn on America*, 7 January 2021) [USA]
- Ralph Berry: *A Potemkin Parliament's Humiliation* (*Charlemagne Institute Chronicles*, 5 July 2019) [Europe]
- Stephen Daisley: *Nicola Sturgeon's Potemkin parliament* (*The Spectator*, 11 March 2022) [Scotland]
- Shashi Tharoor: *Pimping the parliamentary facade Narendra Modi's Potemkin democracy* (*Qantara*, 2021) [India]
- William S. Smith: *Welcome to the Potemkin Village of Washington Power* (*The American Conservative*, 2 December 2019) [USA]
- John Boonstra: *A Potemkin everyone already knows about* (*UN Dispatch*, 10 June 2009 [Iran]
- *The Potemkin village of Canadian foreign policy* (*Policy Options*, 1 December 2003) [Canada]
- *Potemkin Parliament* (*The New York Times*, 26 December 1955) [Russia]

By extension, with respect to governance, the term would seem to lend itself more generally to the description of superpowers (Paul Krugman, *Russia Is a Potemkin Superpower*, *The New York Times*, 28 February 2022; Minxin Pei, *Asia's Real Challenge: China's "Potemkin" Rise*, *The Diplomat*, 7 May 2013; Nate Blevins, *'One World, One Dream' falls flat in Potemkin China*, *Yale News*, 29 August 2008).

The application to the USA is more restricted:

- Shane Harris: *Biden's Coming Potemkin State of the Union Speech* (*Association of Mature American Citizen*s, 10 February 2022)
- Grace Curley: *Joe Biden's Potemkin presidency* (*The Spectator World*, 7 January 2022)
- John Michael Greer: *Potemkin Nation* (*Ecosophia*, 18 August 2021)
- Daniel W. Drezner: *Donald Trump's Potemkin foreign policy*, (*The Washington Post*, 5 February 2020)
- Derek Thompson: *We Live in a Potemkin Autocracy Now* (*The Atlantic*, 22 September 2020)
- Jeet Heer: *Trump's Potemkin Presidency Keeps Making the Pandemic Worse* (*The Nation*, 22 April 2020)
- Lyall Swim: *Empty Chairs and the Potemkin Presidency* (*American Thinker*, 16 January 2016)
- Dave Lindorff: *Bush's Potemkin Town Meetings* (*CounterPunch*, 7 April 2005)
- Jonathan Schell: *Potemkin Government* (*The Nation*, 7 October 2004)

Predictably it is those perceived as enemies of the US, which are believed to see the US itself as a façade:

> Vladimir Putin in Russia, Xi Jinping in China, Khameini in Iran, Kim Jong Un in North Korea. This gruesome foursome is always probing, always looking for ways to exploit cracks in what they regard as the American façade. (Bob Ehrlich, *Now That They See Biden in Power, the 'Gruesome Foursome' Will Come A-Knocking*, *The Western Journal*, 8 March 2022)

The façade of coercion-free voting in the UN General Assembly can then be understood as effectively only for purposes of public disinformation. **Missing is any reference to the degree to which the UN itself invites recognition as a "Potemkin institution" -- a façade -- namely as a "Potemkin United Nations"**. Rather than façade, other terms may be questionably used, recalling the questionable corporate practice of front organizations and shell companies.

Ironically the references to "façade" in that context apply solely to the architecture of the building (*United Nations Headquarters Facades*) -- possibly mirroring applications of the term to academia (Kathy Lund Dean, et al, *Premises, Promises and Perils of Academic Potemkin Villages*, *Management Learning*, 3 March 2020; Victor Davis Hanson, *Potemkin Universities*, *Real Clear Politics*, 4 May 2017).

Especially with the development of virtual meetings, related insights are therefore to be expected, as with respect to "Potemkin conferences" and "Potemkin summits" (and to the "Potemkin strategies" to which they may give rise):

- *The Potemkin Summit: G8 Will Produce Lots of Talk, but What Else?* (*CNBC*, 14 June 2013)
- *Russia's Potemkin Arctic Conference?* (*The Sofia Globe*, 26 September 2013)
- *A Potemkin gathering of world leaders in Paris* (*World Socialist Website*, 14 January 2015)
- *Obama's Potemkin Summit* (7 April 2009)
- *This Potemkin Property Tax Isn't Going Anywhere* (*Bloomberg*, 19 January 2022)
- *Potemkin Bank: How Big Finance Pretends to Innovate* (25 September 2011)
- *The Potemkin Bank of China* (*CNA Finance*, 13 July 2015)
- *Geithner Bank Plan continues Façade of Potemkin Banks* (21 March 2009)

The future may well see the current drama associated with the Ukraine-Russia crisis as a tragic encounter between Potemkin façades -- whether it be those of Russia, Ukraine, the USA, NATO, their armies, or the framing of their interaction by the media and especially by Facebook. Ironically use of "Potemkin" could be caricatured by the abbreviation "*Gone to Pot*".

Context and perspective?

The authorised retreat from context and perspective has been named by Richard Perle in urging "decontextualization". Placing things in context is then to be recognized as incurring the risk of understanding them. Decontextualization ensures a focus on immediate reaction.

As with other phenomena framed as dangerous, if not evil, a shift of perspective is required to engage with the cognitive challenge, as argued by George Lakoff (*Women, Fire, and Dangerous Things: what categories reveal about the mind*, 1987; *Metaphorical Thought in Foreign Policy: why strategic framing matters to the global interdependence initiative*, Aspen Institute, 2000). The categories through which Putin is conveniently framed may be as indicative of issues with the framer as with Putin (*Proportionate Response in the Eye of the Beholder: educational fables for faith-based global governance*, 2006). In the light of Lakoff's study of the justification of the Gulf War (*Metaphor and War*, 1991), the issue is explored otherwise by Karolina Kaminska (*President Vladimir Putin's justification of the annexation of Crimea: a cognitive-linguistic analysis*).

Drawing on critical discourse analysis and conceptual metaphor theory, a study by Svetlana Tsirkunova argues that the metaphorical system offered by Lakoff is insufficient for conceptualizing the US policy regarding the Ukraine conflict, and claims that the choice of cognitive construals is governed by the context in which they are used and by the perspective adopted.(*Through the Prism of Metaphor: a case study of the US and UK political discourse on the Ukraine conflict*, *Acta Scientiarum. Language and Culture*, 38, 2016, 4).

The more fundamental question is indicated by Evaggelos Vallianatos (*Hypocrisy Over Ukraine, CounterPunch*, 3 March 2022):

> If there's a silver lining to the war in Ukraine, it is the hope of a more comprehensive understanding and practice of cooperation among humans in America and Europe and the greater world.

Questionable adequacy of "dialogue" as practiced?

Varieties of dialogue: Much is made of the desirability and potential of (diplomatic) dialogue as an alternative to conflict -- and sanctions. Far less evident is the fruitfulness of such dialogue in practice in the face of seemingly incommensurable perspectives. There are many approaches to dialogue acclaimed as fruitful, as reviewed separately (*Overview of a variety of approaches to dialogue and conversation*, 2021). These may be clustered as:

- Dialogue analysis
- Dialogue for learning
- Decision-making dialogue
- Inquisitory dialogue

- Persuasive dialogue
- Healing dialogue
- Conversation as an art
- Mapping dialogue-

It is far from clear how many of the acclaimed dialogue processes have been proposed or envisaged in response to the Ukraine-Russian crisis -- including those associated with the most eminent places of learning and their engagement with governance, such as the Harvard Negotiation Project.(Roger Fisher, William Ury and Bruce Patto, *Getting to Yes: negotiating agreement without giving in.* , 2011).

The absence of information on the methods of dialogue used in crucial situations contrasts curiously with the technical details and performance of the military hardware made available in conflict situations or which it is hoped to use. There is therefore little available insight into why a given method of dialogue proves inadequate -- despite subsequent arguments for renewing the "dialogue".

Renowned dialogues: As noted separately (*Challenging impoverishment of conventional discourse*, 2016), it is appropriate to recognize the appreciation associated with particular dialogues between two or three individuals, suggesting that their quality should be considered exemplary, even when hypothetical:

- Kenneth N. Cissna and Rob Anderson. *Buber, Rogers, and the Potential for Public Dialogue* (2012)
- J. Krishnamurti and David Bohm: *The Future of Humanity: a dialog between Krishnamurti and Bohm* (1990)
- Bohr-Einstein debates: Don Howard, *Revisiting the Einstein-Bohr Dialogue*, (*Science 2.0*, 2009)
- Jung-Pauli dialogue: S. Gieser, *Depth Psychology and Quantum Physics: Wolfgang Pauli's dialogue with C.G. Jung* (2005)
- Ralph Abraham, Terence McKenna and Ruper Sheldrake: *Trialogues at the Edge of the West: chaos, creativity, and the resacralization of the world* (1992)
- Daniel Fidel Ferrer: *Trialogue between Heidegger, Nietzsche, and Nagarjuna in Todtnauberg* (2011)

What form might an exemplary dialogue berween Russia and the Ukraine take, even if hypothetical? Noteworthy is that those cited above do not include dialogues renowned in other cultures and only include one (involving Krishnamurti) that could be understood as "between cultures".

Efficacy of dialogue: More to the point, **can it be objectively asserted that "dialogue", as currently advocated, promoted and practiced, is "fit for purpose" in the face of the conflictual dynamics of a cancel culture?** Pertinent questions are:

- Is the fundamental complexity and subtlety of current conflict dynamics far greater than the dialogue methodologies advocated?
- Where is research on dialogue undertaken -- relevant to incommensurable perspectives (inter-national, inter-faith, inter-disciplinary, etc)?
- Why does no international institution report annually on progress in dialogue methods?
- Where are the exemplars of dialogue appropriate to the global challenge (as distinct from those above)?
- In comparison with advances in other technologies (which may evoke the need for more sophisticated dialogue):
  - Where is dialogue of a higher order celebrated as a model and an inspiration?
  - Where are innovations in dialogue processes highlighted?

Given the failure of dialogue, apparent from the current incidence of unresolved conflict, is there a case for recognizing what is so systematically avoided -- namely the level of ignorance of forms of dialogue of relevance to the times? **Rather than the focus on any "Big Lies" cultivated in crafting such conflicts, is the "Bigger Lie" in fact the claim that remedial "dialogue", as advocated and practiced, is adequate to the challenge?**

Is it in fact the case that the key dialogues of diplomacy are characterized by what has been explored by Edward de Bono (*I Am Right, You Are Wrong*, 1968), thereby highlighting the requisite shift from "rock logic" to "water logic"? The prevailing simplistic dynamic of "rock logic" has been characterized by Patrick Lawrence who argues:

> Diplomacy is an essential skill in the century swiftly taking shape around us, but we find that hurling playground insults at the leader of another nation has become normal in post-9/11 Washington...Americans post–2001 live in a state of intellectual isolation so pervasive most are not aware of it. Name-calling, as a third-grade symptom of the anxiety and insecurity of the past two decades, is a way of expressing patriotism (a comforting euphemism for nationalism). America is left utterly incapable of imagining -- to say nothing of creating -- new possibilities in a new, multipolar world. (*Imperial Infantilism*, *Consortium News*, 21 March 2022)

Could it be said that current "dialogue technology" merits comparison with bows-and-arrows, or swords-and-shields -- faced with challenges based on far more sophisticated technology? Potentially indicative of their inadequacy is the seeming inability to apply current dialogues to the conflicts between proponents of particular dialogue approaches and their methodologies (*Controversies and consensus in dialogue research*, 2021).

Transcendent "stereoscopic perspective" via meta-discourse?

The examples of exemplary dialogues cited above raise the question of how they might be recognized as adequately self-reflexive. The missing sense of perspective, historical or otherwise, can be emphasized by the contrast between meta-data and meta-discourse. Whilst the former offers a form of perspective through statistical analysis, it is the latter which is indicative of a quite distinctive mode of inquiry.

One approach to this has been explored through *appreciative inquiry*. This is a positive approach to organizational change that focuses on maximizing an organization's strengths instead of purely looking for problems to fix or avoid (Mark Sparvell, *Appreciative Inquiry: getting more of the good stuff*, *Forbes*, 25 January 2021). Through its emphasis on the positive, it might however be asked whether it is sufficiently radical to be appropriate to the challenge of polarization explored here. There is some reason to expect that it would fall victim to the arguments of Barbara Ehrenreich (*Bright-sided: how the relentless promotion of positive thinking has undermined America*, 2009) or those of Yonason Goldson (*Political Correctness: the lobotomy of the American mind*, *Jewish Express*, 9 May 2018). The relevance of appreciative inquiry to the Ukraine-Russia does not appear to have been indicated.

Another approach is through "meta-discourse", a term used in philosophy denoting a discussion about a discussion, as opposed to a simple discussion about a given topic. Closely related approaches are meta-discussion and meta-communication. It could be asked whether and how these might be applied to exploring the discourse -- and narrative -- regarding Ukraine-Russia, or the larger historical context framing such conflicts. The difficulty would appear to be the focus of such a perspective on questions of literary style. Despite assumptions that might be made about the relevance of this approach, no consideration of discourse regarding the Ukraine-Russia crisis appears to have been made.

A distinct approach is that of meta-dialogue, as variously described separately (*Metadialogue*, 2009). However this appears to have been primarily explored in clinical and therapeutic work (Tom Andersen, *The Reflecting Team: dialogue and meta-dialogue in clinical work*, *Family Process*, 26, 1987; Nancy L. Tucker, et al, *Meta-Dialogues in Domestic Violence-Focused Couples Treatment*, *Journal of Systemic Therapies*, 19, 2000, 4). An application to policy has however been proposed (Yumo Xu, et al, *Meta Dialogue Policy Learning*, *arxiv*, 2006). More subtle, and potentially of far greater relevance, is the framing offered by Dorothee Gelhard (*Meta-dialogue and Identity or the Recovery of Meaning*, *The Dostoevsky Journal*, 1, 2000) in the light of the study by Emmanuel Levinas (*Ethique et Infini*, 1982). How indeed does the subtle sense of collective identity feature in comprehension of the Ukraine-Russia crisis?

As with the various approaches to "dialogue", **it would appear that the various "meta" approaches are equally inadequate to the challenges of crises like Ukraine-Russia** -- if not more so. Despite its strategic implications, the current relevance of meta-politics would appear to be equally questionable. This is metalinguistic discourse about politics; a political dialogue about politics itself. In this mode, metapolitics takes on various forms of inquiry, appropriating to itself another way toward the discourse of politics and the political. It assumes a self-conscious role of mediating the analytic, synthetic, and normative language of political inquiry and politics itself.

Again it could be most usefully said that **civilization has not developed the skills to discuss fundamental disagreement with the efficacy that is required to engage with the conflicts it engenders**. Dialogue as promoted is relatively successful in engaging with "low-level disagreement" with a narrow focus. Significant in this respect. when "dialogue" is proposed in a crisis, no indication is given of the methodology. This is evident in the case of any report on diplomatic dialogue -- despite its crucial importance to resolving a crisis. Could the specifics be obtained with a Freedom of Information request?

A remarkable case study is offered by the pattern of "dialogue" between North and South Korea (*Inter-Korean Dialogue: government to government talks*, *North Korea in the World*, 1971-2018; *South Korea extends another offer of dialogue to North Korea*, *Yeni Safak*, 10 February 2022). That dialogue could qualify for the *Guiness Book of Records* (*Sustainable discourse: longest conflict versus longest conversation?* 2019).

Dialogue as currently practiced and advocated would seem to distort the nature of the challenge when it purports to be "fit for purpose" in response to incommensurable perspectives. Indications of these are apparent to a degree in efforts to mediate in marital breakdown and parent-adolescent conflicts -- let alone those between faiths.

At this time **acknowledgement of collective ignorance with regard to the requisite dialogue skills** could prove to be a fruitful point of departure for future research (Nicholas Rescher, *Ignorance: On the Wider Implications of Deficient Knowledge*, 2009). It could also serve as an indication of the investment priorities and settings for such research -- in contrast with those in response to security challenges exacerbated by inadequate dialogue. **The threat to security of assuming adequacy of skills in dialogue is increasingly clear** -- when all the evidence suggests that it is proving inadequate to the challenge. Arguably this applies to stupidity, as insightfully argued by Jerry Sheppard (*Potemkin Stupidity*, *Academia Letters*, March 2021)

More speculatively, the ability to acknowledge ignorance could prove vital to framing engagement with "extraterrestrials" (*Strategic Clues for Alien Communication*, 2000). That argument included an indication of the increasing challenge of home-grown aliens -- "terrestrial extras" -- those increasingly alienated by mainstream discourse. Ironically, in the case of ETs, it is appropriate to recall that the long-standing debate on why humanity has not been contacted -- the Fermi paradox -- includes the possibility that humanity is subject to a pattern of "universal sanctions", as can be variously imagined (*Anticipation of Judicial Inquisition of Humans by Extraterrestrials*, 2020; *Earth as a Shithole Planet -- from a Universal Perspective? Understanding why there are no extraterrestrial visitors*, 2018).

Potential role of AI in global dialogue?

It is remarkable to note the extent of the anticipated role of artificial intelligence in global governance. AI may have a major impact in reframing dialogue and addressing conflicts such as Ukraine-Russia, as can be variously argued (*Forthcoming Major Revolution in Global Dialogue: challenging new world order of interactive communication*, 2013).

The current information-based global civilization, of which the Ukraine-Russia crisis is a feature, is characterized by information warfare, memetic warfare and cognitive warfare variously recognized simplistically as "propaganda". Sanctions and severance of connectivity now merit recognition within the more powerful "language" of cognitive warfare (François du Cluzel, *Cognitive Warfare*, *Innovation Hub,* June-November 2020; Ben Norton, *Critical Analysis: Cognitive Warfare*, *Axis of Logic*, 31 October 2021; Silviu Costinescu, *Cognitive warfare is so much more than psyops*, *Silview*, 17 Ocrober 2021).

Cognitive warfare has been defined as an unconventional form of warfare that uses cyber tools to alter enemy cognitive processes, exploit mental biases or reflexive thinking, and provoke thought distortions, influence decision-making and hinder actions, with negative effects, both at the individual and collective levels (Johns Hopkins University and Imperial College, *Countering cognitive warfare: awareness and resilience*, *NATO Review*, 20 May 2021).

Supercomputers: The development of AI is associated with that of supercomputers but not dependent on them. They are ranked within the Top500 listing. The most powerful as of November 2021 is in Japan; the most numerous are in China (183), followed by the USA (*Europe holds its own in supercomputer race as China squeezes out US*, *Science Business*, 27 January 2022). Some are blacklisted because of their military applications (*US blacklists seven Chinese supercomputer groups*, *BBC News*, 9 April 2021).

Only 7 supercomputers are noted as located in Russia, but with others in the Commonwealth of Independent States (*Rating of supercomputers of Russia and CIS of Top50*, *TADdviser*, 1 April 2020). The NDMC Supercomputer, a military supercomputer located in Moscow, is designed to predict the development of armed conflicts and is able to analyze the situation and draw conclusions based on the information about past military conflicts. The database of the supercomputer contains data on the major armed conflicts of modernity for the efficient analysis of future threats.

Of relevance to the current argument, however, is the capacity to formulate and explore questions relevant to the resolution of conflicts through dialogue, as argued separately (*Superquestions for Supercomputers: avoiding terra flops from misguided dependence on teraflops?* 2010). Would AI be able to reframe the blame-game tendency which is so frequently a prelude to conflict (*Reframing whingeing and blame-gaming through meta-discourse?* 2014).

Non zero-sum games? Given the questionable adequacy of the approaches to dialogue and meta-discourse highlighted above, **a key question is whether the envisaged "meta-capabilities" of AI will be relevant to global dialogue in times of crisis.** The much-publicized encounters of AI with chess and go grand masters -- and more recently poker -- are only suggestive in this regard (Keith Romer, *How A.I. Conquered Poker*, *The New York Times*, 18 January 2022). With respect to meta-reasoning, early exploration in terms of human machine interaction are indeed already evident (D. Perlis, et al, *Modeling Time and Meta-Reasoning in Dialogue via Active Logic*, *AAAI Technical Report FS-99-03*, 1999).

In the case of chess, go and poker the capabilities acquired by AI are to defeat the opponent -- to win -- as in the many ball-games which are an inspiration for military conflict, and are already in use for that purpose (George Gilder, *AI is not a Zero-Sum Game*, 23 April 2021; *Adversarial search and zero-sum games*). This suggests a need for crucial reframing as to whether humans are able to orient the neural learning of AI to enable other outcomes, and will AI be able to detect outcomes of that kind as preferable?

From a game theory perspective, can AI be adapted to dialogue framed as non zero-sum games, with the implied requirement for **non zero-sum thinking** and a recognition of any probability of zero-sum bias? An indication of possibilities is suggested by a new program called Delphi, developed by researchers at the University of Washington and the Allen Institute for Artificial Intelligence (Ai2) in Seattle, to teach AI about human values.

Paradoxically, as claimed by Yi Zeng, *Global Cooperation on Artificial Intelligence is not a Zero-Sum Game* (*International Research Center for AI Ethics and Governance*, 3 February 2021). In the case of the Ukraine-Russia conflict it might be asked whether the AI-enhanced supercomputers employed by all the parties for strategic purposes could be understood as having "collaborated" in any way.

Would such collaboration be a feature of the emerging metaverse (*Future Psychosocial Implications of the Metaverse*, 2022)?

Adversarial collaboration: The potential of adversarial collaboration, as articulated by Nobel Laureate Daniel Kahneman (*Adversarial Collaboration: an Edge Lecture*), offers a contrast to the uncritical focus on crushing and eliminating any opposition. Related approaches can be envisaged (*Using Disagreements for Superordinate Frame Configuration*, 1993; *Interrelating Incompatible Viewpoints*, 1983; *Differences as a basis for Sustainable Community*, 1998).

AI may come to play a considerable role in meeting organization -- collective dialogue -- beyond that of the zoom-style current favoured (*From Zoom Organization to Zome Configuration and Dynamics*, 2020; *Envisaging the AI-enhanced Future of the Conferencing Process*, 2020).

More controversially, will AI systems seek to exploit outcomes -- or be used to that end -- as can be speculatively argued (*Governance of Pandemic Response by Artificial Intelligence: control of human agents unconscious of AI-elaboration of communication scripts?* 2021).

Reframing boundaries: In the light of the Ukraine-Russia crisis, it is especially intriguing to consider how AI might enable conventional boundaries to be reframed in dialogue. Given the anticipated impact of quantum computing, this capacity could notably follow from the arguments of Alexander Wendt (*Quantum Mind and Social Science: unifying physical and social ontology*, 2015; *The mind-body problem and social science: motivating a quantum social theory*, Journal for the Theory of Social Behaviour, 48, 2018, 2).

The boundaries in question -- as psychosocial constructs -- could necessarily include the geopolitical boundaries and the cultural boundaries conventionally associated with them, as discussed separately (*Boundary preoccupations: geopolitical, cognitive and otherwise*, 2022). Understood as an interface, the transfer across them could also be enabled and sustained by AI.

Especially intriguing is the static legacy of the nation state in a world which is, if anything, dynamic in many sense of the term -- and threatened by stasis where appeals for resilience are widely made (*Danger of state-orientation in a dynamic world*, 1998). This raises the question whether AI could provide collective identity with a form of dynamic invariance in contrast with the static invariance on which the dynamics are currently so perversely dependent. The challenge is exemplified globally (*Dynamic Transformation of Static Reporting of Global Processes: suggestions for process-oriented titles of global issue reports*, 2013).

The possibilities have implications beyond the nation state and overly simplistic initiatives towards world government and a new world order -- as currently formulated in preparation for any new pandemic (Rudolf Hänsel and Peter Koenig, *The WHO as a "Proxy World Government"? Abolition of the Nation State?* Global Research, 7 March 2022). How might "disease" then be fruitfully reframed by AI in generic terms, given the wider psychosocial and environmental implications (*Cognitive Implications of Lifestyle Diseases of Rich and Poor*, 2010; *Memetic and Information Diseases in a Knowledge Society*, 2008).

Potentially more intriguing is how identity is then held to be associated with boundaries if the boundaries include understandings of diasporas and spheres of influence, potentially vital to the issues of Ukraine-Russia (*Georgia's EU bid raises existential question: What is Europe and where does it end?* Euronews, 4 March 2022). Especially significant in the light of quantum computing are the psychosocial implications of quantum superposition -- echoed to a very limited degree by dual nationality and the right to multiple passports.

Could AI be used to enable, enrich and sustain the earlier condominium model recognized in international law? *Wikipedia* cites numerous examples of current condominia, former condominia, and proposed condominia. Would AI be able to formulate unusual viable models like that for Chile (Orlando Miles, *New Constitution Would Declare Chile a Plurinational State*, Inter Press Service, March 2022)?

Dynamic possibilities and metamorphosis? The challenge is obvious in the Israel-Palestine case with its current focus constrained by a controversial "two-state" solution, when other unforeseen **dynamic** possibilities merit exploration by AI (Mordechai Nisan, *The Two-State Delusion*, Middle East Forum, Winter 2014). Where are resources applied to investigation of Ukraine-Russia and North/South Korea, for example?

The possibility of shifting beyond the current emphasis on the static characteristics of psychosocial organization has been envisaged in terms of "variable geometry" (Fabrizio Tassinar, *Variable Geometries: mapping ideas, institutions and power in the wider Europe*, CEPS Working Document, No. 254, November 2006; *Alternation between Variable Geometries: a brokership style for the United Nations as a guarantee of its requisite variety*, 1985). Understood otherwise, could AI be used to manage contractual relationships in new ways?

AI might then provide a context for such transformation, whether periodic or continuous, namely for metamorphosis. Some indication of this is offered by time-sharing, functional rotation and notions of "shapeshifting" (Daina Middleton, *Are You a Shape-shifter? The Importance of Building Organizational Resilience*, 16 May 16, 2016; Rakhi Rajani, *Shape shifting organisations: a simplistic view*, Medium, 1 April 2017; Divina Paredes, *Why shapeshifting organisations are the future*, CIO, 17 July 2018; *Secret sharing, Shapeshifting and Embodiment*, 2011).

Aside from the implications for physical boundaries and organizations, especially intriguing are the implications for conceptual boundaries. Whereas the meanings associated with categories are typically understood as bounded, AI may be able to handle fuzzy or fluid boundaries typical of alternative and ambiguous definitions (*Cognitive Osmosis in a Knowledge-based Civilization: interface challenge of inside-outside, insight-outsight, information-outformation*, 2017). Especially intriguing is the possibility for AI to enable use of fundamental values as verbs rather than as nouns (*Freedom, Democracy, Justice: Isolated Nouns or Interwoven Verbs?* 2011). The value of values may prove to be especially expressed dynamically. Peace? Harmony?

The focus on dialogue among civilizations by UNESCO has notably featured Edgar Morin (*Dialogue Assumes Equality*, Courier, January 2004), Morin makes extensive use of the metamorphosis of the caterpillar as a metaphor of social transformation:

> A caterpillar can become a chrysalis from which emerges something new, something that has wings. Metamorphosis is not only

a phenomenon for insects, like butterflies, but al a historical phenomenon of human societies. (*Complex Thinking for a Complex World: about reductionism, disjunction and systemism*, *Systema*, 2, 2014, 1)

Engendering and "re-cognizing" patterns in dialogue: The future may consider it extraordinary the investment in pattern recognition in sports, most notably the so-called "passing patterns" in team ball games (*13 Soccer Passing Drills for Great Ball Movement*, *SoccerCoachingPro*). From a future perspective, the question could be why that monitoring expertise and analysis is not systematically applied to discourse analysis in crucial international summits. **Why is AI not used to recognize more fruitful patterns of dialogue and to sustain their emergence?** Why is it not used to flag any logical fallacies in international summits?

It is curious that purportedly vital global summits do not call upon such expertise in the quest for viable strategies, as can be variously argued (*Identifying Polyhedra Enabling Memorable Strategic Mapping: visualization of organization and strategic coherence through 3D modelling*, 2020; *Multi-option Technical Facilitation of Public Debate: eliciting consensus nationally and internationally*, 2019; *Encoding Coherent Topic Transformation in Global Dialogue: memorability of cognitive implication in symmetry-preserving operations on polyhedra*, 2021).

It is clear that AI is used by the security services to analyse communication patterns in order to detect influential individuals whose marginalization or elimination may be considered strategically advantageous. This framing bears comparison with skill in detection of the key log to be shifted to free a river log-jam. Could AI be adapted to recognize arguments (or their advocates) inhibiting or enabling social change?

Requisite subtlety of dialogue: As noted with respect to any form of meta-discourse, missing is any "re-cognition" of levels of subtlety in dialogue -- which acknowledge the challenges of collective identity fundamental to the Ukraine-Russia crisis. With the classic articulation of an extreme of dialogue subtlety by Martin Buber (*I and Thou*, 1923), the challenge may be expressed as moving far beyond the simpler requirements of the Turing Test in dialogue (*AI Dialogue: beyond the Turing Test to the Buber Test?* 2020; *TAO of Dialogue*, 1996).

As a guide to such future possibilities, how are dialogues to be distinguished by "depth" (*EU and US pledge greater depth of dialogue*, *Agence Europe*, 16 April 2015). This might be understood in terms of "levels of dialogue"? Given the varieties of dialogue, what form of self-reflexive dialogue can be distinguished as "sustainable", and as fundamental to "sustainability" (*Sustainable Dialogue as a Necessary Template for Sustainable Global Community*, 1995; *12 Complementary Languages for Sustainable Governance*, 2003; *Sustaining the Quest for Sustainable Answers*, 2003)

With respect to the Ukraine-Russia crisis, of underlying relevance is Eastern Orthodoxy -- the Christian faith of fundamental significance to both countries -- with implications for a process of apophatic discourse of a subtlety not recognized in conventional diplomatic discourse.

Pretending pretence is a viable option?

Whether with respect to the systematic dissemination of misinformation, propaganda or cognitive warfare it is clear that a new global arena is being engendered. The media have a fundamental role in this. It may indeed be recognized as the emergence of a metaverse, as promoted to a degree by Facebook/Meta (*Future Psychosocial Implications of the Metaverse*, 2022)?

Missing however is an appropriate appreciation of the degree of pretence in which all indulge -- whether formally or informally. This could be said to be the case of a UN General Assembly resolution or the violence characteristic of a high proportion of entertainment. It is indeed becoming difficult to distinguish between such entertainment and what is offered as coverage of conflicts such as Russia-Ukraine -- relieved by a selection of imagery and tales evocative of every degree of empathy.

There is a case for recalling the strategic initiative of the Roman Empire in engaging the population through games of corresponding savagery -- the entertainment of that time of which the Colosseum is the iconic exemplar, echoed wherever feasible in that period.

Rather than any reference to the façades of Potemkin, **an information-based civilization should be able to engage in pretence of a far higher order and to greater effect**, as envisaged with respect to the current pandemic (*Governance of Pandemic Response by Artificial Intelligence*, 2021). This could be understood as the essence of cognitive warfare -- as a fundamental development of its precursors in the form of propaganda, advertising and entertainment.

Just as games can be taken extremely seriously by participants and spectators, there is also the capacity to recognize a degree of pretence -- a recognized perspective on the dynamic and its attraction. This is especially evident in theatre and the presentation of dramatic tales. Many processes, including those of the United Nations, are framed in commentary as drama and games, however seriously participants and spectators may feel obliged to take them.

Domains of application: There is therefore the possibility of fruitfully developing this "cognitive dissonance" to a far higher degree -- as a means of engendering perspective of higher order. This could be explored in many arenas:

- *Issues*: Rather than frame an issue as a problematic existential threat to civilization, there is a case for deploying every means of reframing it as negligible, other than in the most dramatic terms -- for effect, evoking a sense of immediacy and urgency. To be taken seriously indeed, but only to the degree that it enhances engagement with the drama. The approach could be applied to climate change, for example, as presented separately (*Climate Change -- Let's Just Pretend: why do we need to do anything?* 2016) . In that case the focus needs to be on pretending that everything that needs to be done is already in process, and the challenge is in hand -- including the need to pretend to take it very seriously through demonstrations and COP conferences. The approach could be applied to crime, drug addiction, terrorism, pollution, non-renewable resources, unemployment, disease,

and the like. Rather than the unfruitful tendency to deprecate such concerns as mere "myths" -- as with the myth of overpopulation -- an alternative perspective could be elicited by dramatising such myths to a far greater extent given the recognized power of that modality (Joseph Campbell, *The Power of Myth*, 1988).

- **Institutions**: Rather than criticizing the inadequacy of an institution with Potemkin characteristics (as with the United Nations), the pretence to be cultivated to a higher degree is its extreme value for humanity, as a unique expression of human values. This could be applied to corporations otherwise deemed to be a major factor in exacerbating issues as with Big Pharma, agribusiness, and arms manufacturers. Whether a typical feature of the stated objective objective or its self-promotion, theis calls for far greater skills in appreciatively cultivating that illusion to an exaggerated degree and appropriately witholding any expression of a critical perspective.

- **Leaders**: Considerable attention is already given to cultivating the image of leaders, but far more is required to enhance that image to a higher degree -- as the ego needs of the individual may indeed welcome as being indicative of their true value -- as they imagine themslves to be. Whereas this may already be achieved with awards, medals, insignia, titles and status symbols, there is a case for developing these indications -- and their associated rituals -- to a far higher degree. The challenge is the extent to which this may be done without losing the credibility of the illusion through the necessarily conscious pretence.

- **Initiatives**: A strategic agenda -- a plan -- is typically proposed by institutions and leaders in response to an issue. The question is how to combine a considerable enhancement of its presentation -- as the ultimate panacea to be taken seriously (such as universal vaccination) -- with enabling recognition that it is not indeed a "silver bullet", but rather a well crafted pretence and to be appreciated by all as such.

- **Nations**: Many leaders are already framing the collective aspiration for their country as to be "Great Again". This effort needs to enhanced to elicit a far higher order of engagement in the serious possibility and credibility of achieving this -- whilst at the same time using exaggeration to offer a sense of how unrealistic the pretence of that achievement is in the reality of a community of nations. The argument also applies to groups and communities of smaller or greater size -- each identified with the possibility of being the ultimate expression of human values.

- **Cultures**: As with nations, the expression of the unique value of a culture requires enhancement to the highest degree, beyond any possibility of serious criticism -- whilst enabling a degree of perspective on the unreasonable exaggeration of that pretence in a community of cultures in which other perspectives prevail. Again the argument also applies to belief systems and communities of smaller or greater size -- each identified with the possibility of being the ultimate expression of human values.

- **Media**: Mainstream media already promote their trustworthiness explicitly as sources of "news you can trust", even collaborating beyond their rivalries in establishing the Trusted News Initiative (John Glenday, *Bloomberg, Reuters and the BBC unite to highlight importance of trusted news outlets*, Bloomberg, 29 September 2021). Their uncritical self-appreciation merits promotion to a far higher degree, as with their claims to attacking the many forms of misinformation of which they can in no way be credibly held to be representative. Extolling their merits in contrast with the extensive criticism of their institutional biases (in favour of governments, corporate sponsors, and advertising) then increases the sense of perspective offered to many -- a form of education in its own right .

- **Values**: There is widespread reference to human values as the essential characteristic of humanity to be cultivated at all costs. Clearly there is a case for ever higher orders of expression of this sense and the pretence that any value is unquestionable. However it is in the widely evident contrasting perspective of the failure to appreciate this in practice that further insight is to be obtained -- as when confronted with virtue signalling, or in the case of equality, for example (*Cultivating the Myth of Human Equality: ignoring complicity in the contradictions thereby engendered*, 2016).

- **Law**: Clearly the law is to be upheld as the embodiment of values in practice -- to be honoured and praised to the highest degree, as with its representatives. The challenge is to give even greater expression to the pretence of this appreciation than current rituals of dress, ceremony and modes of dress permit. The greater the exaggeration, the more people will be aware of the injustice and failures overlooked by the law.

Crafting temporary scenarios: In an increasingly surreal context, the art would seem to lie in crafting the overriding appreciation of the moment -- and its pretension to reality -- but to such a degree that the exaggeration elicits a subsequent sense of perspective and historical context. How is the requisite suspension of belief characteristic of entertainment to be related more creatively to critical thinking rather than to simplistic cynicism? Arguably pretending pretence to a higher degree effectively increases the length of the "cognitive baseline" by which deeper insight can be elicited.

Again reference may be made to the Colosseum, but specifically to its less visible technology -- concealed in the hypogeum -- namely the stage craft machinery underground whereby a variety of scenic backdrops could be raised or lowered (Tom Mueller, *Secrets of the Colosseum*, *Smithsonian Magazine*, January 2011). Equivalents exist in modern theatres -- but necessarily of greater sophistication and flexibility, further enhanced by auditory and visual possibilities. Of course the Colosseum design also offered facilities for the entry of wild animals and barbarians -- the threatening issues eliciting an adrenalin rush in modern times

Information technology now enables "scenes" to be presented and withdrawn -- as "scenarios" -- most obviously in the daily news cycle and in the crafting of narratives. Cognitive warfare may well be understood as taking the form of the manipulation of such images.

Whether issues, institutions, leaders, initiatives, nations, cultures or values.

Clearly the role of scenarist, and the art of stage craft, require development and recognition of their strategic importance -- as with that of the dramaturge (*Gorbachev: Dramaturge ?! Participative Democracy vs. Participative Drama: Lessons on social transformation for international organizations from Gorbachev*, 1991). The play on ambiguity in presentation is evident to a degree in the art of bullfighting -- usefully employed as a metaphor (*Viable Global Governance through Bullfighting: challenge of transcendence*, 2009; *The-O Ring and The Bull Ring as Spectacular Archetypes*, 2014).

Psychosocial constructs from theory: Whilst "pretending pretence" may be readily deprecated as unreasonable, it is appropriate to recall the arguments relating to psychosocial constructs, most notably personal construct theory and enactivism. The latter is a perspective of cognitive science that argues that cognition arises through a dynamic interaction between an acting organism and its environment. From the perspective of AI, this can be explored in terms of enactive interfaces in robotics and man-machine interfaces. Such constructs can be interpreted as forms of cognitive pretence.

Of potential relevance are the extensive explorations of reality in Buddhism. This seeks to address any disparity between a person's view of reality and the actual state of things. Indicative in this respect is the fundamental understanding that all the constituent forms (*sankharas*) that make up the universe of experience are transient (Pali: *anicca*), arising and passing away, and therefore without concrete identity or ownership (*atta*). As "scenery", they can therefore be recognized as a "pretence". Consciously engaging with their illusory nature as reality is then a form of "pretending". Failing to recognize that process then consttutes a form of indulgence in what might be termed "pseudophilia" (*Cognitive Encryption enabling Collapse of Civilization: drowned by the undertow of pseudophilia*, 2021).

Aside from philosophical understanding of constructs, especially intriguing is the manner in which, notably through string theory, fundamental physics calls into question the nature of the very existence of conventional three- or four-dimensional entities of shared reality. Other constructs are various hypothesized. Going further, constructor theory supplements the traditional physics viewpoint. It has a radically different mode of explanation, where the main objects are physical transformations, or tasks. Its fundamental statements are about what tasks are possible, what are impossible, and why. This enables incorporation of more of physical reality, including entities, such as information, that have inherently been regarded as approximate and derivative as a result of the traditional physics take on things.

Indicative tendencies: The art of "pretending pretence" is already evident to a degree through upbeat reporting -- cultivating the "positive" at all costs, excluding the "negative" to the extent possible, irrespective of potential dangers (Barbara Ehrenreich, *Bright-sided: how the relentless promotion of positive thinking has undermined America*, 2009; *Being Positive Avoiding Negativity: management challenge of positive vs negative*, 2005). The question is at what stage the promotion of the positive is recognized as being exaggerated and inappropriate --a tipping point -- evoking the perspective from which due appreciation of the negative is considered necessary to viability.

The spinning of a traditional tale has been transformed into requisite spin in any form of public relations or in engagement with decision-makers (*Globallooning -- Strategic Inflation of Expectations and Inconsequential Drift*, 2009). The viability of "let's pretend" is evident in the tale of the *Emperor's New Clothes* -- highlighting the credibility in current practice of what would otherwise be held to be ridiculous. The perspective to be elicited is that of the "little boy crying wolf" in another tale, warning of a threat with regard to uncritical "feel good" evaluations (*Entangled Tales of Memetic Disaster: mutual implication of the Emperor and the Little Boy*, 2009).

Advocating "pretending to pretend" honours the experience of those locked in the framework of Plato's cave, whilst enabling and engendering (through excessive exaggeration) the perspective offered by that allegory. Another argument to that effect is through the cultivation of "negative strategies" -- using overweening praise in a reversal of tough love (*Liberating Provocations: use of negative and paradoxical strategies*, 2005). The art would seem to lie in avoiding any reactive association with sarcasm.

Faced with the systemic strife of the present times, the concluding insight of Nicholas Rescher as a philosopher is especially relevant:

> For centuries, most philosophers who have reflected on the matter have been intimidated by the strife of systems. But the time has come to put this behind us -- not the strife, that is, which is ineliminable, but the felt need to somehow end it rather than simply accept it and take it in stride. To reemphasize the salient point: it would be bizarre to think that philosophy is not of value because philosophical positions are bound to reflect the particular values we hold. (*The Strife of Systems: an essay on the grounds and implications of philosophical diversity*, 1985)

A particular articulation of pretending pretence has been advocated by Shakespeare, as presented below. The alternative proposed above could take the form: *Extol a virtue, where others have it not* -- with exalt, glorify, or magnify as variants.

Assume a virtue, if you have it not.
That monster, custom, who all sense doth eat,
Of habits devil, is angel yet in this,
That to the use of actions fair and good
He likewise gives a frock or livery
That aptly is put on. Refrain tonight,
And that shall lend a kind of easiness
To the next abstinence; the next more easy;
For use almost can change the stamp of nature.

Quotation from *Hamlet* by William Shakespeare

References

Gregory Bateson. Mind and Nature: a necessary unity. Hampton Press, 1979

Barbara Ehrenreich. Bright-sided: how the relentless promotion of positive thinking has undermined America. Metropolitan Books, 2009

Michael Eskin. Ethics and Dialogue: in the works of Levinas, Bakhtin, Mandel'shtam, and Celan. Oxford University Press, 2000

Roger Fisher, William Ury and Bruce Patto. Getting to Yes: negotiating agreement without giving in. Houghton Mifflin, 2011

Isak Winkel Holm. Kafka's Stereoscopes: the political function of a literary style. Bloomsbury Academic, 2021 [review]

Stephen P. Hubbell. The Unified Neutral Theory of Biodiversity and bBogeography. Princeton University Press, 2001 [summary]

George Lakoff:

- Women, Fire, and Dangerous Things: what categories reveal about the mind. University of Chicago Press. 1987
- Metaphor and War: the metaphor system used to justify war in the Gulf. *Peace Research*, 23, 1991, 2/3) [abstract]
- Metaphorical Thought in Foreign Policy: why strategic framing matters to the global interdependence initiative. Aspen Institute, Internal Report, 2000.

Emmanuel Levinas. Alterity and Transcendence. Columbia University Press, 1999

Nicholas Rescher:

- Finitude: A Study of Cognitive Limits and Limitations. Ontos, 2010.
- Ignorance: On the Wider Implications of Deficient Knowledge. University of Pittsburgh Press. 2009.
- Pluralism: Against the Demand for Consensus. Oxford University Press, 1993
- The Strife of Systems: An Essay on the Grounds and Implications of Philosophical Diversity. University of Pittsburgh Press, 1985.

Andrew Scull. Madness in Civilization: a cultural history of insanity from the Bible to Freud, from the Madhouse to Modern Medicine. Princeton University Press, 2015 [review]

Svetlana A. Tsirkunova:

- Through the Prism of Metaphor: a case study of the US and UK political discourse on the Ukraine conflict. *Acta Scientiarum. Language and Culture*, 38, 2016, 4 [text]
- Conceptual Metaphor as a Means for Teaching Critical Thinking Skills. *International Journal of Humanities and Social Science*, 3, 2013, 16 [text]

John Watts. The Grand National Lobotomy. Neopoiesis Press, 2013 [review]

Alexander Wendt. Quantum Mind and Social Science: unifying physical and social ontology. Cambridge University Press, 2015

Yanxia Zheng. The Effectiveness of Xi Jinping's Metaphorical Discourse in Cross-Cultural Communication. *Journal of Language Teaching and Research,* 12, 2021, 6 [text]