



# laetus in praesens

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## Time for a Remedial Global Nuclear War?

### Recognizing an unconscious collective need for disastrous cathartic experience

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## Introduction

Global society is faced with a strange situation. Many warn frequently and authoritatively of the immediate dangers of nuclear war -- with the possibility of its escalation to the destruction of all life on Earth as it is currently known. Many call frequently, if not vigorously, for the peaceful resolution of differences so as to achieve peace globally. Those associated in any way with the military are however especially focused on anticipation of future conflict and the use of nuclear weapons at their disposal -- especially with the possibility of developing their destructive capacity even further.

**Crisis of crises:** In this context it is increasingly evident that global governance is stretched to an ever higher degree in its response to crises and the irreconcilable differences which exacerbate them. Various forms of collapse are foreseen with little capacity to reduce their probability. These include environmental collapse, food system collapse, health system collapse, infrastructure collapse, financial system collapse, collapse of law and order, and the like.

Problems critical to systemic collapse and a "crisis of crises" have long been recognized, most notably dating from the influential Club of Rome report on *Limits to Growth* (1972). Symptomatic of the evolving strategic disarray, are insights explicitly excluded from that articulation, as presented by Hasan Ozbekhan (*The Predicament of Mankind*, 1976), and later reviewed systemically as 24 "continuous critical problems" by Alexander Christakis (*Retrospective Structural Inquiry of the Predicament of Mankind Prospectus of the Club of Rome*, 2004). Both authors resigned from the Club. The complex of issues has since been loosely reframed in terms of "wicked problems" (Keith Grint, *Wicked problems in the Age of Uncertainty*, *Human Relations*, 75, 2022, 8).

Far more controversial is the recognition of any root cause of the complex of problems, as by Paul Ehrlich: *All of the interconnected problems are caused in part by overpopulation, in part by overconsumption by the already rich. One would think that most educated people now understand that the larger the size of a human population, ceteris paribus, the more destructive its impact on the environment* (*Overpopulation and the Collapse of Civilization*, *Millennium Alliance for Humanity and Biosphere* 5 November 2013).

**Careful negligence:** One response is to ignore the role of overpopulation, the increasing fragility of global society, and expert recognition of its vulnerabilities. Many are content to rely optimistically on hope and the voices of the hope-mongers -- ignoring or deprecating the voices of doom-mongers. For example, the Club of Rome now optimistically frames the strategic possibility in terms of five "extraordinary turnarounds to save the world" (Sandrine Dixon-Declève, et al, *Earth for All – A Survival Guide for Humanity*, 2022). This naively ignores the continuing global strategic disarray and the improbability of effective consensus (*The Consensus Delusion*, 2011). Some focus optimistically on a technological "fix" -- possibly enabled by artificial intelligence -- on the assumption that human ingenuity will necessarily prevail. Many may cultivate prayer -- and anticipation of a saviour prophesied for the "end times" in their

preferred scriptures.

For those anticipating the possibility of nuclear war, there is a well-cultivated assumption that destruction will be primarily and "hygienically" inflicted on opposing forces. For those claiming a higher order of responsibility, the scope of such damage may be held to be limited through emphasis on "surgical strikes" by [tactical nuclear weapons](#) designed to that end -- despite indications to the contrary (Ellen Ioanes and Dave Mosher, *A terrifying animation shows how 'tactical' nuclear weapon could trigger a US-Russia war that kills 34 million people in 5 hours*, *Business Insider*, 15 October 2022).

**Experiential disconnect:** There is however relatively limited recognition of how damage will be experienced and handled as a result of successful strikes by opposing parties. As the most heavily armed country, for example, the USA has no recent experience of damage caused by war on the home front. However many natural disasters there increasingly offer a personal taste for some.

Missing too is the recognition that the capacity of nuclear weapons of mass destruction may be unpredictably supplemented by use of other weapons -- possibly by those with no access to the nuclear variety. The potential effects of [biochemical warfare](#) have however become clearer as a consequence of the COVID-19 pandemic. The possibility of [weaponisation of weather modification](#) is acknowledged to some degree in relation to disasters attributed to climate change -- with the role of [HAARP](#) cited by conspiracy theorists, extending to provocation of earthquakes. Relatively little is said of the effects on vital information networks of a [nuclear electrical magnetic pulse](#) (EMP).

Curiously it is the media and the infotainment industry which have cultivated a remarkable degree of popular comprehension of global disaster, its personal implications, and its wider social consequences. With respect to this argument, the point to be emphasized is that such presentations as entertainment can be understood as designed (consciously or unconsciously) to evoke widespread popular appeal -- and are typically highly successful in doing so. The intimate relationship between Hollywood and the Pentagon has been recognized as the [military-entertainment complex](#). Irrespective of the degree to which it is deprecated, the attractive power of interpersonal [violence in the media](#) and in [esports](#) is only too evident -- echoing the violence of [blood sports](#). It could be argued that society grooms itself to anticipate violence as a natural remedial process to be vicariously relished and glorified, notably through the suffering of others (*Schadenfreude*).

**Remedial possibility:** In this context it is then appropriate to ask the highly controversial question: **would many welcome the cathartic experience of global nuclear war** -- again, whether consciously or unconsciously? Those doing so consciously may assume that it would resolve the challenges posed by their declared enemies -- possibly framed as the embodiment of evil. This assumption includes the sense that it is the others who would suffer most -- rightly and deservedly so. As in any fight, a degree of pain is deemed acceptable and honourable, if the other can be defeated -- if not eliminated (*Eradication as the Strategic Final Solution of the 21st Century?* 2014). For those doing so unconsciously, religious narratives suggest that such disastrous conflict -- however tragically deplorable -- would be remedial, enabling a "renaissance", and that a fruitful peace would finally prevail thereafter. Ironically "nuclear" then invites pronunciation as "new clear"?

The question here is how best to come to grips with society's seemingly fundamental desire for such archetypal "end times" conflict. Is there a case for a more radical reassessment of the seemingly ineffectual strategic optimism, pessimism and tokenism which now prevail? Psychotherapy benefitted to a degree from the controversial perspective of [James Hillman](#) and [Michael Ventura](#) (*We've Had a Hundred Years of Psychotherapy -- And the World's Getting Worse*, 1992). Is there a case for a strategic counterpart: *We've Had a Hundred Years of Strategic Analysis -- And the World's Getting Worse*? A **remedial global nuclear war might then be a paradoxical possibility** meriting consideration -- as the effective use of "weapons of mass destruction" in lieu of the ineffectual use of "weapons of mass distraction".

## Complementary "big lies" -- "pro-peace" and "anti war"?

One approach is to consider whether society is confronted by "Big Lies" -- two, rather than a single one, as typically argued.

**Pro-peace image cultivated by the military:** The vast investment in military hardware, its development, and its deployment to multiple bases around the world, are all upheld as being in order to ensure peace and security. Whilst this assumption may be challenged by critics of the military-industrial complex and the pursuit of profit by arms manufacturers, the increasing allocation of resources to that end continues to be stressed as a strategy to ensure the peace to which populations aspire.

An issue for critics is to exactly what threat such military preparedness is addressed. Here it is evident that military proponents of the pro-peace image are attentive to highlighting by every means the nature of threats by other entities -- typically defined as of malign intent, if not of essentially evil nature. The often subtle nature of such threats calls for clarification of what the military posture opposes -- the "anti-what" which is a guarantee of "pro-peace"?

The posture has been criticized as the need for enemies in order to reinforce a tangible sense of collective identity (*Needing Evil Elsewhere*, 2001). Without problematic enemies, is a collective at risk of losing any sustainable sense of identity and of the relative superiority of its values, especially when their nature is elusive? (*Values, Virtues and Sins of a Viable Democratic Civilization*, 2022)

Faced with the possible erosion of a sense of identity and coherence, is the collective then obliged to engender enemies justifying a militaristic posture? This may be done deliberately through false flag operations or by other covert means -- eliciting threats to which a response can be justified. (*Provocation of "Unprovoked Aggression" by Encroachment*, 2022). In an information dependent society, enemies may be variously imagined or asserted to exist -- much as has been done in the past by assertion of the role of "evil spirits".

A feature of this Big Lie is the global institutionalization of the safeguarding of peace in the UN Security Council -- grouping Permanent Members who tend to perceive each other as a primary threat to peace. Ironically those attracted to anti-war activism may themselves be profiled by such authorities as a threat to law and order -- to peace.

**Anti-war image cultivated by peace movements:** Curiously the pro-peace posture of the military is complemented by an "anti-war" posture by a variety of righteous movements variously successful in mobilizing people momentarily. Historically this was inspired by the [Russell-Einstein Manifesto](#) (9 July 1955) -- subsequently the basis for the [Pugwash Conferences on Science and World Affairs](#).

The current global condition has engendered a sense of urgency in this regard (Caitlin Johnstone, [The Historic Urgency for an Anti-War Movement](#), *Consortium News*, 1 March 2023; Phyllis Bennis, [When the World Said No to War](#), *Counter Punch*, 24 February 2023; [Anti-war protests in Washington, Munich and Helsinki](#), *Helsinki Times*, 22 February 2023).

Somewhat ironically, such movements have their own need for enemies to sustain their sense of identity and the coherence of their values (Chuck Zlatkin, [Unifying the Rage Against the War Machine](#), *Consortium News*, 15 February 2023; Bernie V. Lopez, [Resurrection of the Anti-war Movement](#), *Daily Tribune*, 24 February 2023). The military-industrial complex is a natural focus of their concern -- to whatever degree this is transformed into militant activism.

While such anti-war movements may be successful in mobilizing many for massive demonstrations and media exposure, far less evident is their ability to translate this momentary expression of protest into sustainable collective strategies. That such protests serve no purpose is however [dismissed as a myth](#). Just as the military is faced with a fundamental challenge of engendering a credible "anti-what" strategy, the "anti-war" movements have the greatest difficulty in engendering a sustainable consensus on a credible "pro-what" strategy.

The difficulty is exemplified by the simplistic nature of what seems to engender the highest degree of consensus, namely strategies articulated in terms of "stop" -- whether "stop the war", or "stop" some other initiative by questionable others. Missing is widespread consensus on what should be "started" and how to do so -- other than by protesting against those deemed to be undermining that possibility.

How exactly is the "pro-what" nature of society to be envisaged -- assuming the achievement of "peace"? For some this is adequately understood as business-as-usual -- ignoring the multiplicity of problems which render this questionable for many. For others it is a paradigm shift to a new understanding of society and its peoples -- despite its elusive nature and the challenges to its widespread acceptance, however articulated. A stress may be placed on remedial local initiatives, avoiding those of a global nature -- effectively relying on a "trickle-up" effect. Religions have long been faced with such a paradigm shift -- a challenge now faced by science and techno-optimists. Both religions and science continue vigorously to promote belief in the remedial viability of their agendas -- and their unquestionable credibility.

The possibility of coherent consensus has been offered globally by "sustainability" and the UN's 17 [Sustainable Development Goals](#). It is increasingly questionable whether these will ensure the degree of uptake assumed to be possible. Cynics can readily criticize the "development" in question as a deceptive means of creating ever more "fucking opportunities" -- whilst carefully failing to address the problematic consequences of overpopulation in relation to resources, as noted above by Paul Ehrlich.

**"Stopping" versus "Starting":** There is a further curiosity to the complementarity highlighted above. Whereas the pacifist, anti-war movement is indeed renowned for its initiatives to "stop" war, the militarist mindset is necessarily focused on the "start" of war. Technology has become ever more sophisticated in the detection of any missile launch by which war may be deemed to have been initiated -- requiring an immediate response. The posture is embodied in the acronyms of the succession of Strategic Arms Reduction Treaties ([START-I](#), [START-II](#), [START-III](#), and [New START](#)).

Military preparedness has become a significant focus, with personnel oriented to "starting" at any moment -- and possibly welcoming the transition from inaction to purposeful action. This is in striking contrast with the anti-war mindset. There is little insight into what might fruitfully emerge after successfully "stopping". That consideration might even be deemed irrelevant, or simply framed as "anything is better". This is of course inadequate as a response to the array of problems of which war serves as a distracting culmination.

Problematic for both extremes is any gradual process. The gradual transition from a "quick" war to one that develops into one that is drawn out over decades can be held to exemplify military failure and strategic desperation. Vietnam, Afghanistan and Ukraine offer examples. The latter frames the question as to when war has become reality, given the transition through proxy war and the careful pretence of the absence of conflict between Russia and US-led NATO.

A "quick" peace is evident in any [ceasefire](#) process. Less evident is the gradual shift in attitude from a conflictual posture to one in which a form of peace emerges but without any formal affirmation of the absence of conflict, as through a [peace treaty](#). It is surprising to recognize the number of conflicts which can be considered latent, although little recognition is accorded to them. For example, there has been no peace treaty between North and South Korea since termination of the conflict in 1953; Japan and Russia never signed a formal peace treaty ending World War II hostilities because of a long-running territorial dispute over the islands off Hokkaido. Historical conflict between colonists and indigenous peoples may continue to fester over centuries.

**"Big Lie"-complex as a hyperobject:** The nature of any Big Lie is such as to render its comprehension extremely challenging. This challenge necessarily extends to a complex of two mutually entangled lies. The challenge is exacerbated by the dynamics within both contexts, as well as between them. A sense of chaos may well be deliberately or inadvertently cultivated by various initiatives.

The complex invites recognition as a [hyperobject](#), as articulated from the perspective of [object-oriented ontology](#) (OOO) by [Timothy Morton](#) ([Hyperobjects: philosophy and ecology after the End of the World](#), 2013; [Introducing the Idea of 'Hyperobjects': a new way of understanding climate change and other phenomena](#), *High Country News*, 19 January 2015). For Morton, a hyperobject is held to be of such vast temporal and spatial dimensions in relation to human life that it defeats traditional ideas about what is indicated -- an association with references to [hyperreality](#).

Whether such recognition is helpful is another matter, given the challenge articulated by [Stafford Beer](#):

*Le Chatelier's Principle:* Reformers, critics of institutions, consultants in innovation, people in sort who "want to get something

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

**Embracing error?** If there is merit to controversial recognition of the framing of complementary "big lies", it can then be asked whether the two constituencies are capable of admitting any "error" in their respective worldviews. Does each necessarily consider itself to be "right" -- with the other as necessarily "wrong"? This is the pattern reviewed by [Edward de Bono](#) as inhibiting fruitful lateral thinking (*I Am Right and You are Wrong*, 1968).

An alternative perspective is offered by [Donald N. Michael](#), as "the requirement to embrace error" (*Learning to Plan and Planning to Learn*, 1997):

More bluntly, future-responsive societal learning makes it necessary for individuals and organizations to embrace error. It is the only way to ensure a shared self-consciousness about limited theory on the nature of social dynamics, about limited data for testing theory, and hence about our limited ability to control our situation well enough to be successful more often than not.

From that perspective it could be asked whether institutions such as the UN or the Club of Rome have proven themselves capable of recognizing any error in decades of strategic analysis -- in the light of criticism -- and of then "embracing" it in "future-responsive societal learning", as suggested by Michael (*Club of Rome Reports and Bifurcations: a 50-year overview*, 2018). The question can be addressed to think tank reporting more generally in the light of their highly conflictual relationships (*Tank Warfare Challenges for Global Governance*, 2019).

The problematic denial of error, accompanied by blame-games, is especially evident at the national level, with striking examples:

- Iraq: Twenty years after the invasion of Iraq, controversy still rages over the existence of the "weapons of mass destruction" (WMDs) which provided the UK's justification for taking part (*How the search for Iraq's secret weapons fell apart*, BBC, 13 March 2003)
- Afghanistan: (*A "Strategic Failure": Assessing the Administration's Afghan Withdrawal*, House Republican Interim Report, August 2022; *Pentagon audit: Afghanistan War a \$145 billion 'Vietnam' failure*, *Washington Examiner*, 16 November 2022; *Veterans give searing testimony on US withdrawal from Afghanistan at hearing*, *The Guardian*, 10 March 2023; *20 years in Afghanistan: Was it worth it?* BBC, 17 April 2021)
- Slavery: Although former colonial powers have declared the slavery in which they engaged to be illegal, this has not translated into any admission of error justifying reparations (*The case for British slavery reparations can no longer be brushed aside*, *The Guardian*, 10 July 2020; *Reparations for slavery in the United States*)

The pattern is evident, and presumably reinforced by denial of error by religions over centuries.

A difficulty shared by the mutually challenging pro-peace and anti-war perspectives is that of "nation building" -- on a global scale -- whether after war, or after its successful prevention.

It is such conflictual relationships which are neglected in optimistic strategic proposals in response to the "crisis of crises" in the quest for a safe operating space for humanity (*Recognizing the Psychosocial Boundaries of Remedial Action*, 2009). Ungovernability and indifference to strategic analysis can be seen as engendered by the immediate challenges posed by increasing population and the progressive erosion of coping capacity (*Indicators of Political Will, Remedial and Coping Capacity?* 2019; *Ungovernability of Sustainable Global Democracy?* 2011).

## Enjoyment of violence -- surreptitious and otherwise?

**Attraction of violence?** With respect to the erosion of the coping capacity of governance, a curious indicator is offered by the widespread enjoyment of violence, especially when experienced vicariously. As noted above, this is most evident in media representations of violence, in competitive sports, and in esports. At the youngest age children are drawn into the symbolic killing of opponents as a feature of games -- however these may translate into bullying and gang-enabled violence. Violence of the bloodiest kind is a primary feature of esports -- potentially extending to torture.

Successful development of attractive games focused on peaceful outcomes is relatively problematic -- if not boring by comparison. The difficulty extends to strategically-focused management games, where triumphantly crushing opponents is a primary objective and indicator of success. For Andrew J. Weaver

Media violence is widely produced and treated as a valuable economic commodity, but the research on the appeal of violence suggests that audiences' appetite for violent content is not quite so straightforward. Although the presence of violence tends to increase selective exposure, it also has a tendency to decrease enjoyment. There are a few potential explanations for this disconnect, including the possibility that violence represents other narrative features that do increase enjoyment (e.g., action, suspense, humor), or the possibility that we seek out violence for nonhedonic purposes (e.g., meaning-making, justice restoration, information). (*Liking of Violence*, *The International Encyclopedia of Media Psychology*, 2020)

**Relative dislike of peace?** References such as the following frame the question of how "peace" and "sustainability" might be liked by comparison, as promoted by [International Peace Games](#), or the [Games for Sustainability](#) of the Global Goals Centre -- of which relatively little are heard. The contrast with wargaming is striking, as noted by A. Walter Dorn, et al, in stressing the need for digital simulations of peacekeeper roles:

Militaries around the world have benefited from computerized games. Many recruits have been attracted to the military through military-style video games. After recruitment, games and simulations provide an important means of soldier training, including before actual deployments. However, electronic games are lacking for UN peace operations. The multidimensionality of peacekeeping has yet to be simulated in serious games to complement the many games that too often depict a binary battlefield of blue-team versus red-team (or, often in public games, good versus evil). Not only could soldiers benefit from nuanced and ambitious peace-related games, so too could civilian peacekeepers, and the public at large. (*From Wargaming to Peacegaming, International Peacekeeping*, 27, 2, 2020).

For Simon McCarthy-Jones: *From Tarantino to Squid Game: why do so many people enjoy violence?* (*The Conversation*, 28 October 2021):

Last month, more than 100 million people watched the gory Netflix show, Squid Game. Whether or not screen violence is bad for us has been extensively studied. The consensus is that it can have negative effects. But the question of *why* we are drawn to watch violence has received much less attention.

The incomprehension of violence more generally can be explored as matching the incapacity to question the reason why (*Global Incomprehension of Increasing Violence*, 2016):

Writing from the recently acclaimed [epicentre of terrorism in Europe](#), it is remarkable to note the astonishment widely expressed as to the reason behind the attacks in Brussels on 22 March 2016 -- as was the case with regard to the attacks in Paris in 2015, or indeed in the earlier case of 9/11.

The question in the minds of many is "why" such irrational attacks are so unreasonably made against innocents. The title of this note is usefully ambiguous, however, for it also holds the more crucial question as to **why so little effort is made to address the question of "why"**. This is to be compared with efforts to detect and constrain perpetrators by any feasible means -- "[closing the stable door after the horse has bolted](#)". The resources allocated to the detection of threat, and the associated investment in security resources, are many orders greater than those devoted to understanding violence and the many forms it may take.

To the extent that there is a sense of being trapped by the degree of violence in society, and the fear it engenders, a valuable insight is offered by policy scientist [Geoffrey Vickers](#): *A trap is a function of the nature of the trapped* (*Freedom in a Rocking Boat: changing values in an unstable society*, 1972).

The question here is whether it is in the nature of people not to want to know "why"? Is this because of the fear of change potentially implied? Unknowingly, have we seen the enemy and "[them is us](#)" -- as might be concluded from the argument of John Ralston Saul (*The Unconscious Civilization*, 1995)? Are there unknowns so terrifying that humanity has no desire to know of them -- because of the transformation for which it calls?

**War as "best time of their lives"?** There is a strange degree of acknowledgement -- for many of those who survive -- that the experience of warfare was the "best time of their lives". This experience has been celebrated in a much-reviewed movie (*The Best Years of Our Lives*, 1946; Glen Melanson, *Seventy-five Years of The Best Years of Our Lives: a retrospective on war and peace, Film and History: an interdisciplinary journal of film and television studies*, 42, 2012, 2).

Emphasis has been given to the bonding and feelings of companionship which emerged under conditions of crisis (*Land girls -- 'It was best time of our lives'*, *News Shopper*, 6 March 1999). Given such implications, the surprising willingness to renew the experience has been noted by Duane France:

If you had a choice, after all these years, would you go back? Absolutely. In a heartbeat. This is something I hear from veterans I work with all the time: if they called, I would go back in an instant. This may come as a surprise to those who have never served, and I certainly don't mean to say that all veterans feel this way. But for many combat veterans, there is an often conflicting desire: to remain home with their loved ones or to go back to war. This has elements of the fact that it was often the best time and the worst time in our lives. And it also has to do with the back there paradox that some veterans need to resolve. (*Why Would Veterans Want to Go Back to Combat? Veteran Mental Health from a Combat Veteran Perspective*, 2 August 2018)

**Widespread indulgence in bullying?** A less physically fatal form of violence offers scope for identifying other reasons for its attraction -- namely through the pervasive phenomenon of [bullying](#). This is the use of force, coercion, hurtful teasing or threat, to abuse, aggressively dominate or intimidate -- often repeatedly. It may well take place in the presence of a large group of relatively uninvolved bystanders.

Distinguished forms include: [cyberbullying](#), [disability bullying](#), [gay bashing](#), [legal abuse](#), [bullying in the military](#), [child abuse](#), [prisoner](#)

abuse, school bullying, sexual bullying, workplace bullying, bullying in academia, bullying in information technology, bullying in the legal profession, bullying in medicine, and bullying in teaching. Missing from such a set of categories are the widely overlooked forms of bullying of prisoners of war during warfare, and the violence among refugees in refugee camps.

Less evident is the source of enjoyment experienced by the bully in engaging in the process. Explanations for bullying include::

- wanting to dominate others and improve their social status
- having low self-esteem and wanting to feel better about themselves
- having a lack of remorse or failing to recognise their behaviour as a problem
- feeling angry, frustrated or jealous
- struggling socially
- being the victim of bullying themselves (*Bullying - why people bully and how to stop it*, Health Direct)

Unfortunately the reasonable "explanations" tend not to explore the attraction of a process deemed unreasonable (Wendy Rose Gould, *7 Common Reasons Why People Bully*, *VeryWellMind*, 30 June 2022). Especially elusive is the enjoyment of humiliation (Neel Burton, *The Psychology of Humiliation*, *Psychology Today*, 27 August 2014; Matthew Rozsa, *Humilitainment: Why the internet thrives on other people's humiliation*, *Salon*, 20 February 2022).

Periods of crisis can be seen as enabling other forms of bullying, most obviously bullying of citizenry by newly empowered bureaucrats, as has been evident during the recent pandemic. Under more extreme conditions of social disorder, bullying by gangs becomes especially relevant.

**Gruesome but necessary?** The inexplicable nature of violence was evoked in the case of the [massacre of less than a hundred Norwegians](#) in 2011 by [Anders Behring Breivik](#). Curiously however the Norwegian was an enthusiast of online war games -- *World of Warcraft* and *Modern Warfare 2* -- in which millions engage daily, often for many hours at a time (*Norway Terrorist Used World Of Warcraft As A Training Simulator*, 27 July 2011; *Terrorist Anders Behring Breivik Used Modern Warfare 2 as "Training-Simulation"* 23 July 2011).

More curiously, the justification offered for the slaughter by Breivik, through his lawyer, was that it was "**gruesome but necessary**". That phrase figures prominently (some 75,000 hits, at that time) in any web search relating to *World of Warcraft* -- prior to any reference to Breivik. It would appear to be recognized as a slogan -- framing the necessity of violence. As discussed separately, the extreme normality (exemplified by peaceful Norwegian society) can be explored as an indicator of systemic negligence (*Gruesome but Necessary: Global Governance in the 21st Century?* 2011).

## Questionable remedial potential of global communications

The case for a remedial nuclear war can be called into question in the light of the optimistic expectations so widely promoted with respect to global communication, the internet, and artificial intelligence. Remedial potential is readily associated with the anticipated developments with arguments to the contrary readily dismissed.

There is however a case for exploring the possibility, if not the probability, that the global communication system will collapse of its own accord in the light of evident difficulties to which attention has been variously drawn. It is therefore questionable whether its processes can provide the safety-net expected of it. An earlier exercise considered the challenges in terms of the collective capacity to process the volume and variety of information critical to global governance (*Imminent Collective Communication "Info-death"?* 2018). This distinguished the following issues:

[Information death of the global brain](#)  
[Evident collective communication challenges](#)  
[Schematic articulation of constraints on collective communication](#)  
[Efficacy of global communication uptake?](#)

[Disaster-engendering constraints on collective communication?](#)  
[Increasing unreliability of collapsing communication](#)  
[Mind mapping global civilizational collapse](#)  
[Expanding communication universe prior to a "big crunch"](#)

Since that time, a point to be emphasized is that irrespective of the potential physical violence indicated above -- and the opposition to it -- global communications are now a context not only for information warfare, but also for memetic warfare and cognitive warfare. The "pro-war" and "anti-war" constituencies are especially active in these. It is unclear that any form of "peace" is to be engendered in consequence, whether transcendent or otherwise.

Global communication possibilities are then to be understood as being as much a part of the problem as of any remedial potential. Whereas they can indeed be understood as offering possibilities of transformative paradigm shifts in response to global fragmentation, it is equally clear that their manipulative use reinforces such fracturing to an ever greater degree. Especially problematic in this respect is the use of global communication to craft a "mainstream" **dominant narrative** such as to marginalize and repress alternative perspectives. Such crafting is notably significant in the manner in which ensures both the negligence of critical issues and a distractive focus on secondary or trivial issues (*Vigorous Application of Derivative Thinking to Derivative Problems*, 2013).

Never in the history of humankind has there been so much "dialogue" to so little long-term benefit -- and with so little effort to explore the nature of such failure, relative to the challenges such dialogue claims to address.

Especially noteworthy as failures of integrative global communication are international dialogue, interdisciplinary dialogue, interfaith dialogue, intercultural dialogue -- in the light of the difficulties highlighted in each case. Proponents of each naturally emphasize progress made, avoiding reference to its inadequacy in relation to the challenges they might otherwise be expected to address.

Of particular relevance at this time is the degree to which integrative communication has been sacrificed in the name of support for the

proxy war between NATO and Russia in Ukraine. This can be interpreted as an act of [lobotomy](#) avoiding the potential of meta-discourse, as argued separately ([Severing the Russian Hemisphere as Problematic Global Lobotomy?](#) 2022). It could be understood as deriving from the simple biblical notion: *And if thine eye offend thee, pluck it out, and cast it from thee* ([Matthew 19:9](#)). The biblical injunction continues with the more questionable comment: *It is better for thee to enter into life with one eye, rather than having two eyes to be cast into hell fire*. The difficulty is that in order to navigate the complex crises of the times, at least two eyes are required for focusing capacity and depth perception (John A. T. Robinson, [Truth is Two-eyed](#), 1979; Albert Marshall, [Two-Eyed Seeing](#), Institute for Integrative Science and Health, 1974).

Framed in that way it then becomes questionable as to what might be understood as a "global brain" and its efficacy in response to the challenges of global governance. Given the multidimensional nature of the complex of problems, the integration of a multiplicity of perspectives may be assumed to be required -- rather than two ([Interrelating Multiple Ways of Looking at a Crisis](#), 2021). Rather than being simply distinctive, there may be a further requirement that they be disparate to the point of being necessarily incommensurable ([Dynamics of N-fold Integration of Disparate Cognitive Modalities](#), 2021).

In the light of brain metaphor, the question may be locating the integrative function within the world wide web ([Corpus Callosum of the Global Brain?](#) 2014). Does reflection on the nature of any "global brain" extend beyond the problematic competition between intelligence agencies and their surveillance capacity ([Envisaging a Comprehensible Global Brain -- as a Playful Organ](#), 2019). More problematic is the provocative question: [Are the UN and the International Community both Brain Dead](#) (2019). Does the desperate quest for extraterrestrial intelligence ignore the terrifying possibility of the lack of intelligence on Earth ([Quest for Intelligent Life on Earth -- from a Future Perspective](#), 2023) ?

The possibility of integrative insight into the challenges of global governance is further undermined by the manner in which a very limited number of multinational corporations own and control the content of those academic journals deemed to be "high impact". This complements a similar pattern of ownership of the major news media rendering highly questionable the critical capacity of the mainstream narrative they collectively craft. This suggests a dangerous vulnerability to global group think, silo thinking and conceptual cartels.

## Arrivalism in questionable anticipation of future remedial catharsis

Responding to the problematic challenges of "Big Lies" -- and the seemingly unresolvable global issues in practice -- can be avoided by optimistic anticipation of future events. These can be understood as engendering the coherence which eludes viable global governance at this time. These contrast with efforts to achieve this by [Promoting a Singular Global Threat](#) (2002), as in the case of terrorism, climate change, or recurrent pandemic.

Whether framed positively or negatively, reframing the urgency of present day preoccupations, the variety of singularities recognized by some as a future focus are discussed separately ([Emerging Memetic Singularity in the Global Knowledge Society](#), 2009). These were clustered as follows:

<a href="#">Technological singularity</a>	<a href="#">Globality as singularity</a>	<a href="#">Spiritual singularity</a>
<a href="#">Cognitive singularity</a>	<a href="#">Symmetry group singularity</a>	<a href="#">Singularity of planetary consciousness</a>
<a href="#">Metasystem transition</a>	<a href="#">Subjective singularity</a>	<a href="#">Metaphorical singularity</a>
<a href="#">Communication singularity</a>		

Of particular interest, as reviewed, there are the [End times scenarios](#). In contrast to any emphases on new beginning through transcendence of some kind, different flavours of anticipated singularity are either deplored in isolation (as with the items of the checklist above) or associated with understandings of "end times" (possibly as precursor to such beginnings). The following raise the interesting question as to the manner in which the metasystem transition associated with some form of singularity (especially the technological) would be capable of "recognizing" content that is more subjective than objective, or more qualitative than quantitative. The scenarios discussed are clustered as follows:

<a href="#">End of history</a>	<a href="#">End of civilization</a>	<a href="#">End of abundance</a>	<a href="#">End of logic</a>
<a href="#">Timewave theory</a>	<a href="#">End of security</a>	<a href="#">End of confidence</a>	<a href="#">End of rationality</a>
<a href="#">Eschatological scenarios</a>	<a href="#">End of privacy</a>	<a href="#">End of hope</a>	<a href="#">End of modernism</a>
<a href="#">End of science</a>	<a href="#">End of intelligence</a>	<a href="#">End of privacy</a>	<a href="#">End of wisdom</a>
<a href="#">End of culture</a>	<a href="#">End of ignorance</a>	<a href="#">End of truth</a>	<a href="#">End of tolerance</a>
<a href="#">End of religion</a>	<a href="#">End of knowing</a>	<a href="#">End of faith</a>	<a href="#">End of nature</a>

In addition to the extensive exploration of a saviour, as a primary characteristic of eschatological scenarios, is the speculative exploration of the anticipated contact with extraterrestrials ([Anticipation of Judicial Inquisition of Humans by Extraterrestrials](#), 2020; [Sensing Epiterrestrial Intelligence \(SETI\)](#), 2013).

## Time for a really "good war"?

**Framing war as "good"** The traditional phrase "having a good war" may be understood as behaving in a way that is successful and admired during a war, or during a difficult time period that can be seen as similar to a war. This may be framed as having made the most of the opportunities presented during wartime. It is curiously acknowledged in the rituals by which medals are accorded and disported by military personnel and their leaders ([Wampum and its modern variants](#), 2014).

There is a strange and persistent myth of a "good war". World War II may be framed and challenged from that perspective:

- Ken Gewertz, introduces his review of that understanding by the statement: *World War II has been called "The Good War," often in contrast to later conflicts whose moral justification is seen as more ambivalent (A new look at the 'Good War', The Harvard Gazette, 22 March 2007).*
- For Geoffrey Wheatcroft: *Our year of remembrance has exaggerated the tragic futility of the first world war and preserved the dangerous idea that the second was noble and heroic (The Myth of the Good War, The Guardian, 9 December 2014).*
- For Mark Weber: *This global clash -- with the United States and the other "Allies" on one side, and Nazi Germany, imperial Japan and the other "Axis" countries on the other -- is routinely portrayed in the US as the "good war," a morally clear-cut conflict between Good and Evil. (The 'Good War' Myth of World War Two, Institute for Historical Review, May 2008)*
- For Tim Kelly: *... that description comes from the war's popular portrayal as a necessary Manichean struggle between the good Allied powers and the evil Axis powers. And indeed, the regimes the Allied forces ultimately vanquished were truly evil (Was the "Good War" Really Good? The Future of Freedom Foundation, 5 December 2012)*

For Mohammad Rafi Saad:

The perception that WWII was nobler and finer than WWI is highly dubious, since such concept sanitizes so much, from the massacre of civilians by Allied bombings to the gang rape of millions of women by the Red Army at the time of victory. The sanctification of the later war has had more dangerous consequences than anathematizing the former. Worse than that is the glorification of the WWII and the assumption that the west is alone qualified and virtuous in distinguishing the political right from wrong. It is also not right to have the belief that our apparent virtuous ends must justify any means we apply, lighting up bomber flare paths in Dresden, Tripoli, Baghdad, Hiroshima and Nagasaki. (*The 'Good War' Myth of the Second World War, War History Online, 23 February 2015* ,

More recently the relevance of this framing has been explored with respect to Iraq and its aftermath, given that it was justified as "humanitarian intervention":

- Jonathan Masters: *Was the Iraq War Worth It? (Council on Foreign Relations, 15 December 2011)*
- Ben Doherty: *How the 'good war' went bad (The Guardian, 2 June 2021)*
- Ben Voth: *Iraq: The Good War (American Thinker, 2 September 2010)*
- *Was the Iraq War good or bad, why and why not? (Reddit, 2021)*

For Jacob G. Hornberger:

Some interventionists came to refer to the invasion of Afghanistan in 2001 as the "good war," implying that the 2002 invasion of Iraq was the bad war. Even today, interventionists continue to justify their invasion of Afghanistan, which, like Iraq, killed countless people and ended up destroying the entire country (*Colin Powell, Iraq and the "Good War", Counter Punch, 22 October 2021*)

The myth of any goodness to war is simply presented by Luke Andreski, arguing: *There is no such thing as a good war, because nothing which incorporates immoral killing is good. (10 Reasons Why War Is Wrong, Critical Mass, 1 March 2022).*

Framed by such controversial considerations, the focus may be placed on why *Why War Is Good* -- the title of Robert D. Kaplan's review of the extensive study by [Ian Morris](#) (*War! What Is It Good For? The role of conflict in civilisation, from primates to robots, 2015*). As noted by Kaplan:

Morris, both an archaeologist and a historian, surveys thousands of years of history and comes away with the seemingly startling thesis that human progress has been helped, rather than hindered, by war. As he writes, "by fighting wars, people have created larger, more organized societies that have reduced the risk that their members will die violently". (*Real Clear World, 2 October 2014*)

**Opponents as essentially "evil":** The deceptive ease with which those opposed and vanquished in any "good war" are necessarily to be understood as "evil" is called into question by the remarkable tendency of competing countries, political parties, and religions to explicitly frame each other as unquestionably "evil" -- and especially their leadership (*Existence of evil as authoritatively claimed to be an overriding strategic concern, 2016*). Ironically the framing tends to be reciprocated (*Framing by others of claimants of evil as evil, 2016*). Which leaders have not been held to be "evil" by opponents. The Australian Leader of the Opposition has now celebrated the UN resolution condemning Russia in such terms (*Zelensky rallies world to keep up fight against evil, The Australian, 25 February 2023*).

**"Good versus Evil":** Curiously the nature of a "good war" follows from continuing reference to the traditional archetypal framing of the war "between Good and Evil" -- one long imagined and anticipated by religions and theology in the light of their scriptures (J. S. Exell, *The Final Battle Between Good and Evil, BibleHub*). Such a battle necessarily frames the engagement as a "Holy War" -- as understood by the religions supporting either side. Thus the war against terrorism is readily held to be a "holy war" -- although this reference may be similarly applied to socialism, communism, atheism and capitalism, for example, as to other "virtual wars" (*Review of the Range of Virtual Wars, 2005*).

From that perspective the engagement of the primarily Christian countries of NATO in Iraq was famously framed as a "crusade" by George Bush in instigating it (Peter Ford, *Europe cringes at Bush 'crusade' against terrorists, The Christian Science Monitor, 19 September 2001*; Peter Waldman and Hugh Pope, *'Crusade' Reference Reinforces Fears War on Terrorism Is Against Muslims, Wall Street Journal, 21 September 2001*)

Such considerations imply the controversial possibility that the time may have come for a "really good war" -- a war to end all wars? One indication is offered by Brian Molinari (*10 Reasons Why A Nuclear War Could Be Good For Everyone*, *Listverse*, 22 August 2018).

**Redemptive nuclear war?** **Redemptive violence** is defined as the belief that violence is a useful mechanism for control and order (Francisco Wills, *The Myth of Redemptive Violence in Prison*, *Atlantic Journal of Communication*, 22, 2014, 1) or alternately as using violence to rid and save the world from evil (Maggie Campbell, et al, *Fighting the Good Fight: the relationship between belief in evil and support for violent policies*, *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 40, 2014,1). The French Revolution involved violence that was depicted as redemptive by revolutionaries, while decolonization theorist **Frantz Fanon** was an advocate of redemptive violence (Peter Hallward, *Fanon and Political Will*, *Cosmos and History*, 7, 2011, 1). Pacifism rejects the idea that violence can be redemptive.

Wars, including World War I and II, have been presented as redemptive wars -- although variously challenged (Robert L. Ivie, *Fighting Terror by Right of Redemption and Reconciliation*, *Rhetoric and Public Affairs*, 10, 2007, 2). There is little effort to explore the possibility that nuclear war might itself be understood as redemptive. The assumption that nuclear power has a redeeming role has however been appropriately noted by Columba Peoples (*Redemption and Nulopia: the scope of nuclear critique in international studies*, *Millennium*, 44, 2016, 2):

... political programmes of international nuclear order are crucially underpinned by what is termed here as 'utopianism': a mode of understanding nuclear power that is imbued with a spirit of technological optimism in relation to 'peaceful' nuclear power, but simultaneously qualified by an awareness of the destructive uses and catastrophic potentialities of nuclear weapons. Second, that such utopianism is in turn predicated on the 'saving power' of 'the atom': the assumption that nuclear power has redeeming features crucial to human progress and economic prosperity, the development of which should be facilitated within the structures of international order.

## Facing World War III as Nuclear Armageddon?

There is already recognition of the previously "unimaginable" reality of **World War III**, with some arguing that it has already effectively begun -- with the confirmation withheld from the public:

- Mike Adams: *World War III Has Already Begun* (*Global Research / NaturalNews*, 23 September 2022)
- Emmanuel Todd: *World War III has already begun* (*The Post*, 16 January 2023)
- Lili Bayer: *World War III? It's close, Orbán claims* (*Politico*, 10 March 2023)
- Pepe Escobar: *"Fragmented World" Sleepwalks Into World War III* (*Global Research*, 18 January 2023)
- John Weeks: *Walking Wide Awake into World War III* (*Global Research / The Libertarian Institute*, 5 November 2022)
- Stephen Wertheim: *World War III begins with Forgetting* (*The New York Times*, 2 December 2022)
- Michael T. Klare: *Countdown to World War III? It May Arrive Sooner Than You Think* (*Global Research / TomDispatch*, 2 December 2021)
- Michel Chossudovsky: *Towards a World War III Scenario: the dangers of nuclear war* (*Global Research*, 2012)
- Stephen Flynn: *Is World War III Possible? The Next Few Weeks Will Tell* (*Global Resilience Institute*)
- *Are we on the brink of World War Three?* (*The Week*, 28 February 2023)

The perverse logic of a "preemptive nuclear war" is reviewed by Michel Chossudovsky (*The Historic Battle for Peace and Democracy. a Third World War threatens the future of humanity*. *Global Research*, 11 March 2023):

*At no point since the first atomic bomb was dropped on Hiroshima on August 6th, 1945, has humanity been closer to the unthinkable. All the safeguards of the Cold War era, which categorized the nuclear bomb as "a weapon of last resort", have been scrapped.*

*Vladimir Putin's statement on February 21st, 2022 was a response to US threats to **use nuclear weapons on a preemptive basis** against Russia, despite Joe Biden's "reassurance" that the US would not be resorting to "A first strike" nuclear attack against an enemy of America...*

*Although the Ukraine conflict has so-far been limited to conventional weapons coupled with "economic warfare", the use of a large array of sophisticated WMDs including nuclear weapons is on the drawing board of the Pentagon.*

*According to the **Federation of American Scientists**, the total number of nuclear warheads Worldwide is of the order of 13,000. Russia and the United States "each have around 4,000 warheads in their military stockpiles".*

According to the *Book of Revelation* in the *New Testament* of the Christian Bible, **Armageddon** is the prophesied location of a gathering of armies for a battle during the "end times". Framed as "Nuclear Armageddon", there is increasing anticipation of both the possibility and the questionable ability to avoid it:

- Noor Al-Sibai: *Scientists say we're closer to Nuclear Armageddon than any other point in History* (*The Byte*, 25 January 2023)
- Joshua Frank: *Nuclear Armageddon Games in Ukraine* (*CounterPunch*, 3 March 2023)
- Rafael Loss: *How to defeat Russia and prevent nuclear armageddon with one weird trick* (*European Council on Foreign Relations*, 10 November 2022)
- Zoë Richards and Patrick Smith: *Biden warns risk of nuclear 'Armageddon' is highest since Cuban Missile Crisis* (*NBC News*, 7 October 2022)
- Aamer Adhani, et al: *Biden's 'Armageddon' talk edges beyond bounds of US intel* (*AP News*, 8 October 2022)

- Daryl Kimball, et al: *The Prospect of Nuclear Armageddon* (Arms Control Association, 10 November 2022)
- Roxana Tiron: *Preventing Nuclear 'Armageddon' Hinges on US Policy of Ambiguity* (Bloomberg Government, 7 October 2022)
- Ernesto Fraga: *Nuclear Armageddon an Uncomfortable Reality of the Ukraine War* (International Policy Digest, 7 February 2023)
- Deepak Sinha: *Nuclear Armageddon: Putin's way* (The Times of India, 17 October 2022)
- Paul Kengor: *Averting Nuclear Armageddon -- in October 1962 and Today* (National Catholic Register, 17 October 2022)
- Ramesh Thakur: *If You Want the Peace of the Dead, Prepare for Nuclear War* (UN Chronicle, 48, 2011, 4)

For some the possibility is welcomed as the fulfillment of prophecy -- and therefore presaging "the greatest event ever to occur in the universe" (Gerald Flurry, *Nuclear Armageddon Is 'At the Door'*, Philadelphia Trumpet, October 2017). The possibility can be explored as the outcome of negligence -- of "global oversight" otherwise understood (*Spontaneous Initiation of Armageddon -- a heartfelt response to systemic negligence*, 2004). A speculative focus can be placed on the role of "evil" (*Evil Rules Guidelines for Engaging in Armageddon Now*, 2015).

**"Facing the Spectre" versus "Facing What"?** Use of "spectre" is frequently made in reference to the horrific prospect of nuclear warfare (Scott Simon, *The Specter of Nuclear Armageddon*, NPR, 15 October 2022). Curiously however, humanity has developed a considerable taste for dystopian movies (*List of dystopian films*, Wikipedia; *Apocalyptic and post-apocalyptic fiction*, Wikipedia). terror paper??

This can perhaps be seen as an inherently dishonest manner of engaging with disastrous catastrophe -- an "arms length" appreciation thereof. Why the degree of appreciation for horror, suffering and *Schadenfreude*? Is there an unrecognized existential need for a more direct experience -- beyond what was offered through the Colosseum, and similar fora deemed essential throughout the Roman Empire?

Such questions can be seen as contrasting with "facing" what might be held conventionally to be more acceptable -- with one's back to what? How might people cultivate a taste for "facing peace" or "facing sustainability" -- with their backs to war? Controversially it might be asked whether peace and sustainability are tragically "horrific" in other ways, as yet unrecognized -- if only as the horror of boredom in the absence of excitement?

**Engaging courageously with the unthinkable?** The conventional avoidance of the existential realities of nuclear warfare have been controversially called into question by the strategic framing of a "winnable" nuclear war, as articulated by Herman Kahn (*On Thernuclear War*, 1960), followed by *Thinking about the Unthinkable* (1962) and *Thinking about the Unthinkable in the 1980s* (1984).

Given the extensive fictional anticipation of apocalyptic catastrophe and nuclear Armageddon, arguably a step beyond "thinking" is now appropriate for humanity. A taste is indeed offered in developed countries by the increasing range of natural disasters with the associated loss of life. Arms length exposure is offered by the media to the tragic condition of refugees in many developing countries.

Beyond what is considered admissible in fictional exploration, how might the collective sacrifice of humanity be imagined -- for a higher cause yet to be credibly articulated? Collective sacrifice has indeed been enabled in the past, as variously presented, but with a limited focus:

- Arthur Borriello: *The Virtue of Collective Sacrifice: antagonism and moral values in austerity discourse in Italy and Spain (2010-2013)* (Langage et Société, 166, 2019, 1).
- Sage Van Wing: *How Americans' attitudes about collective sacrifice has changed* (OPB, 12 December 2020)
- David Fitzpatrick: *The Logic of Collective Sacrifice: Ireland and the British army, 1914-1918* (The Historical Journal, 38, 1995, 4)
- Brandon T. Jett and Christopher McKnight Nichols: *Americans used to sacrifice for the public good. What happened?* (The Washington Post, 7 December 2020)
- Jake Nevins: *The Imperative of Personal Sacrifice, Today and During World War II* (The New York Times Magazine, 3 April 2020)
- Roger Griffin: *The Meaning of "Sacrifice" in the First World War* (Library of Social Science)
- *Collective sacrifice needed to overcome challenges - PM* (Daily News, 4 February 2019)

The psychosocial implications of the COVID pandemic have been presented as requiring a form of collective sacrifice -- in marked contrast to the mortal personal risk of engagement in conventional warfare (*Cowering for One's Country in the War against Coronavirus*, 2020).

There is of course a major difference between sacrifice imposed upon others (Hiroshima, carpet bombing, etc) and that undertaken voluntarily with fatal implications for the participants (*Human sacrifice in Aztec culture*; *suicide attacks*; *suicide by pilot*). Especially problematic is when the redemptive implications of sacrifice are articulated and crafted for others only. As noted by Roger Griffin:

In *Redemption by War* (1982), Roland Stromberg addressed the inadequacy of existing historical explanations for the almost "manic bellicosity of the European intellectuals, writers, artists, scientists" at the crucial beginning of the terrible war of 1914-18. He confirms that not only the avant-garde, but ordinary people from every class were eager to witness a "cultural rebirth" unfolding in an age of machines and masses rather than popes and princes.

Far more challenging is the process of **mass suicide**, voluntarily undertaken for a higher cause -- of which multiple instances are documented by Wikipedia. Mass suicide notably occur in religious settings. In war, defeated groups may resort to mass suicide rather than being captured. Is the process to be anticipated -- if not encouraged as an honourable option -- in the face of emerging crises?

**Learning to "love the bomb"?** This process was explored in a 1964 black comedy film -- *How I Learned to Stop Worrying and Love the Bomb* -- that satirizes the Cold War fears of a nuclear conflict between the Soviet Union and the United States. Known simply and more commonly as *Dr. Strangelove*, the film is often considered one of the best comedies ever made, as well as [one of the greatest films of all time](#).

In the film, "Dr. Strangelove" is a former Nazi and scientist, suggesting [Operation Paperclip](#), the US effort to recruit top German technical talent at the end of World War II. The character is an amalgamation of [RAND Corporation](#) strategist Herman Kahn, rocket scientist [Wernher von Braun](#) (a central figure in Nazi Germany's rocket development program recruited to the US after the war), and [Edward Teller](#), the "father of the hydrogen bomb".

*Dr. Strangelove* ridicules nuclear war planning. It takes shots at numerous contemporary Cold War attitudes such as the "missile gap" but it primarily directs its satire on the theory of mutually assured destruction (MAD), in which each side is supposed to be deterred from a nuclear war by the prospect of a universal cataclysm regardless of who "won". A planned sequel was set largely in underground bunkers, where Dr. Strangelove had taken refuge with a group of women. The pattern has been explored otherwise (Ann Hornaday, '*Don't Look Up*' is a satire in the mold of 'Dr. Strangelove' and 'Idiocracy', *The Washington Post*, 8 December 2021).

## Promotion of nuclear war as a vital global necessity?

**Beyond hope-mongering:** The controversial question is whether the challenges of global governance have become so complex that assumptions regarding the possibilities of fruitful dialogue on the matter are increasingly naive exercises in hope-mongering and tokenism. The anti-war movement seemingly has little of coherence to offer in response to such challenges -- even if "stopping" is as successful as is hoped. The military sustains its coherence through being enthusiastically poised to "start" a conflict of global proportions -- eroding and destroying any latent opposition to it to the extent possible.

There is of course the irony that the military-industrial complex is readily framed as intrinsically evil by the anti-war movement, whilst the pacifist tendencies of the latter are themselves held to be dangerously naive -- if not evil -- by those favouring a military posture and the potential of nuclear strikes as a means of eliminating evil. The "stand-off" between the two perspectives can be understood as a feature of many decades -- one that has become tedious in its sterility in practice. Given the many critical challenges of increasing dimensions -- for which there is little real prospect of resolution in practice -- there is a case for promoting an alternative possibility.

**Courageously "clearing the air"?** As in many archetypal tales, is it time to "clear the air" and "have it out" -- as in the millennial-old pattern between competing gangs and tribes? Such a dynamic has always been appreciated in resolving leadership conflicts in school playgrounds, prisons and military camps -- for lack of any practical alternative. The process is enthusiastically celebrated and re-enacted in competitive sports and many movies -- in contrast to the limited attention and credibility accorded to "peace games".

Is there a case for shifting from "pussy-footing" proxy warfare to use of the thousands of nuclear weapons that have been so assiduously developed and deployed? Rather than cowardly techniques of "arms length" proxy warfare, manipulating others to fight for them -- thereby dishonouring the military tradition -- is it time for countries to place themselves "at risk" and to "stand-up" for what they believe in opposing each other?

Is it time to be courageously prepared to "take a bullet" rather than cowering in distant bunkers? Is engaging in nuclear warfare to be reframed as "biting the bullet" rather than indulging in "mealy mouth" discourse? (Nassim Nicholas Taleb, *Skin in the Game: Hidden Asymmetries in Daily Life*, 2018).

What does it take to get out of trench of complacency, to stand up and be targetted -- if one may not be able to shoot the other first?

**Just war theory:** For the opposing sides, this would be readily framed as a war by the "Good" against "Evil" -- according to the principles of [just war theory](#), articulated with the aid of religions, according to the highest accessible principles. Such principles could be fruitfully adapted to an honest articulation of "[Just suffering theory](#)" (2021).

The US-led NATO alliance clearly holds itself as embodying the "Good" -- if not the angelic, as some might argue. Despite viewing themselves otherwise, the alliance between Russia-China and other countries is readily held to be intrinsically evil -- as in references to the Axis of Evil. Alternative perceptions are necessarily held to be inspired by the forces of evil. The actions of each side embody the "good" in opposition to the "evil" embodied by the other. Humanity has not developed insights to transcend this paradox -- and sees little need to invest in such possibilities, in contrast with the massive investment in imposing the good on the evil other.

## Good time for civilization to die -- with dignity?

Much is made of the consequences and experience of individual aging. Increasing concern is expressed with respect to aging societies. Related concerns are expressed with respect to aging leadership in those societies. Far less is said regarding aging civilizations and the consideration which this might merit.

**Individual perspective:** Missing from such perspectives is a consideration occasionally raised with respect to individuals, namely when it is a "good time to die". How then to approach the question of when it would be a good time for the current global civilization to die? How might this be done with the dignity that is an individual aspiration?

It is the reflections on the manner of the timely death of the individual which would appear to be the primary source of insight of relevance to that of civilizations. Examples of such reflections include:

- Charles Krauthammer: *The Fine Art of Dying Well* (*Time Magazine*, 5 March 2007), as notably reviewed by Morgan Rempel (*Dying At The Right Time*, *Philosophy Now*, 76, May/June 2014)

- Robert Bellarmine: *The Art of Dying Well* (1847)
- Katy Butler: *The Art of Dying Well: a practical guide to a good end of life* (2019)
- Ira Byock: *Dying Well: the prospect for growth at the end of life* (1997)
- Karen Speerstra and Herbert Anderson: *The Divine Art of Dying: how to live well while dying* (2014)
- John Wyatt: *Dying Well: dying faithfully* (2018)
- Lydia S. Dugdale: *The Lost Art of Dying Well: reviving forgotten wisdom* (2020)
- Lydia S. Dugdale: *Dying in the Twenty-First Century: toward a new ethical framework for the art of dying well* (2015)
- Julia Neuberger: *Dying Well: A Guide to Enabling a Good Death* (2017)
- Jared W. Ludlow: *Untimely Death: Is There a Good Time to Die?* (2021)
- T. Patrick Hill and David Shirley: *A Good Death: taking more control at the end of your life* (1992)
- Ian M. Kilgour: *The Art of Dying Well: ideas and reflections to help you face your death with courage, peace and hope* (2019)
- Marilyn Webb: *The Good Death: the new American search to reshape the end of life* (1997)

Other clues are offered in the light of increasing concern with assisted dying from a medical perspective ([peer-reviewed articles](#)), and when this might be appropriate:

- Zeinab Hemati, et al: *Dying with Dignity: a concept analysis* (*Journal of Clinical Nursing*, 25, 2016, 9-10)
- Ronald W. Pies: *Is "Death with Dignity" Really Possible?* (*Psychiatric Times*, 1 December 2021)
- Dale Archer: *Dying With Dignity* (*Psychology Today*, 11 April 2014)
- Peter Allmark: *Death with Dignity* (*Journal of Medical Ethics*, 28, 2002, 4)
- M. de Haas, et al: *Dying 'on time' in dementia* (*International MinD Conference 2019: Designing with and for People with Dementia*, 2019)
- Andrea Rodríguez-Prat, et al: *Patient Perspectives of Dignity, Autonomy and Control at the End of Life: systematic review and meta-ethnography* (*PLOS One*, 24 March 2016)

Extensive reference is however made to the slogan *Hoka Hey* of *Crazy Horse*, a renowned Lakota Sioux warrior. This is translated as "a good day to die". There would appear to be a case for an equivalent to various explorations of "dialogue with death" -- an exploration by global civilization of the prospect of its own imminent death *Arthur Koestler, Dialogue with Death*, 1937; Ian Kinnes, *Dialogues with Death, The Archaeology of Death*, 1981; Gordon Tappan, *Dialogues with Death. Humanistic Psychology Institute*, 1974).

The argument by Anton van Niekerk emphasizes that the "medical profession has a duty to assist" (*We have a right to die with dignity, The Conversation*, 26 October 2016). This frames the provocative question as to what "professions" should be called upon to assist in the death of civilization. Recommendations by the UN for individuals suggest their reinterpretation for an aging civilization (*The Right to End-of-Life Palliative Care and a Dignified Death, UN-ECLAC for the Expert Group Meeting on Care and Older Persons*, December 2017).

**Corporate perspective:** Some clues are offered from the occasional consideration of the demise of corporations -- given their relatively limited lives and the frequency of bankruptcies. However it is the major corporations which have existed over decades (or even centuries) which are a focus of particular attention.

The sense of a "time to die" can of course be explored from the perspectives of corporation considering [bankruptcy](#) -- or faced with it (*World facing bankruptcy time bomb, Phys.org*, July 2020; Hillel L. Presser, *Five timing factors to consider when filing bankruptcy*, 11 June 2018; Douglas Farquhar, *7 Reasons Why the Timing of Your Bankruptcy Filing Is Crucial*, 22 October 2010).

Financial considerations may merely be symptomatic of others of which bankruptcy is a metaphor, as can be the case of not-for-profit organizations, institutions, and initiatives. Academic disciplines may well come to be considered "bankrupt". In all such cases the question can arise as to how and when the initiative should "die" or be considered "dead". How the dying may then be achieved with dignity is another matter.

Some initiatives may specifically anticipate their probable demise through a "[sunset clause](#)" -- suggesting such a possibility for the current civilization.

**Cultural perspective:** Potentially considered especially tragic is the "death" of cultures and [ethnic groups](#), exemplified by that of languages. Attention is periodically accorded to [endangered languages](#), and to the "last speakers" of a language embodying a culture (*10 Fascinating Cultures That May Soon Disappear, Listverse*, 10 October 2014). In the case of religions central to the identity of such cultures, the many divinities of the past are also suggestive (*List of Gods and Goddesses From Antiquity, Learn Religions*).

This perspective frames the question as to how the disappearance of cultures may be enabled, given the historical role of colonial powers in endeavouring to do so. The controversial ethical considerations recall those currently highlighted with respect to "assisted dying" and "voluntary euthanasia" of individuals.

**Civilizational perspective:** The rise and fall of civilizations is a particular concern of historians (Arnold J. Toynbee, *A Study of History*, 1934-1961; Johan Galtung and Sohail Inayatullah, *Macrohistory and Macrohistorians: Perspectives on Individual, Social, and Civilizational Change*, 1997). It may be termed [societal collapse](#), thereby including the extinction of cultures.

A framework offering insight is that of disease, understood collectively and psychosocially -- rather than individually and physically. By borrowing from the Greek historian Thucydides the metaphor of a singularly subtle disease, the argument is developed by John K. Williams (*The Disease from which Civilizations Die, Foundation for Economic Education*, 1 September 1985). The framework can be explored otherwise (*Cognitive Implications of Lifestyle Diseases of Rich and Poor*, 2010; *Memetic and Information Diseases in a Knowledge Society*, 2008).

Given the multiple crises with which global society is so evidently confronted, there is currently a degree of concern expressed with

regard to the probable collapse of a declining civilization (Jared Diamond, *Collapse: how societies choose to fail or succeed*, 2005; John Michael Greer, *The Long Descent: a user's guide to the end of the Industrial Age*, 2022). A contrast has been made between decline and collapse -- going out "with a bang rather than with a whimper" -- as noted by Craig Collins:

As modern civilization's shelf life expires, more scholars have turned their attention to the decline and fall of civilizations past. Their studies have generated rival explanations of why societies collapse and civilizations die. Meanwhile, a lucrative market has emerged for post-apocalyptic novels, movies, TV shows, and video games for those who enjoy the vicarious thrill of dark, futuristic disaster and mayhem from the comfort of their cozy couch. (*Four Reasons Civilization Won't Decline: It Will Collapse, Resilience*, 10 August 2020)

With bankruptcy justifying the demise of corporations, is global civilization to be variously considered "bankrupt", whether economically or culturally. The level of public debt is an indicator of the former, but the ineffectual nature of thinking informing global governance is especially indicative of the latter. Is global civilization now intellectually bankrupt -- if not spiritually so?

## "Tough love" for humanity through unexplored "negative strategies"?

Considerable energy is invested in exhorting constructive, positive behaviour in response to social and other problems. This approach has been used for many past decades. It is the basis for many institutional strategies, whether at the level of the United Nations, governments, or local communities. It is fair to say that these strategies have been relatively modest in their success -- in comparison with the challenges. This is as true with respect to health, violence, and environment, as it is with respect to discrimination and other issues. Critics point to characteristically tired language and outworn formulae.

**Paradoxical strategies?** Without denying the merit of these positive strategies, there is at least a case for reflecting on another strategic approach -- especially in the light of the current disruption of the international framework of law and order and the increasing recognition that the forces undermining positive achievement are more powerful and widespread than was previously assumed. There are increasing appeals for more imaginative approaches and what follows is a modest contribution to this end.

Such a possibility has been explored (*Liberating Provocations: use of negative and paradoxical strategies*, 2005). The argument considered the following themes:

Promoting "negative" strategies?	Playing games?	Commercialisation?
Why then engage in such an initiative?	But is it already done?	Reservations -- when to avoid paradox?
How would this provocative mode work?	Possibilities?	Justice?
Examples?	Seriously?	Doing the Unthinkable?
Precedents?	Surrealistically?	
Theory?	Provocative dramatisation and <i>médiatisation</i> ?	

In a perverse world, is there not a strong case for developing perverse strategies -- especially if that is what humanity is already in effect doing? The strategy of suicide bombers might be seen as a strangely distorted, provocative effort to achieve justice. Perhaps modern society, like those of the past, requires "preparatory" human sacrifice as a rationale for remedial initiatives? As a trivial example, why is so little documented regarding the number of such "sacrifices" required before seat-belt legislation was imposed for automobile drivers?

**Shock therapy?** As noted above, the international community has had recourse to lobotomy, metaphorically understood (*Severing the Russian Hemisphere as Problematic Global Lobotomy?* 2022). This has proven to be far less than successful as a remedial strategy for global civilization. Consideration could therefore be given to a related technique, metaphorically understood, which has been variously promoted by the medical profession, namely **shock therapy** or the variant known as **electroconvulsive therapy** (ECT). An electrically induced generalized seizure (without muscular convulsions) is thereby used to manage refractory mental disorders.

There is little question that global society can be characterized as suffering from "refractory mental disorders" -- whether or not these can be usefully associated with problematic conditions in the "global brain" (as mentioned above). As applied to the individual, ECT is considered a safe and effective intervention for **major depressive disorder**, **mania**, and **catatonia** -- conditions which could be variously recognized in global society in this period.

Curiously one feature of nuclear war may take the form of a **nuclear electrical magnetic pulse** (EMP), as noted above. As a burst of electromagnetic radiation created by a nuclear explosion, this could be understood from a global perspective as having an analogous effect to ECT applied to the individual.

Three components of nuclear EMP are distinguished: "E1", "E2" and "E3". E1 causes most of its damage by causing electrical **breakdown voltages** to be exceeded, thereby destroying computers and communications equipment. The main problem with E2 is that it immediately follows E1, which may have damaged the devices that would normally protect against E2. The E3 component has similarities to a **geomagnetic storm**, producing geomagnetically induced currents in long electrical conductors, damaging components such as power line transformers. Also known as an "Enhanced-EMP", a super-electromagnetic pulse is a relatively new type of warfare in which a nuclear weapon is designed to create a far greater electromagnetic pulse in comparison to standard nuclear weapons of mass destruction.

Whilst the effects of EMP on infrastructure have been extensively studied, relatively absent are considerations of very extensive global communication breakdown, as envisaged above. In terms of collective psychotherapy, it is the immediate remedial potential of EMP which merits attention -- in the light of insight into the therapeutic effects of ECT.

**Electronics-free days?** A far less "convulsive" possibility than the catastrophically "shocking" consequence of EMP is already variously promoted annually in the form of [International Internet-Free Day](#), the [World Day Without Wi-Fi](#), and the [World Days Without Phone and Smartphone](#). These are comparable with the annual [World Car-Free Day](#), sponsored by the UN Environment Programme.

Given that such days are primarily voluntary -- "to raise awareness" -- they are characterized by exemptions, justified by response to emergency. Greater collective learning would potentially result from the absence of exemptions in the case of EMP. These would be illustrated by any "Power-Free Day", "Food-Free Day", "Water-Free Day", "Medication-Free Day", or "Sanitation-Free Day". These are of course characteristic of the lives of many exposed to natural disasters, strike action, or underprivileged environments.

It is noteworthy that variants of a "week" or a "month" may be enforced by religious restrictions associated with fasting, or by prohibition of use of technology.

**Promotion of the problematic?** Whether or not the anti-war movement is now deemed to be relatively ineffectual, **what effect would strong popular promotion of nuclear war now have?**

There is recognized value to [role reversal](#) as a psychotherapeutic technique in [psychodrama](#), whereby a protagonist's intrapersonal conflicts deeply and explicitly on stage. The protagonist is invited to move out of their own position or role into the significant other's position and enact that role. What if nuclear war was promoted more vigorously than through the threats evoked by the military-industrial complex -- then to be framed as self-serving and cowardly by comparison?

## Requisite sacrificial representation

If nuclear warfare is to be envisaged as a remedial process, as argued above, careful attention is required as to how it is to be presented and rendered attractive -- namely how it is to be packaged and marketed.

**Reframing collective human sacrifice:** Sacrifice has long been a central feature of religious ritual, most notably among the Abrahamic religions (Blair G. Van Dyke, *Elements of Sacrifice in Abraham's Time and Our Own*, *Religious Educator*, 10,, 2009, 1). The question is whether it is now a vital prerequisite for sustainable global civilization (*Fundamental Need for Human Sacrifice by Abrahamic Religions*, 2018).

As noted above, it can be argued that any piece of major legislation requires human sacrifice before arguments proposing it are perceived to be credible. This can be recognized with respect to elaboration of international agreements. Missing however are databases documenting the number of deaths which have been required in the case of each agreement -- in order to offer indications for vital future agreements.

**Senicide:** There is a long tradition of [senicide](#) in village communities in many cultures around the world where it is recognized that there are "too many mouths to feed" in a family. A family would achieve this by leading an elderly relative to a mountain or similarly remote and rough environment to die, not by means of suicide but by dehydration, starvation, or exposure. It may also be referred to as "[granny dumping](#)". It may be imposed on the elderly or framed as an honourable and voluntary form of euthanasia.

The process is of obvious relevance in aging societies, especially where abortion is already considered acceptable (Stephen G. Post, *Euthanasia, Senicide, and the Aging Society*, *Journal of Religious Gerontology*: 8, 1991, 1; Raimund Pousset, *Senicide and Old Age Killing, an overdue discourse*, 2023). With "Spaceship Earth" under transformation into a liferaft, the issues are readily highlighted in a thought experiment (*Resource Insights from Plus or Minus 12 People on a Liferaft*, 2014).

To the extent that governance may be responsive to the insights of artificial intelligence, senicide may be presented as a logical possibility (Xiaoling Xiang, et al, *Modern Senicide in the Face of a Pandemic: an examination of public discourse and sentiment about older adults and COVID-19 using machine learning*, *The Journals of Gerontology: Series B*, 76, 2021, 4). An understanding of "civilizational euthanasia" is unfortunately confused with deprecation of genocide.

From this perspective are current references to an "aging society" effectively misleading -- if not deliberately so? Do they deliberately avoid recognition that it is global society which is effectively approaching senility, with indications of dementia? This is indeed suggested by the many references to the "insanity" of global governance -- if not to its leaders specifically, as exemplified by many decisions..

**Collective self-grooming?** It is one thing to package warfare against others -- implying a quick resolution through eliminating the enemy. It is another matter to frame the highly probable sacrifice required by the process, given the response of the enemy and unforeseeable side effects. The requisite crafting of the enabling narrative might usefully seek inspiration from historical processes of mass suicide, whether in Aztec culture, the iconic Jewish suicide at [Masada](#), or the [Cathars](#) (*10 Largest Mass Suicides in History*, *WorldAtlas*).

Understood as a grooming process, inspiration is available from *kamikaze* pilots, engagement in trench warfare (with the capacity to go "over the top"), and the *jihad* of suicide bombers (Emiko Ohnuki-Tierney, *Kamikaze, Cherry Blossoms, and Nationalisms: the militarization of aesthetics in Japanese history*, 2002). It is of course the Cathars who framed the [cathartic experience](#) which global society can be considered to be unconsciously seeking through nuclear catastrophe.

It could be asked whether the global self-grooming process bears any resemblance to the [Jonestown massacre](#) of 1978 in which a community of 918 people committed "revolutionary suicide" through the consumption of poisoned [Kool-Aid](#). Could global civilization explore the honour to be cultivated through "collective [seppuku](#)" (*Honour Essential to Psycho-social Integrity*, 2005)?

**Martial music?** Music has traditionally been a major feature in mobilization for warfare, as with the role of "[war drums](#)" in many cultures. The iconic role of the bagpipe has long been noted, as presented by Miguel Ortiz:

... until 1996, the British government considered the bagpipes to be a bona fide weapon of war... In fact, when they were captured in combat, bagpipes were not inventoried as musical instruments like drums or bugles. Rather, they were listed as weapons along with sabers, rifles, and munitions. During WWI, roughly 2,500 British soldiers served as pipers and crossed No Man's Land armed only with their bagpipes. (*Bagpipes used to be classified as weapons of war*, *WeAreTheMighty*, 3 September 2022).

Music is noted as having played a significant role in military operations in Iraq to enable participant disassociation from the inflicted destruction, as noted by Lisa Gilman:

This article examines how American troops use music to navigate complex associations of place during deployment... describing using music to psychologically remove themselves from an environment. Technological transformations coupled with the particularities of war make musical listening especially salient in the day-to-day existence of contemporary American troops during wartime. Examining relationships between musical listening and place with a focus on the memories of veterans who were deployed to the Iraq war yields insight both into the critical role that music has for many contemporary troops involved in the physically and psychologically demanding context of war and to scholarly understandings of how music can operate in complicated processes of location and dislocation. (*Grounding the Troops: Music, Place, and Memory in the Iraq War*, *Volume: French journal of popular music studies*, 10 January 2013).

Society has avoided eliciting music to enable credibly coherent global governance (*A Singable Earth Charter, EU Constitution or Global Ethic?* 2006). Is now the time to elicit music in support of remedial nuclear war?

**From MAD to MAP?** The strategic creativity enabling development from 1962 of the policy of **Mutual Assured Destruction** (MAD) posited that a full-scale use of nuclear weapons by an attacker on a nuclear-armed defender with second-strike capabilities would cause the complete annihilation of both the attacker and the defender. This is based on the theory of rational deterrence, which holds that the threat of using strong weapons against the enemy prevents the enemy's use of those same weapons. Once armed, neither side has any incentive to initiate a conflict or to disarm.

The primary application of this doctrine started during the Cold War (1940s to 1991), in which MAD was seen as helping to prevent any direct full-scale conflicts between the United States and the Soviet Union while they engaged in smaller proxy wars around the world. Proponents of MAD as part of the US and USSR strategic doctrine believed that nuclear war could best be prevented if neither side could expect to survive a full-scale nuclear exchange as a functioning state.

With this historical precedent, very little would seemingly be required to adapt the theory to ensure a Mutual Annihilation Pact (MAP). The merit of this alternative, as a collective variant of the **suicide pact**, would be to enable a refreshing new approach to the sterile pattern of dialogue between strategic opponents. Each would give the other an optimum amount of information to ensure successful annihilation. In particular this could include insights from enthusiasm for "**town twinning**" (or "sister city") initiatives. Pairs of individual cities could exchange precise coordinates in order to facilitate missile targeting -- in the spirit of suicide pacts on a smaller scale.

**Social responsibility?** Less evident is the inspiration recently offered by the unquestionable worldwide pandemic narrative of "doing the right thing" by others, as clarified by Consolato M. Sergi and Alexander K. C. Leung (*Vaccination: a question of social responsibility*, *Journal of Preventive Medicine and Hygiene*, 62, 2021, 1):

We want to emphasize that vaccination is not only a personal choice, but an issue of social responsibility, international development, and institutional commitment that need to be expressed with integrity.... Social responsibility is an ethical context where either an organization or an individual must act for the benefit of society. In this context, social responsibility has a task to allow an individual or a governmental or nongovernmental organization to perform in the best interests of the community at large. In the setting of individual social responsibility, it is mandatory for advocating political or social issues that can help others, e.g., advocating for policies targeting domestic and family violence in post-conflict communities. In this context, an egocentric view of parents choosing their children not to be vaccinated without consistent data should be considered irresponsible from a social point of view.

Whether collective uptake of this process will engender fatal consequences on a large scale is however only a matter of speculation at this time. The planned coordination by the World Health Organization of a more effective approach to worldwide vaccination may demonstrate otherwise.

The focus on individual social responsibility is however far less convincing in the light of the questionable outcome of past promotion of **corporate social responsibility**.

**Asteroid collision with Earth?** Irrespective of the possibility of nuclear war, remedial or otherwise, many of the issues highlighted are usefully brought into focus by the prediction of an **asteroid colliding with the Earth**. Considered a near-certainty in some form, planetary defence against that possibility is a focus of **asteroid impact avoidance**. The most recent warning indicates a probability of such a collision in 2046 (*Olympic pool-size asteroid has a 1-in-600 chance of impacting Earth*, 9 March 2023).

## Enabling symbolism, aesthetics, and otherwise

**Enabling metaphors?** Arguably there is a sense through which the military metaphors associated with development processes suggest

that development discourse already places global society on a war footing inviting further manipulation (*Enhancing Sustainable Development Strategies through Avoidance of Military Metaphors*, 1998; Jim Glassman, *Drums of War, Drums of Development: the formation of a Pacific ruling class and industrial transformation in East and Southeast Asia, 1945-1980*, 2018).

As part of any grooming process, there is clearly the possibility of developing relevant collective metaphors, as an extension of those enabling individual death (*Metaphors To Die By: correspondences between a collapsing civilization, culture or group, and a dying person*, 2013).

Given the framing offered by *Dr Strangelove*, as noted above, it is appropriate to note that Stanley Kubrick, as director of the film, subsequently acknowledged its sexual connotations -- from intromission (the planes going in) to the last spasm (the ride down on the bomb and detonation at target). (Alison Castle, *The Stanley Kubrick Archives*, 2008, p. 359). A remedial nuclear war invites further development of such insights, perhaps recognizing that MAP (as a pact) is fundamentally a sexual contract -- a "Geneva convention" between opposing parties understood otherwise. Perhaps from fission to fusion as modelled by genetic coiling (*Planetary Impalement by Stakeholder Capitalism?* 2023; *DNA Supercoiling as a Pattern for Understanding Psycho-social Twistedness*, 2004).

Of potential relevance to any reframing of the "death of civilization" is the extensive research interest in "near-death experiences" of individuals. This frames the question as to the nature of a "near-death experience" of collectivities and especially of a civilization. Could remedial nuclear war be understood as offering a collective an experience of that nature?

**Aesthetic symbolism?** Particular attention has been given to the aesthetics of dying (Sushila Blackman, *Graceful Exits -- How Great Beings Die: death stories of Tibetan, Hindu and Zen Masters*, 1997; Harold Bloom, *Till I End My Song: a gathering of last poems*, 2010). This is especially evident in the **death poems** crafted by monks in the Zen tradition (Yoel Hoffmann, *Japanese Death Poems: written by Zen monks and Haiku poets on the verge of death*, 1986). A renowned poetic reflection is offered by John Keats in his *Ode to a Nightingale*.

Considerable importance is attached to celebrating **past conflicts** through memorials -- although those commemorating massacres are less frequent and more selective, as noted separately (*Towards Inclusive Multi-Massacre Memorials to Victims of Conflict*, 2022).

Ironically, given the above argument, there is a case for developing "anticipatory memorials" to the catastrophic **future demise** of the current civilization. The iconic role of the *Guernica* painting by Pablo Picasso is suggestive in this respect, as argued separately (*Reimagining Guernica to Engage the Antitheses of a Cancel Culture*, 2022). This explored the possibility of rendering coherent the surreal nature of the engendering condition of catastrophe as a hyperobject.

From an architectural perspective, what might be constructed to survive a global nuclear holocaust and embody the remarkable features of the current civilization? The construction of **Mayapan** toward the end of the remarkable Mayan civilization could be seen as an example. In its ruins archaeologists now reconstruct the forces that destroyed it, as noted by Tatiana Proskouriakoff (*The Death of a Civilization*, *Scientific American*, 1 May 1955).

The aesthetic "evocation" of civilizational decline can be presented as follows:

If the creations of great artists reveal the underlying psychological and spiritual atmosphere of the times, then an honest survey of modern art must lead one to consider the possibility that modern civilization is suffering from a spiritual sickness -- a deep existential loneliness, an eruption of the demonic, a negation of human nature and a fragmentation of the human form, a celebration of chaos -- and thus perhaps, even a "sickness unto death". (*Modern Art and the decline of Civilization*, *Academy of Ideas*, 13 March 2023)

**Evoking poignancy and nostalgia -- through flowers?** Curiously flowers play a considerable role in the process of dying, whether to reframe the environment of hospice and intensive care, as wreaths at any funeral, on gravestones, or in memorial gardens. Also curious is their importance in the decoration of conference rooms in which governance of the world is deliberated -- with the nostalgic evocation of "what might have been".

Their use is characteristic of memorials to deaths in the past -- especially on a large scale. This is exemplified by Remembrance Day, otherwise known as **Poppy Day**, in poignant commemoration of the fallen of World War I -- and variously adapted to those of World War II.

A remarkably insightful study of the role of flowers in relation to war is provided by Ann Elias (*War and the Visual Language of Flowers: an antipodean perspective*, *War, Literature and the Arts*, 20, 2008). This explores the poppy as an emotive symbol, an example of significance and symbolism of floral imagery to the war imagination. It notes the incongruity of flowers -- which popularly signify innocence and beauty -- within military contexts. Elias specifically remarks on the philosophical study of the significance of flowers by Claudette Sartillot (*Herbarium Verbarium: the discourse of flowers*, 1993):

... it is in their nature to embody double meanings, since flowers are male and female in one, and when cut they become mobile metaphors that do not denote any fixed identity. In war imagery they oscillate between the beautiful and the ugly, the masculine and the feminine, death and love, and the transcendent as well as the abject. They are simultaneously symbols of grief for the slain, and symbols of hope about life's renewal.

This ambiguity is further exemplified by their metaphorical use in relation to civilization, as discussed separately -- given the prospect of its demise (*Flowering of Civilization -- Deflowering of Culture*, 2014).

**Soma?** Elias concludes:

Nationalism depends on the symbolism and aesthetic of red which enfolds not only visceral references to the dead but also historical references to Flanders fields. However, the red poppy that increasingly emerges today as symbol of contemporary war, and its aftermath, is the cultivated narcotic poppy from Afghanistan. The Flanders poppy and the Afghanistan poppy symbolise two different eras of warfare, but in both cases, their image embodies the melancholy of the human condition which is the struggle between war and peace.

It could be considered profoundly ironic that [opium](#) is derived from the poppy seed -- given the manner in which the drug facilitates forgetting. More ironic is the extent to which the United States in particular is faced with an [opioid crisis](#) associated with deaths by overdose on a large scale. Approximately 80 percent of the global pharmaceutical opioid supply is consumed in the United States.

This may be usefully compared to the [soma](#) as the ritual drink of Hindu tradition, variously associated with ensuring forgetfulness, about which it is noted in *Wikipedia* that:

We have drunk the soma; we have become immortal; we have gone to the light; we have found the gods.  
What can hostility do to us now, and what the malice of a mortal, o immortal one?

**Evocation of civilizations past?** A globally destructive nuclear war could evoke fruitful qualitative reflection thereafter on what has been lost -- as with the poignancy for some of lost civilizations, as with the myth of Atlantis (*List of lost lands*, *Wikipedia*). An Irish Celtic myth recalls the story of an elder race (the [Tuatha Dé Danaan](#)) that through their wisdom were eventually able to "withdraw into the stones".

A sense of past "golden eras" may well give focus to future consideration of any "renaissance", and the possibility of engaging with otherness otherwise (*Post-Apocalyptic Renaissance of Global Civilization*, 2018).

## Collective unconscious sexual connotations of nuclear submarines?

**Phallic associations:** As noted above with respect to *Dr. Strangelove* (*Dr. Strangelove: An Analysis*, *Teen Ink*, 12 January 2014), it is not surprising to discover references to the sexual connotations of rockets and missiles, as phallic symbols *par excellence* (Andrew Naughtie, *Jeff Bezos' phallic rocket deserves all the ridicule it gets*, *The Independent*, 20 July 2021; Sophie Mellor, *Jeff Bezos's historic rocket trip created one giant meme trail on Earth*, *Fortune*, 21 July 2021; *Phallic Weapon*, *TV Tropes*).

The phallic association notably extends to submarines:

- *Why do submarines look like dicks?* (*r/shittyaskscience*, 2013)
- *Nuclear submarines, later nuclear weapons? Phallic symbols for Australian politicians* (*Antinuclear*, 20 July 2013)
- Ceridwen Hall: *Submarine Reconnaissance: Bodies, Permutations, Voyages* (*Southern Humanities Review*, 53.4)

. This is especially the case of those with a nuclear payload, although the focus is primarily on the individual submariner:

- Aaron Satloff: *Psychiatry and the Nuclear Submarine* (*American Journal of Psychiatry*, 124, 1967, 7)
- J. L. Serxner: *An Experience in Submarine Psychiatry* (*American Journal of Psychiatry*, 125, 1968, 1)
- S. P. MacKenzie: *Revisiting the U.S. Navy Submarine Service Psychological Casualty Rate in World War II* (*Armed Forces and Society*, 46, 2020, 4)

**Problematic relationship to women:** The complex associations can be explored from an interdisciplinary perspective, recognizing that submarines are traditionally an environment for men -- from which women and sexual relationships have supposedly been systematically excluded:

- Linda Maria Koldau: *Why Submarines? Interdisciplinary approaches to a cultural myth of war* (*Journal of War and Culture Studies*, 4, 2011, 1)
- Henri Myrntinen: *Disarming Masculinities* (*Women, Men, Peace and Security*, 2003, 4)
- Carol Cohn: *Sex and Death in the Rational World of Defense Intellectuals* (*Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society*, 12, 1987, 4)

Curiously the dynamics between nuclear submarines of opposing parties (and their personnel) are now celebrated imaginatively as central themes in major [submarine movies](#). The extensive list of over 150 submarine-themed films provided by *Wikipedia* (culled from a variety of databases) distinguishes those of World War II and earlier, from those of the Cold War and after, noting those of a "future or fantastic past". Why have these proven to be so enthralling? Recognizing that their cultivation as entertainment is part of the "grooming" process noted above, potentially relevant commentary includes:

- Anne Billson: *Naval Gazing: the submarine's fathomless rise to screen stardom* (*The Guardian*, 24 Jun 2019)
- Patrick Mannix: *The Rhetoric of Antinuclear Fiction: persuasive strategies in novels and films* (Bucknell University Press, 1992)
- Linda Maria Koldau: *Submarine Films as Aesthetic Reflection of War History and War Strategy* (*Repräsentationen des Krieges*, 2012)
- J. Proudfoot and P. Kingsbury: *Periscope Down! Charting Masculine Sexuation in Submarine Films* (*Psychoanalytic Geographies*, 2014)

**Unconscious implications?** Although reference may be made to phallic connotations, as noted above, far less evident are their implications -- on which psychoanalysts such as Sigmund Freud might have focused. Freud's framing of the [unconscious mind](#) is

typically illustrated with an iceberg showing the ID as a "submarine" zone below the surface. With respect to warfare, it is appropriate to recall that the views of Freud were solicited by Albert Einstein (David Byron, *What Freud and Einstein tell us about war*, *Polemology*, 1 April 2017). This was consistent with Einstein's concerns evoked with Bertrand Russell (*The Russell-Einstein Manifesto*, 9 July 1955).

Missing is therefore the potential relevance of "penis envy" as it might play out in "missile envy" and the construction of ever larger nuclear submarines (Aaron Johnson, *Missile Envy: Nuclear War and Man's Theology*, *Medium*, 4 February 2018).

Further insights might usefully derive from [castration anxiety](#), [erectile dysfunction](#), "impotence", and "shooting blanks". (Andreja Zevnik and Moran Mandelbaum, *Psychoanalysis in Global Politics and International Relations*, 2021; Robert Schuett, *Political Realism, Freud, and Human Nature in International Relations: the resurrection of the Realist Man*, 2010; Kurt Jacobsen, *Why Freud Matters: psychoanalysis and international relations revisited*, *International Relations*, 27, 2013, 4). Given the manner in which superpower hegemony (as a form of neo-colonialism) is understood to be ensured by a fleet of nuclear submarines, insights into colonialism from a psychoanalytical perspective are also of potential relevance (Sally Swartz, *Psychoanalysis and Colonialism: a contemporary introduction*, 2023).

**Implications from submarine films:** It is however the study by Proudfoot and Kingsbury (2014) which seemingly offers the articulation of greatest relevance to this argument -- in the light of the later insights of [Jacques Lacan](#) rather than of the earlier insights of Freud. They introduce their argument as follows:

The question of the Other's desire is central to submarine films. Whether in the confrontation between two captains in *U-571*, a submarine and a destroyer in *The Enemy Below*, or a captain and a CIA analyst in *The Hunt for Red October*, an uncanny number of submarine films stage the same scenario: a dyad of male protagonists attempting to locate the desire of the Other through the opaque signifiers of sonar pings, radio silence, screw propellers, depth charges, and strategic maneuvers. Aided by their well-disciplined all-male crews, submarine captains sound the depths behind these submerged signifiers, searching for their signifieds...

That argment continues:

When one watches films set on submarines, it quickly becomes apparent that they share a set of genre conventions in the same way as the Western or horror film. Just as the Western would be incomplete without the "showdown" and the horror film incomplete without the protagonists "splitting up" in order to find the killer, the submarine film is almost unthinkable without the sub diving below "hull crush depth" or submariners listening anxiously to the sound of depth charges detonating overhead. Following the tenets of genre theory..., we elaborate a series of recurring conventions in submarine films that stage masculine sexuation, including the obsession with the military chain of command as a fetishization of the symbolic order, the tyrannical figure of the submarine captain, and the Oedipal structure of the relationship between the captain, executive officer ("XO") and crew. Our argument is that these seemingly hackneyed clichés perform an ideological function within the genre and illuminate key elements of Lacan's theory of masculine sexuation.

The context is of course the ocean depths of the world, appropriately recalling the complementary psychoanalytical insights of [Carl Jung](#) regarding the [collective unconscious](#) with which water is so strongly associated (Stephen Farah, *Mysterium Oceanus*, *Center of Applied Jungian Studies*, 2022; Carl Jung, *Water is the commonest symbol for the unconscious*, *Carl Jung Depth Psychology*, 20 April 2020; *Concept of Collective Unconscious*, *Carl Jung Resources*; Susan Schumacher Voss, *Underlying Patterns in International Relations: the role of the unconscious in cooperation and conflict*, *Pacifica Graduate Institute*, 2016; Brent J. Steele, *Restraint in International Politics*, 2019).

Submarines may then be understood as vehicles through which collections of males symbolically navigate the depths of the unconscious in quest of a challenging Other. The submarines can be recognized as symbolic penises in their own right, or as armed with multiple penises (a male fantasy) in the case of [ballistic missile submarines](#). The missiles are capable of striking targets thousands of kilometres around the globe -- a form of planetary impalement with which use of the stake metaphor is curiously associated (*Planetary Impalement by Stakeholder Capitalism?* 2023).

Of relevance to any psychoanalytical perspective is the strange association of submarines with death -- as "coffins", literally and metaphorically understood (James Wharton, *U Boats: 'Grey Coffins' That Shaped Two World Wars And Forged The Era Of The Submarine*, *Forces.net*, 26 August 2020; Ali Kefford, *World War 2's deadliest mission saw fearless heroes accept death in steel coffins*, *Daily Mirror*, 12 November 2021; Kyle Mizokami, *Why China's First Nuclear Submarines Were Underwater Coffins*, *The National Interest*, 5 March 2021; James Holmes, *Underwater Coffins: These 5 Submarines Quite Simply Are the Worst Ever*, *The National Interest*, 24 April 2019; Mark Episkopos, *Underwater Coffins: 5 Worst Submarines from Russia*, *The National Interest*, 12 November 2021; ).

More curious is the unconscious impact during World War II of "U-boats", and through films thereafter -- given their potential recognition in English as "You-boats". Ironically, [Youboat](#) is now the largest website for power boats, sailing boats, rigid or semi-rigid hulled inflatables.

**Variants of the pattern:** As vehicles the pattern has been expressed otherwise in the case of the [worm riders](#) on [sandworms](#) on the world of Arrakis in the renowned science fiction of Frank Herbert (*Dune*, 1965; with sequels and movie) -- acclaimed as the best such novel. The implications for consciousness feature in the production of "spice" on Arrakis, understood as enhancing the multidimensional mental abilities necessary for space navigation.

Ironically the various competing schools of psychoanalysis merit recognition as "submarines" in their own right -- "collective cognitive vehicles" navigating the unconscious (or calling its existence into question) in an effort to explicate meaningful engagement with an Other. Complementing the symbolic significance of the penis, contrasting importance is associated with the vagina and the [Oedipus complex](#). There is clearly a case for exploring the global symbolic implications of multiple (tiny) penises desperately navigating a vast, but singular, ocean on a quest for an Other or for their Mother (from Lacanian and Freudian perspectives respectively). Is there a cognitive "hole" at the heart of "gIObal" -- one calling for greater comprehension, as argued by Ilan Kapoor (*Psychoanalysis and the GIObal*, University of Nebraska Press, 2018)?

**AUKUS?** Considerable strategic importance is controversially associated at the time of writing with the trilateral [AUKUS](#) security agreement for the construction of nuclear submarines. The controversy is most vigorously expressed by a former Prime Minister of Australia (*Paul Keating labels Aukus submarine pact 'worst deal in all history'*, *The Guardian*, 15 March 2023; *Paul Keating savages AUKUS nuclear submarine deal*, *ABC News*, 15 March 2023). Their implication as "coffins" is already evoked (Roger Bradbury, et al, *"Billion-dollar coffins": detection tech to render AUKUS submarines useless*, *Pearls and Irritations*, 19 March 2023)

From a psychoanalytical perspective, what is to be understood by the acquisition of numerous cruise missiles (*Australia plans to buy 220 cruise missiles from America*, *The Canberra Times*, 17 March 2023)? Given any aspiration of psychoanalysis to facilitate "global healing", could the immediate use of such missiles facilitate a form of "shock therapy" consistent with recognition of the need for remedial global nuclear war?

Safety and security are the main arguments for Australian acquisition of nuclear submarines via AUKUS. Response to these issues merits comparison with mandatory [helmet wearing in bicycle riding](#). Curiously Australia is one of only four countries of the world where this is mandatory; these do not include its UK and US partners in AUKUS (see *Bicycle helmet laws by country*). The matter is controversial, but is this a case of unthinking safety overreach and risk aversion peculiar to Australian society -- despite its cultivated reputation for dangerous crocodiles, snakes, spiders and scorpions?

Given the relevance of genital symbolism to comprehension of the role of ballistic missile submarines, the military-industrial (and entertainment) complexes, and nuclear warfare, "AUKUS" invites decoding, perhaps as: *Arsenalism Unifying Knowledge of Unconscious Symbolism*. This follows from related speculation (*Mysterious Complementarity between Capitalism and Arsenalism*, 2020; *The Coalition of the Willy: musings on the global challenge of penile servitude*, 2004).

Also inviting speculation is the triadic form of the AUKUS agreement as an extension of the strategic [nuclear triad](#). This is a three-pronged military force structure that consists of land-launched nuclear missiles, nuclear-missile-armed submarines, and strategic aircraft with nuclear bombs and missiles. More intriguing is a possible conformality to the Freudian, Lacanian and Jungian triad. Potentially relevant is the complex study by Freud (*The Theme of the Three Caskets*, *Encyclopedia*, 1913)

**From "unclear", via "nuclear" and "nu-clear", to "all clear"?** In seeking an engaging presentation of the demise of civilization, the potential of playful or humorous possibilities should not be neglected (*Humour and International Challenges*, 1998; *Humour and Play-Fullness*, 2005).

A point of departure is an irritation voiced by physics, as the discipline most closely associated with the development of nuclear weaponry. It is focused on the distorted pronunciation of "nuclear" as "nuc-u-lar" by leading politicians in the USA (*What is the most important piece of knowledge that practitioners of nuclear physics wish to convey to the general public?* Kent University). That concern is echoed from other perspectives (Jessica E. Slavin, *"Nuclear" and "Nuclear" and So-Called Standard English*, *Marquette University Law School Faculty Blog*, 5 October 2008).

It is therefore surprising to discover the number of web references associating "nuclear" with "nu-clear", given "nu" as a common alternative to "new" in marketing presentations. Especially surprising is the range of music sites and resources associated with "nu-clear" and its variants. Also surprising is its use for a thread cutting oil by which screwing is enabled -- especially given other uses of those terms in a web environment.

Given the remedial potential of nuclear war as argued above, any further adaptation for mnemonic purposes to "new-clear" could trace the transformation from "unclear" to "all clear". The latter is the signal indicating that an air raid or other hazard has ended and that it is safe for civilians to leave their bunkers. As might be imagined, "new clear" has already been appropriately employed (Reta-Faye Walker, *The New-Clear Family: solutions for 21st Century families*) -- in response to a decades-long challenge (Daniel O Keeffe, *The New, Clear, Family*, *Galactic Literature*, 4 November 2020). That reframing would bode well for any "family of nations" in the aftermath of a remedial nuclear war (Morten Skumsrud Andersen, *The Family of Nations*, *Kinship in International Relations*, 2018).

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