

New World Disorder - The Next 20 Years: Hope or Despair?

by Graham Vanbergen via james - True Publica *Monday, Dec 11 2017, 7:18am*

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There is no doubt that the world is facing a wave of unprecedented uncertainties from political and civil unrest, conflict and terrorism to seemingly never-ending financial turmoil, climate change, the struggle for resources and disruptive technologies. Like it or not, no matter where we are, we are living in a new world disorder.



But the big question is how will the world fare over the next twenty years or so amid a global environment that is changing and developing at an unrelenting pace. The greatest immediate tests are emerging from the transition of a disintegrating post-war political system that fostered a massively increased trade and cultural exchange system that is now driving change and increased tensions on the geo-political chessboard. At the same time we are distracted from the demise of our home planet, ravaged by the decades long effects of greed driven globalisation, the consequences yet to fully unfold.

Strategic Forecasting predicts that the European Union will not so much collapse but splinter into four distinct groups; Western Europe, Eastern Europe, Scandinavia, and the British islands as relations break down and they become increasingly estranged from each other. It predicts that China will face political chaos as economic growth declines, that Russia will fall apart as it struggles to keep control of the worlds largest federation and that the U.S. will take a more isolationist stance.

I've spoken with some of the world's foremost commentators as they reflect on the past and look forward on the current trajectory of political and economic fortunes for the next 20 years in the regions where they live or work in the Middle-East, America, Europe and Asia more widely and the results are more complex than Strategic Forecasting predicts.

First up is award winning British journalist Jonathan Cook located in Nazareth, Israel. Known for his de-coding of official propaganda and outstanding analysis of events often obfuscated in the mainstream, which has made him one of the most reliable truth-tellers in the Middle East:

"Our increasingly globalised world means it is difficult – and probably unrealistic – to disentangle geo-strategic problems. Can the Palestinians' hopes of living in dignity really be separated from what happens in Syria, Washington, Europe and Iran?"

Two conflicting global trends will intensify over the next 20 years, and the fates of Israelis and Palestinians – and the rest of us – will hinge on how they play out.

The first is what might be termed the evolution of the “fortress state”, or the “homeland security” syndrome.

The elites in the most powerful states are moving into survival mode: externally against rival states as key resources deplete, and internally as resource shortages and climate change risk turning their own publics against them.

This requires a mix of outward belligerence and inward repression in which Israel already excels. State elites are likely to look to Israel for solutions based on its long experience of destabilising neighbours and using Palestinian areas as laboratories for experimenting in methods of subjugation, surveillance and control. This expertise could, in the words of Israeli analyst Jeff Halper, make Israel “indispensable” and provide it with continuing diplomatic and financial cover.

A second trend cannot be discounted, however. A globalised, interconnected world is one where information is much harder to control or suppress. The evident power of social media to bypass traditional media gatekeepers is already worrying these same elites. They are reacting, claiming that new media – rather than corporate and state media – are the purveyors of “fake news”.

The democratising role of social media is awakening larger sections of the population, especially the young, to the neo-imperial role of the US and its allies, to the inability of capitalism to address its own internal contradictions, and to key injustices, such as the case of the Palestinians. This trend will be hard to stop without overt censorship and repression.

The fate of the Palestinians will depend on the outcome of this wider clash: of the elites v’s the people. We see the first signs of this coming confrontation in the rapid growth of the international grassroots BDS movement – boycott, divestment and sanctions – and the backlash from western governments. They have quickly jettisoned their supposed commitment to free speech (remember Charlie Hebdo?) in favour of measures to suppress support for boycotts of Israel. The polarisation between leaders and led will intensify.

Despite all the evidence, I remain optimistic – both because that is my nature, and because history, however fickle, has a habit of eventually favouring those with justice on their side.”

Next is Felicity Arbuthnot, a British freelance journalist who has visited, written and broadcasted widely on Iraq, one of the few journalists to cover Iraq extensively even in the mid-1990’s during the sanctions and reported on the devastating effects that took place prior to America’s attack that killed over one million civilians:

“It is impossible, given the level of heartbreak and destruction wrought on the Middle East, not to be beyond all shame and mired in pessimism. From the religious zealots in Europe who launched eight major invasions, the Crusades, in the region, between 1095 and 1291 to “liberate” the Holy Land from the majority Muslim inhabitants, to the religious zealots led by George W. Bush and Tony Blair, in a second declared “Crusade” in 2003. It seems the lands of such an eye watering history of humanity, beliefs and wonders are never to be left to flourish amid the beauty and culture.

Fast forward to Winston Churchill who said of the Kurds and the inhabitants of Northern Iraq: “I do not understand this squeamishness about the use of gas. We have definitely adopted the position at the Peace Conference of arguing in favour of the retention of gas as a permanent method of

warfare.... I am strongly in favour of using poisoned gas against uncivilised tribes." (War Office minute, 12th May 1919.)

Lawrence of Arabia meddled in the region on behalf of the UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office and Gertrude Bell, British spy amongst other things, it is forgotten, was busy creating the "New Iraq" after the fall of the Ottoman Empire. In August 1921 she wrote with supreme patronisation: "We have finally crowned our little King." He was not, of course, an Iraqi. Sykes-Picot redrew the borders, severing families and ancient bonds.

Oil was discovered and fast forwarding again, the Project for the New American Century and all the indescribable horrors that have befallen the region since, with further threatened, based on lie after lie, with the UN either ignored or near mute.

But in spite of all, there is perhaps still hope in a region of towering pride, culture, spirit and ingenuity. It was Paul William Roberts who wrote of Iraq after the 1991 decimation, a haunting tribute that equally applies from Tehran in the East to Palestine's Jerusalem in the West:

"But for all the horrors, illegality, destruction, shame on the invaders and collective shame shared by so many, there is something Iraq will never lose"... the old people with resignation stamped across their foreheads, who can't go on yet will go on; the young married couples who still hope for a better life yet don't hope too hard lest it break their hearts, the countless unremembered acts of kindness and of love that fill desolate days, and I realise I would far prefer to be here than in any house where this war is justified. For it cannot be justified. But this region has always led to somewhere worth going. Baghdad is just as glorious in its ruin as it was in its glory, for something noble crawls from the rubble to spread golden wings in the light of dawn. The Gate of God opens wider."

John B. Cobb, Jr. is an American theologian, philosopher, and environmentalist described as one of the two most important North American theologians of the twentieth century:

Currently the threat of war between the United States and Russia is high. Fortunately, the recognition of Mutual Assured Destruction may hold both powers back from the use of nuclear weapons unless one side thinks that some kind of first strike could prevent a response. From time to time, continuous U.S. provocations of North Korea could start a nuclear war there that would be hard to contain. These are the most immediate threats to human survival.

I find myself assuming, without much justification, that our species will avoid this ultimate insanity, and concentrating on the threats that follow from the now well-known fact that our collective behaviour on the planet is unsustainable.

That means that if we continue in the deep ruts we are now in, our current global civilisations will collapse, if not in war, then by famine and disease. We are poisoning the ocean, the land, and the atmosphere. We are exhausting or destroying the sources of fresh water.

The battle of biochemistry against the evolution of new plant and animal diseases will not always be won. Much of the best farmland will be lost to rising sea levels and spreading deserts. Rising temperatures will make large parts of the planet uninhabitable. We will be more and more dependent on technology that will be more and more vulnerable. Meanwhile the middle class is already disappearing, and the rich and powerful will exploit the poor more and more ruthlessly. The poor will be less passive than in the past. Their struggle to survive will include violent resistance to the violence of the powerful. Population will plummet. The remnant will fight over what is left. The technology available for this fighting grows more and more comprehensively destructive. Since we

collectively have shown little willingness to change our ways radically, this seems to be the most probable scenario.

Accordingly, if I must choose between pessimism and optimism, I am a pessimist. But I stand in a tradition that calls for us to trump pessimism with what we call “theological virtues.” These are faith, hope, and love. I live in hope. Hope discerns hopeful developments here and there, new departures that, if pursued, could pull the world back from the brink. It delights in the emergence, now and again, of leaders who, if followed, would bring about the needed changes. It sees that history is unpredictable, full of surprises. To love in the context of hope is to care deeply about the whole and do what we can to participate in promising breakthroughs. It is also to generate what joy is possible in the here and now in acting for the flourishing of the whole.

Andre Vltchek is a political analyst, journalist, author and a filmmaker. He has reported and filmed armed conflicts in every corner of the world, served as a Senior Fellow at the Oakland Institute and is interviewed by major news and TV outlets across Asia for his incisive personal accounts:

Where do we go from here? The world seems to be heading towards the final showdown between the reactionary forces of the Western imperialism and those countries/nations that are determined to defend their rights to maintain their independent course, to protect their cultures and preserve interests of their people.

In a long term I remain very optimistic. In a short term, the confrontation may be inevitable, even brutal, but for more than five centuries, the world has been shouting in horror and pain, tormented by the Western colonialism and neo-colonialism. Most of the victims used to be invisible; they were suffering “somewhere there”, far away, where they “belonged”. Now people are refusing to suffer and to die in silence. They’d rather die standing, struggling, than to live in permanent agony and on their knees.

Powerful new media outlets, in Russia, Latin America, the Middle East and China are now confronting all orthodox Western mass media channels, challenging with determination and courage all official imperialist propaganda dogmas, while unveiling the devastation and killings caused by the Western imperialism in all corners of the globe.

Resistance is growing and the new coalitions are being constantly forged. It is definitely not good news for the West and for its collaborators. But it gives new hope to the rest of the world. I strongly believe that if left alone, the rest of the world would easily and quickly find the way to coexist peacefully, even to find solutions to many urgent ecological problems.

Without imperialism and savage capitalism, we would be already, for many decades, living in much gentler, peaceful and optimistic world.

There may have to be one more battle – a battle for survival of our human race. I only hope that if there has to be one, it would be the very last one: decisive and brief, with as little casualties as possible.

Jeff J Brown lives in China, he has been a speaker at TEDx, the Bookworm and Capital M Literary Festivals, the Hutong, as well as being featured in an 18-part series of interviews on Radio Beijing AM774, with former BBC journalist, Bruce Connolly:

China’s long march to postwar prominence began with communist liberation in 1949. Previously, life expectancy was only 35 years and literacy was 20%. It was brutally colonised, exploited and

addicted to opium, principally by Britain and America. By the end of the Mao Era in 1978, life expectancy for one-fourth of humanity skyrocketed to +65 years and literacy to +70%. The CPC had melded China into a formidable agricultural, industrial, technological and military powerhouse to be respected, in spite of inhumane, Cuba-esque sanctions.

While the economy grew over 6%/year, the population doubled, so per capita, China was still consumer poor. Deng's 1978 reforms were designed to keep China on its path of socialism, while profiting from market methods, to create the wealth needed to eventually transition into being a rich communist country.

Socialism with Chinese characteristics has breathtakingly shattered almost every socioeconomic and trade record in the history of civilization. Over 90% of the world's people brought out of poverty in the last 40 years are Chinese.

China is Earth's biggest (PPP) economy, creditor, manufacturer, exporter and trader. There is no end in sight, as the CPC is on track to meet its 2049 centennial goal to be the rich, communist society the country's constitution promises to deliver to its citizens. Unlike the West, China has done all this without occupying, colonizing and destroying other countries.

For 5,000 years, the Chinese have shown to have zero global imperialism in their DNA. For the sake of Earth's survival into the 21 st century, we need to jettison 500 years of Western tyranny, war and genocide, for responsible and visionary global leadership. China's proven record of win-win cooperation and social justice is a global model we can all benefit from. Time to jump aboard!

Nozomi Hayase Ph.D., is a former WikiLeaks Central contributing writer who has been covering issues of freedom of speech, transparency and the vital role of whistleblowers and cryptocurrencies. She is also a member of the editorial board of The Indicter:

I am optimistic about the next 20 years, because we live in a world where now there is true investigative journalism. WikiLeaks opened a door for a future that can be envisioned by everyday people. This whistleblowing site that rose to prominence in 2010 with the release of the Collateral Murder video, provided an avenue for those with conscience inside institutions to come forward and reveal fraud and abuse of the powerful without fear of political retaliation. Through the method of transparency, WikiLeaks brought a new form of scientific journalism. By employing cryptography and creating a technical infrastructure that is decentralized, they innovated journalism in the age of the Internet and became a global 4th estate resilient to censorship.

For so long, the press, purported watchdogs for power has been co-opted through media consolidation and acting as gatekeepers. In the last 10 years WikiLeaks, with its perfect record of document authentication, liberated free speech from institutions that failed to protect it. When people are informed about real actions of governments, they can withdraw consent and chart a path for self-determination.

Those in power work in secrecy, manipulating perception to engineer people's consent. From Chelsea Manning, Jeremy Hammond to Edward Snowden, we have seen waves of contagious courage. Despite coordinated attacks, WikiLeaks stays strong and keeps publishing. I see tremendous hope in this growing network of people who have begun taking the reins of their own destiny.

The transition from the evidently disintegrating post-war rules based system to a more complicated and international system that America and the West insist on leading will be messy - dangerous even

in the years ahead.

To date, the most powerful advocates and institutions to this system have made some disastrous decisions leading to increased tensions in almost every region of the world. The power brokers of the West are now facing an unprecedented challenge, particularly as rising discontent is gathering at an unstoppable pace within their own territories from disaffected but re-engaged citizens, much to the alarm of the ruling elite. Brexit, Trump, the elimination of the traditional establishment in the French elections and the rise of non establishment political parties is evidence of the rapidly changing political environment we now face.

The globalisation project is facing off against nationalism and protectionism headed up by populist movements, whilst traditional political power is being replaced by transnational social movements who increasingly dominate global politics - all of which adds considerable pressure to an already weakened structure.

The worry is that America and its Western allies could do the unthinkable in a desperate attempt to regain economic and political control and attack its perceived opponents in a typically aggressive show of force with catastrophic consequences.

The big problem is that the American policed security order and European inspired legal order have both fractured at the same time with no real candidates to replace them, thereby, creating a void that could be filled with dangerous ideologies pushed by dangerous individuals.

As Antonio Gramsci wrote from his Roman prison cell just before the last world war: "Disorder, war and even disease can flood into the vacuum that forms when the old is dying and the new cannot be born" - these words are truly relevant today.

The next 20 years will be more than just challenging but from this new world disorder, as we peer over the precipice, we may see the birth of new human collaboration and collective participation as technology combined with a more enlightened generation strive for global peace - an ideology not tried before.

Peoples across the world are trying to wrangle free of globalisation, colonialism, imperialism and the inequality it delivers. From the aforementioned collective commentary it is clear that the immediate future may well be confrontational and certainly testing, be it from political strife, conflict, famine, poverty, climate change and the like but there is considerable optimism that from the very edge, humanity may just come to its senses, and as Nozomi Hayase rightly observes that there is

"tremendous hope in this growing network of people who have begun taking the reins of their own destiny."

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