

Spinoza ~ The Philosopher Of Counter-Radicalization



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Part 1 ~ Personal meaning

It's an honour to address the *Spinozakring* in Amsterdam on *Spinozadag*. As a young man, I was living in Belfast during the darkest years of the terrorist Troubles, when I set out for Trinity College, in Dublin to begin 5 years of post-graduate research on the subject: "*Spinoza's Ethics and the Meaning of Life.*"

What followed was an unequal struggle - Spinoza was even more challenging than I thought - and I didn't find the meaning of life. In the process, I struggled, mentally. No one I met seemed the slightest bit interested in Spinoza and the more I read and understood *The Ethics*, the more isolated, anxious and remote from everyday life I became - as if I was going in one direction and everyone else was headed in another.

And during those difficult years, I learned new ways of thinking and *Being* - perspectives and insights on life and the human condition. Things that have stayed with me to this day; that made me who I am; and that will - I hope - play an important part in my future. After much difficulty, I learned to see and understand the world the way Spinoza saw it.

Spinoza became my anchor - my reference - for exploring life — a beacon of intellectual strength and independence. *'The Philosopher of Amsterdam'* - became my cultural hero in Belfast - not only for his philosophy, *but for his character*. And just as he was an outsider in his community, so was I.

I learned that the concept of Unity - of living with an attitude towards One-ness, cohesion, and cooperation — was central to Spinoza's thinking and that his greatest work, *The Ethics*, described a path to a radical form of mental health through three mutually reinforcing forms of unity, designed to cure three kinds of division.

The first step is to heal and unite the divided self, to overcome conflicted and self-harming emotions, using his psychology; the second, is to unite us with others in strong bonds of friendship, guided by his radical humanism; the third, a cure for ontological alienation in moments of insight when our drop-consciousness joins in an *oceanic* experience with the eternal.

These three perspectives on human existence - the psychological, the pragmatic and the metaphysical - define why Spinoza's thinking is so powerful.

Part 2 ~ The two truths

And this brings us to the tension at the centre of his *Ethics* - and indeed, the terrible contradiction at the heart of the human condition - one that generates so much religious superstition and metaphysical speculation. I'll try and put this as clearly as possible.

The first self-evident truth of the human condition is the subjective truth of Being, how we feel as we look outwards onto the world. We've already beaten *astronomical* odds to arrive as *self-conscious* beings and sense the significance of our moment. The truth of our individual identity - that we are separate and distinct from everything else - places us at the centre of our universe. We instinctively *prioritize* our needs and drives, those we love and care for, and the projects we value. Above all, we want our chance at life to continue.

The second self-evident *truth* - and it is just as mysterious — is that none of this matters. From the perspective of timeless eternity, whether we live or die, whether our projects succeed or fail, what we want for ourselves and others, means nothing. Everything we value - including our lives - will be taken from us, often brutally, no matter how hard we fight, how much we care, or how good or

valuable we are to Mankind. If you want to believe our lives and hopes matter in some objective way, chose a religion, but don't read Spinoza to find the answer.

These two truths represent life and death, or more accurately, time and eternity. They're at war with each other and define the drama of the human condition. Their conflict inspires great art, writing, theatre and music — acts of courage, love and self-sacrifice. But it also drives the dark side - depression, meaninglessness, war, suicide ... and violent extremism. The conflict is resolved in death, in that the second truth always wins - and we, as individuals - must surrender. *But*, it's our defiance, our stubborn striving *to hold our identity* in the face of inevitable loss that makes the human condition feel like a restless, if not urgent, roller-coaster ride.

Like many great thinkers, Spinoza tries to reconcile these two truths... and he does it beautifully. He teaches us how *both* perspectives, both truths can be held and experienced simultaneously. He shows us a way *to bring them together as a lived experience* - purely for the love, strength and peace of mind — it brings us. *This* is his magic.

His *Ethics* has gifted us a strange, extraordinary, philosophy; - *of* this world, and yet *not of* this world - that makes it one of the truly great philosophical masterpieces.

Part 3 ~ What do I do for Amsterdam?

Today, I'm a practitioner in counter-radicalization — not an academic. It was more than 30 years ago - in Jesus College, Oxford - that I last gave a lecture on "*Spinoza's Humanism*" - so forgive me if I am a bit rusty. I'm proud of my role as an advisor to the City of Amsterdam - in particular, for the opportunity to advise a Mayor who is not only a world-class politician - but a considerable fan of Spinoza.

Today, *I'm also speaking for myself*, since I also advise a number of governments and organizations around the world. Most of my work can't be made public. My approach is rooted in witnessing first-hand the community radicalization and violence in Northern Ireland, my training as a psychoanalyst - a decision inspired by reading Spinoza - and the intensity of my work in warzones. *But, what part does Spinoza play? How could ideas which were around 350 years ago, possibly impact on today's very modern and complex issues?*

Well, today - *since it's Spinozadag* - I'm going to present Spinoza as "*The*

Philosopher of Counter-Radicalization.” So far as I know, this is a world first. There are three ways his philosophy can help us.

The first is to use his theory of human emotions in *The Ethics* to re-think our approach to preventing radicalization

The second is to follow his radical intellectual lead in the Theological-Political Tractatus (TPT) to re-frame the situation the West finds itself in

The third is to use his political philosophy - with its emphasis on social cohesion and the management of hope over fear — to prevent polarization and radicalization.

My 4 axioms

Before I make the case, there are four simple axioms I use everyday that are inspired by Spinoza’s thinking.

a) First, understand causes rather than *react*

b) Secondly, “*Do No Harm*” to *our* Here, I follow Spinoza’s personal motto “*Caute*” - caution. The history of countering terrorist recruitment is littered with own-goals.

c) Third: if we are to understand decisions and direction, we must understand emotions.

d) My final axiom is, “*Be pragmatic, not ideological - take the path of least resistance.*”

Three kinds of wrong framing

The first question of counter-radicalisation is.... “*What’s the most effective way to prevent terrorist recruitment without harming ourselves?*”

Well, Spinoza inspires us to take a bold new approach — as he did himself. At the beginning of the Theological-Political Tractatus he says, “*All men are by nature liable to superstition*” and, since we must re-think where we are, we must first *examine our* own false narratives and superstitions.

Not a “Clash of Civilizations”

The most damaging superstition is the West’s default framing of the terrorist conflict as a religious, cultural and ideological war: a “*Clash of Civilizations*”. This terrible, delusional, slogan was used to radicalise *and* militarise the West’s response after 9/11 - with disastrous consequences.

It defined the conflict in binary, emotional, terms - “*You’re either for us or against*

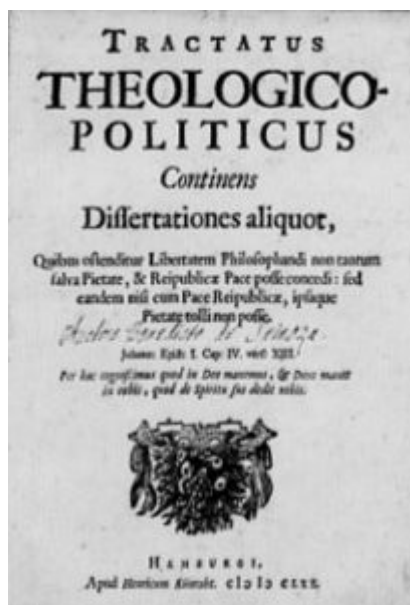
us;" "good Muslim v bad Muslim" — that made conflict more meaningful for terrorist recruits and enabled al Qaeda to claim, "Islam is under attack". We've also made the mistake of focusing on radical theology as the cause of radicalisation.

This over-determined the role of religion, fuelled Islamophobia, encouraged populism and helped to drive social and political polarization. In my view, the election of Trump as President of US can be traced directly to the failed overreaction of the US response to 9/11. And any hope that the West can recover from its mistakes has evaporated with Trump's election and his appalling appointments.

Not the ideology

It's no surprise that we're also using the wrong tactics by treating counter-radicalization as a kind of argument, a "Clash - or War of ideas" ... as if we could debate facts, apply theological arguments and alleged western values to defeat terrorism. It's called the "counter-narrative" and it has made things worse by drawing attention to the terrorists' point of view, without making any impact.

We're simply talking to ourselves. *Spinoza is very clear about this: true ideas don't have the power to remove obstinate emotions or beliefs simply by virtue of being true.* And realistically, theological debate - as Spinoza would argue — has got nothing to do with truth anyway. Put simply, we can never win this argument - *even when we're right.* It's the wrong argument - and the wrong approach.



Part 4 ~ Frame the conflict as a psychological war

So if it's not a "Clash of Civilizations", what is it? Spinoza devotes a majority of *The Ethics* to understanding human emotions. And no emotions are more important in his politics than the interplay of hope and fear. Indeed, the elimination of fear is central to his project. He says, "a free people is led more by hope than by fear, while a subjugated people is led more by fear than by hope." That's our clue.

Today, he would recognize that European democracies - not the Middle East -

have become the front-line *in a new kind of psychological war*, around the emotion of fear; fear for security; fear of Muslims and Islam; fear of immigrants; fear of refugees, fear of loss for a way of life - and most importantly, *fear of uncertainty and the future*. In Spinoza's terms, all this impacts our imagination, filling us with negative, passive, emotions - anger and fear.

And we should recognize that warfare today has evolved - for all practical purposes - into knowing and understanding how to influence what people think and feel. Think of the current accusations of cold-war revivalism against Putin for his influence in the recent US elections.

Populists and IS share the same strategic objectives — to divide, polarize and radicalize our populations. We're the *front-line* of this psychological war since this is where the fear of IS and its propaganda meets the amplification of domestic populism. Populists convert these fears into nostalgia for a lost past using the language of nationalism, racism and Islamophobia. They endow nativism with an almost mystical significance.

The strategic weakness of democracy is that, without strong leadership, it struggles to cope with instability and sudden movements in mass psychology. As Obama said last week - we cannot take democracy for granted. And so Western democracies become weaker and core democratic values come under attack from within. Much of this fear is hysterical and irrational. For example, a majority of Americans now think they or their family members will be killed in an IS attack. In fact, since 9/11, they're almost 300 times more likely to be killed by a police officer - and everyday, more likely to be killed by far-right extremists than jihadists.

The result is that irrational fear has given our body politic an *auto-immune* disease - we're attacking ourselves. As Spinoza tells us (in the TPT) ... *Every system of governance is threatened more by its own citizens than by its open enemies*. And IS uses this strategic weakness to press home its psychological attack. And, by this way, populism poses a much greater threat to our democracy than IS ever could.

Spinoza's psychology - it's emotions — not the ideology

One of the major successes of Spinoza's philosophy is that it provides the basis of a modern scientific psychology and psychoanalytic theory. Spinoza's psychology

places an enormous emphasis on the power of emotions to subvert everything else in human life, so let's see where that takes us.... And let's look at the facts.....

The terrorist ideology is weak in Europe. It's the best-known ideology in the world yet it inspires recruits only in random ones and twos. IS has never appealed to more than one thousandth of one percent of Muslims and now says to recruits: "Don't worry about ideology. *We are the ideology. That's all you need to know. Obey us.*"

Spinoza's philosophy shows us how the path to extremism is likely to be individualistic, psychological and, I will argue, consumerist.

Let's consider first, the relevance of Spinoza's insights into emotions and drives. He says, "*Everyone shapes his actions according to his emotions;*" and, "*Everyone strives to increase his own sense of power, to seek his own advantage.*" People are "*conscious of their desire without knowing the causes of desire.*" "*True ideas are not enough to change negative or obstinate emotions.*" "*An emotion can only be changed by a stronger and contrary emotion.*"

To summarize these powerful insights, Spinoza's thinking teaches us that extreme acts and beliefs are expressions of extreme emotions. What people *say* about *why* they hold extreme beliefs is not reliable since they're *not* aware of the real causes of their feelings. Asking a jihadist exactly why he radicalized is unlikely to reveal the truth - even if he was honest.

Every psychoanalyst knows we can vigorously defend, but secretly doubt, what we believe to be our strongest held beliefs - *including* the ones we say we would die for. As John Le Carré's clever spy, George Smiley, says - "*Every fanatic is hiding a secret doubt.*" We need a stronger explanation for violent extremism than simply being convinced of a theological argument. Today we would not expect to help someone with an eating disorder by arguing with them about their nutritional needs. Something else, something much more profound is going on. We know it's a psychological condition. It's the same with our efforts in counter-radicalization.

Part 5 ~ What is the emotional attachment mechanism?

The question we now need Spinoza's help to answer is - if theological belief is not the real cause of terrorist recruitment - what is?

First, we must understand that European jihadists aren't driven by the same

factors as MENA recruits. They're born, raised *and* educated with Western rather than Sunni-Islamic values. IS is a radically violent Sunni-sectarian organization and yet most European recruits have no idea of - and certainly no grievances that relate to - differences between Sunni and Shi'ia Islam. Most are wholly ignorant of the differences. Like Protestants and Catholics in Belfast - sectarianism was an excuse for violence, not a cause.

Like everyone else, European recruits are consumers in a consumer culture, and instinctively relate to how brands use feelings and emotions to influence and communicate symbolic meaning, identity and values. They also face anti-Muslim sentiment - something that doesn't exist in Muslim countries - so there's already a distinct impetus in some towards finding a counter-cultural - anti-Western - identity. If we put these two things together - consumerism and search for identity - we come up with brands.

Consumerism and religion

Consumerism, as a form of identity building and attachment, has taken on many aspects of religious devotion. In the 17th Century *meaning, identity and attachment* were defined by religious belief, sect and congregation. Today, these are replaced by consumer desire, brand loyalty and social-media networks. In the 17th Century, the purpose of this life was to find salvation in the next; in today's celebrity culture, many seek fame and recognition as a form of redemption. (*Could we imagine Spinoza's landlady, today, asking if she'll be famous when he dies?*)

Spinoza's thinking tells us to follow the emotions. Unlike theological arguments which deal in ideas, opinions and abstractions, *brands* quickly communicate powerful emotional stories that appeal to fantasies of power, identity and a *sense of belonging*. Because they appeal to unconscious emotions, people identify with - or reject - brands for reasons that are close to love or hate - feelings that they cannot explain rationally. As the poet says, "*The heart has its reasons, of which reason knows nothing.*" In Spinoza's words, we are, ..."*conscious of desire but not the hidden causes of desire.*"

In the "*Korte Verhandeling*" Spinoza writes, "*We could not exist without enjoying something with which we become united and from which we draw strength.*" As we shall see, for the European jihadist - where the radicalization process has

become faster and faster — the union he draws strength from is *not* Allah, or the worldwide *umma*, or the Caliphate, but the powerful “*fast-food*” – the instant gratification – of the “*off-the-shelf*” jihadist *brand*. In this way, he *buys into IS as a consumer* rather than as a genuine religious believer or convert.

The IS brand

This doesn't happen by chance. IS projects its carefully managed brand package into the West to target alienated desire and lost identity — preferring recruits who have a violent criminal background – and almost 70% have. There is *no battle of ideas* on the part of IS or genuine effort to convert – simply a push for media exposure and connection.

It's a symbiotic relationship. The IS brand narrative offers a transformed life – a second chance: a sense of victimhood redeemed; becoming a player in a world-historical struggle and the promise of recognition that means, in the end, his life can be a success – a marriage of victimhood and celebrity. This is Western, not Islamic: a diet based on the values of reality TV, Hollywood revenge movies and social media profiles. And they're fixated by all of these.

Even Spinoza – in the 17th Century – recognized the devious attraction of the all-too-human weakness for fame. And in terms of branding strategy, it's exactly how the Trump campaign operated – all emotion and unspoken fantasy, an imagined, shared backstory, vague promises of greatness but lacking genuine ideological content. It works.

The point is, none of this requires *belief* in – or even the existence of — an ideology. Western recruits aren't being pulled-in by theological argument, but by their *imagination* and a series of *passive emotions and empowering fantasies*. The ideology today can be reduced to shouting “Allahu Ahkbar”, and is simply one more branded product – like the black flag, a ski-mask, an unopened copy of the Koran (or, if you're French, the burkini).

If we look at this through the lens of Spinoza's theory of emotions we can see the mechanism of radicalization more rationally – it's about a mess of emotional needs and drives being matched by carefully crafted fantasies of meaning, identity, purpose, revenge, and fame.

Part 6 ~ Fear, superstition, uncertainty and Amsterdam

Social cohesion has become hugely important in preventing community radicalization and maintaining state security. In this regard, the actions of populists driving polarization by manipulating public fear are a direct threat to our security. This is why IS celebrated the election of Trump.

Spinoza recognizes that public fear of uncertainty causes conflict and breaks social cohesion - and that people who swing wildly between hope and fear can believe almost anything. He argues that political and religious rulers took advantage of fear of uncertainty to impose standardized and manipulative belief systems. Fundamentalists and populists exploit fear of uncertainty in a self-defeating way - namely, they need to encourage fear if they are to stay relevant. It's ironic that they quickly produce *too much* certainty - that is, *intolerance* and *instability*.

Spinoza knows uncertainty can be a negative force yet he offers a radical solution - not "*How can we remove it?*" — (we can't) - but how can we use it to help improve social interaction. I think he learned something very important here from his experience as a merchant in Amsterdam.

The city's cultural DNA is rooted in an independent - pragmatic - *state of mind*, a product of internalizing the habit of negotiation from trade, and trust in commercial procedures, together with the cooperation inherent in the polder model.

Rather than fear of uncertainty, Amsterdam's citizens used "*constructive uncertainty*" and risk-management as a way to increase interaction by negotiating their everyday practical certainties. In this way, the positive interplay of hope and fear enabled them to embed core democratic values - in particular, pluralism, tolerance of "The Other" and a skepticism towards the brittleness of fundamentalist thinking. *The key was the development of the flexibility inherent in the democratic mindset.*

At the core is the *realpolitik* of compromise and this, Spinoza recognized, goes to the heart of the democratic process - surrendering our natural rights to gain freedom *from* fear and the security of state protection. It's a win-win situation for citizens and the state, and fundamentalists and extremists, simply cannot do this. They have to *win on their terms only* - and everyone else has to lose. This is simply not the Amsterdam way.

In terms of cooperation, Spinoza tells us that people “... *without mutual help live miserable lives...life (he says) should not be controlled by individuals, but by the power and will of everyone....and.... Men should defend their neighbour’s rights as their own.*”

He also saw that the politics of group identities are both divisive and destructive of individual freedom and social cohesion. Spinoza was more focused on defending and protecting individual freedoms than the freedom of organized religious worship.

Towards the end of the TTP, Spinoza describes how the relationship between freedom, tolerance and the state will work. He’s not describing an abstract idea or Utopian vision. He’s writing about the Amsterdam he knew and loved. He says, “*In this thriving and splendid city state, people from all nations and with all possible beliefs live together harmoniously... religion and sect are of no importance for it has no effect before the judges in winning or losing a cause...*”

In this way, the city’s cultural DNA plays an important role in enabling Spinoza’s emphasis on social cohesion and how it relates to counter-radicalization.

Part 6 ~ Finale

I want to finish by briefly mentioning two aspects of his life that are important for how we remember him.

For Spinoza, the social class, religion, nationality or ethnic group we are born into has no intrinsic value, because, as he puts it in *The Ethics*: “*All men are born ignorant of the causes of things.*” Life is a process of *becoming* – a struggle to see *what you make of yourself* – and we all have exactly the same hill to climb.

Spinoza was given the name Bento at birth. So far as we know, he never referred to himself as Baruch. We do know that from the age of fourteen he signed and called himself Bento. With his name change – from Bento the Merchant, to Benedict/us the philosopher – he quite deliberately re-invented himself – sometime in his mid-twenties – for the next phase of his life – and it was a philosophically significant moment. It was about much more than a name. It was an entire identity – a brand – complete with a motto – “*Caute*” – and the symbolic logo of the rose.

He *now* belonged to *Mankind*, transcending the passive accident of birth. We

should respect his decision and refer to him by the *only name he ever chose for himself*, that he used in his correspondence and conversation with others, and took with him to the grave. He signed his name - *Benedict de Spinoza*.

I want finally to focus on one feature of Spinoza's life that is truly inspirational. He had courage. As a young man, he stood up to the bullying of his community to conform, and in later life he endured attacks and abuse from the equivalent of today's far-right populists and ecclesiastical bullies. With the murder of the de Witts he experienced the destructiveness of populism and violent extremism. It did not stop him protesting it.

What is impressive is his inner-strength and courage even as he became weak and sickly. He argues that often it is the wisest and most peace-loving who are the targets of moral crusades and intolerance and just as often, it's the stupidest and most obnoxious who lead such campaigns. Are you listening *Geen Stijl*?

I talk to people today who feel intimidated by populists, idiot commentators and cowardly bloggers. When we remind ourselves that in the space of a few years, four people close to Spinoza were executed, murdered or died in prison because of what they believed, what we face today is nothing by comparison.

I think he would be a bit alarmed at the way the democratic centre is under pressure today but I also think he would immediately clear his thinking and get on with the fight to protect democratic values. And so must we.

Forty years after I first began to read Spinoza, he is still a ghost in my life, and standing here today, he seems closer than ever. Time has no real value in Spinoza's philosophy - nothing, he says, is more perfect for living longer.

And speaking of time, I'm sure there are many in this room who would gladly give up a *year* of their life to have the privilege of spending just *one day* in conversation with him — in the beautiful city of Amsterdam.

Thank-you for listening, and the privilege of speaking to you today.

Monika Palmberger ~ How Generations Remember. Conflicting Histories And Shared Memories In Post-War Bosnia And Herzegovina



From: *Introduction: Researching Memory and Generation*

[...] The title of this book, *How Generations Remember*, is an allusion to the title of Paul Connerton's seminal book, *How Societies Remember* (1989). In his book, Connerton opens up a timely discussion going beyond the textual and discursive understanding of remembering by concentrating on embodied/habitual memory and ritual aspects of memory. In terms of the study of generations he thus mainly discusses generations as transmitters or receivers of group memory. Although Connerton's pioneering contribution to the study of memory is unquestioned, by focusing on how memory is passed down through the generations he primarily answers the question of how group memory is conveyed and sustained. This emphasis on transmission and persistence leaves open the question of where to locate the individual, the agent, the force and possibility for reflexivity and change (Argenti and Schramm 2010; Shaw 2010). My study, in concentrating on the role of generational positioning, reveals that past experiences inform present stances, but also shows that it is the actor in the present that gives meaning to the past. This is also true for narratives of the past that are passed on from older to younger generations, and are then scrutinised and contextualised by the latter. It is suggested that people's sense of continuity can deal with the inconsistencies that arise with this transfer between generations. It is this field of tension between collective and personal, and between persistence and change that is central in the discussion of generational positioning in this book.

Download book: <http://link.springer.com/book/>

Noam Chomsky: The US Health System Is An “International Scandal” ~ And ACA Repeal Will Make It Worse



Changes are coming to America’s health care system. Not long from now, the Affordable Care Act could be history. President-elect Donald Trump wants to repeal so-called Obamacare, although he is now urging Republicans to repeal and replace it at the same time. But replace it

with what?

The political culture of the most powerful nation in the world is such that it vehemently defends the right of people to buy guns but opposes the right to free and decent health care for all its citizens. In all likelihood, the Trump health care plan will be one based on “free market principles.” Under such a plan, as Noam Chomsky notes in the interview for *Truthout* that follows, poor people are likely to suffer most. In other words, the scandalous nature of the US health care system is bound to become even more scandalous in the Trump era. Welcome back to the future.

C.J. Polychroniou: Trump and the Republicans are bent on doing away with Obamacare. Doesn’t the 2010 Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act (ACA) represent an improvement over what existed before? And, what would the Republicans replace it with?

Noam Chomsky: I perhaps should say, to begin, that I have always felt a little uncomfortable about the term “Obamacare.” Did anyone call Medicare “Johnsoncare?” Maybe wrongly, but it has seemed to me to have a tinge of

Republican-style vulgar disparagement, maybe even of racism. But put that aside.... Yes, the ACA is a definite improvement over what came before — which is not a great compliment. The US health care system has long been an international scandal, with about twice the per capita expenses of other wealthy (OECD) countries and relatively poor outcomes. The ACA did, however, bring improvements, including insurance for tens of millions of people who lacked it, banning of refusal of insurance for people with prior disabilities, and other gains — and also, it appears to have led to a reduction in the increase of health care costs, though that is hard to determine precisely.

The House of Representatives, dominated by Republicans (with a minority of voters), has voted over 50 times in the past six years to repeal or weaken Obamacare, but they have yet to come up with anything like a coherent alternative. That is not too surprising. Since Obama's election, the Republicans have been pretty much the party of NO. Chances are that they will now adopt a cynical [Paul] Ryan-style evasion, repeal and delay, to pretend to be honoring their fervent pledges while avoiding at least for a time the consequences of a possible major collapse of the health system and ballooning costs. It's far from certain. It's conceivable that they might patch together some kind of plan, or that the ultra-right and quite passionate "Freedom Caucus" may insist on instant repeal without a plan, damn the consequence for the budget, or, of course, for people.

One part of the health system that is likely to suffer is Medicaid, probably through block grants to states, which gives the Republican-run states opportunities to gut it. Medicaid only helps poor people who "don't matter" and don't vote Republican anyway. So [according to Republican logic], why should the rich pay taxes to maintain it?

Article 25 of the UN Universal Declaration on Human Rights (UDHR) states that the right to health care is indeed a human right. Yet, it is estimated that close to 30 million Americans remain uninsured even with the ACA in place. What are some of the key cultural, economic and political factors that make the US an outlier in the provision of free health care?

First, it is important to remember that the US does not accept the Universal Declaration of Human Rights — though in fact the UDHR was largely the initiative of Eleanor Roosevelt, who chaired the commission that drafted its articles, with

quite broad international participation.

The UDHR has three components, which are of equal status: civil-political, socioeconomic and cultural rights. The US formally accepts the first of the three, though it has often violated its provisions. The US pretty much disregards the third. And to the point here, the US has officially and strongly condemned the second component, socioeconomic rights, including Article 25.

Opposition to Article 25 was particularly vehement in the Reagan and Bush 1 years. Paula Dobriansky, deputy assistant secretary of state for human rights and humanitarian affairs in these administrations, dismissed the “myth” that “economic and social rights constitute human rights,” as the UDHR declares. She was following the lead of Reagan’s UN Ambassador Jeane Kirkpatrick, who ridiculed the myth as “little more than an empty vessel into which vague hopes and inchoate expectations can be poured.” Kirkpatrick thus joined Soviet Ambassador Andrei Vyshinsky, who agreed that it was a mere “collection of pious phrases.” The concepts of Article 25 are “preposterous” and even a “dangerous incitement,” according to Ambassador Morris Abram, the distinguished civil rights attorney who was US Representative to the UN Commission on Human Rights under Bush I, casting the sole veto of the UN Right to Development, which closely paraphrased Article 25 of the UDHR. The Bush 2 administration maintained the tradition by voting alone to reject a UN resolution on the right to food and the right to the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health (the resolution passed 52-1).

Rejection of Article 25, then, is a matter of principle. And also a matter of practice. In the OECD [Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development] ranking of social justice, [the US is in 27th place out of 31](#), right above Greece, Chile, Mexico and Turkey. This is happening in the richest country in world history, with incomparable advantages. It was quite possibly already the richest region in the world in the 18th century.

In extenuation of the Reagan-Bush-Vyshinsky alliance on this matter, we should recognize that formal support for the UDHR is all too often divorced from practice.

US dismissal of the UDHR in principle and practice extends to other areas. Take labor rights. The US has failed to ratify the first principle of the International

Labour Organization Convention, which endorses “Freedom of Association and Protection of the Right to Organise.” An editorial comment in the American Journal of International Law refers to this provision of the International Labour Organization Convention as “the untouchable treaty in American politics.” US rejection is guarded with such fervor, the report continues, that there has never even been any debate about the matter. The rejection of International Labour Organization Conventions contrasts dramatically with the fervor of Washington’s dedication to the highly protectionist elements of the misnamed “free trade agreements,” designed to guarantee monopoly pricing rights for corporations (“intellectual property rights”), on spurious grounds. In general, it would be more accurate to call these “investor rights agreements.”

Comparison of the attitude toward elementary rights of labor and extraordinary rights of private power tells us a good deal about the nature of American society.

Furthermore, US labor history is unusually violent. Hundreds of US workers were being killed by private and state security forces in strike actions, practices unknown in similar countries. In her history of American labor, Patricia Sexton — noting that there are no serious studies — reports an estimate of 700 strikers killed and thousands injured from 1877 to 1968, a figure which, she concludes, may “grossly understate the total casualties.” In comparison, one British striker was killed since 1911.

As struggles for freedom gained victories and violent means became less available, business turned to softer measures, such as the “scientific methods of strike breaking” that have become a leading industry. In much the same way, the overthrow of reformist governments by violence, once routine, has been displaced by “soft coups” such as the recent coup in Brazil, though the former options are still pursued when possible, as in Obama’s support for the Honduran military coup in 2009, in near isolation. Labor remains relatively weak in the US in comparison to similar societies. It is constantly battling even for survival as a significant organized force in the society, under particularly harsh attack since the Reagan years.

All of this is part of the background for the US departure in health care from the norm of the OECD, and even less privileged societies. But there are deeper reasons why the US is an “outlier” in health care and social justice generally. These trace back to unusual features of American history. Unlike other developed

state capitalist industrial democracies, the political economy and social structure of the United States developed in a kind of *tabula rasa*. The expulsion or mass killing of Indigenous nations cleared the ground for the invading settlers, who had enormous resources and ample fertile lands at their disposal, and extraordinary security for reasons of geography and power. That led to the rise of a society of individual farmers, and also, thanks to slavery, substantial control of the product that fueled the industrial revolution: cotton, the foundation of manufacturing, banking, commerce, retail for both the US and Britain, and less directly, other European societies. Also relevant is the fact that the country has actually been at war for 500 years with little respite, a history that has created “the richest, most powerful, and ultimately most militarized nation in world history,” [as scholar Walter Hixson has documented](#).

For similar reasons, American society lacked the traditional social stratification and autocratic political structure of Europe, and the various measures of social support that developed unevenly and erratically. There has been ample state intervention in the economy from the outset — dramatically in recent years — but without general support systems.

As a result, US society is, to an unusual extent, business-run, with a highly class-conscious business community dedicated to “the everlasting battle for the minds of men.” The business community is also set on containing or demolishing the “political power of the masses,” which it deems as a serious “hazard to industrialists” (to sample some of the rhetoric of the business press during the New Deal years, when the threat to the overwhelming dominance of business power seemed real).

Here is yet another anomaly about US health care: According to data by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, the US spends far more on health care than most other advanced nations, yet Americans have poor health outcomes and are plagued by chronic illnesses at higher rates than the citizens of other advanced nations. Why is that?

US health care costs are estimated to be about twice the OECD average, with rather poor outcomes by comparative standards. Infant mortality, for example, is higher in the US than in Cuba, Greece and the EU generally, according to CIA figures.

As for reasons, we can return to the more general question of social justice comparisons, but there are special reasons in the health care domain. To an unusual extent, the US health care system is privatized and unregulated. Insurance companies are in the business of making money, not providing health care, and when they undertake the latter, it is likely not to be in the best interests of patients or to be efficient. Administrative costs are far greater in the private component of the health care system than in Medicare, which itself suffers by having to work through the private system.

Comparisons with other countries reveal much more bureaucracy and higher administrative costs in the US privatized system than elsewhere. One study of the US and Canada a decade ago, by medical researcher Steffie Woolhandler and associates, found enormous disparities, and concluded that “Reducing U.S. administrative costs to Canadian levels would save at least \$209 billion annually, enough to fund universal coverage.” Another anomalous feature of the US system is the law banning the government from negotiating drug prices, which leads to highly inflated prices in the US as compared with other countries. That effect is magnified considerably by the extreme patent rights accorded to the pharmaceutical industry in “trade agreements,” enabling monopoly profits. In a profit-driven system, there are also incentives for expensive treatments rather than preventive care, as strikingly in Cuba, with remarkably efficient and effective health care.

Why aren't Americans demanding — not simply expressing a preference for in survey polls — access to a universal health care system?

They are indeed expressing a preference, over a long period. Just to give one telling illustration, in the late Reagan years 70 percent of the adult population thought that health care should be a constitutional guarantee, and 40 percent thought it already was in the Constitution since it is such an obviously legitimate right. Poll results depend on wording and nuance, but they have quite consistently, over the years, shown strong and often large majority support for universal health care — often called “Canadian-style,” not because Canada necessarily has the best system, but because it is close by and observable. The early ACA proposals called for a “public option.” It was supported by almost two-thirds of the population, but was dropped without serious consideration, presumably as part of a compact with financial institutions. The legislative bar to government negotiation of drug prices was opposed by 85 percent, also

disregarded — again, presumably, to prevent opposition by the pharmaceutical giants. The preference for universal health care is particularly remarkable in light of the fact that there is almost no support or advocacy in sources that reach the general public and virtually no discussion in the public domain.

The facts about public support for universal health care receive occasional comment, in an interesting way. When running for president in 2004, Democrat John Kerry, [The New York Times reported](#), “took pains .. to say that his plan for expanding access to health insurance would not create a new government program,” because “there is so little political support for government intervention in the health care market in the United States.” At the same time, polls in The Wall Street Journal, Businessweek, The Washington Post and other media found overwhelming public support for government guarantees to everyone of “the best and most advanced health care that technology can supply.”

But that is only public support. The press reported correctly that there was little “political support” and that what the public wants is “politically impossible” — a polite way of saying that the financial and pharmaceutical industries will not tolerate it, and in American democracy, that’s what counts.

Returning to your question, it raises a crucial question about American democracy: why isn’t the population “demanding” what it strongly prefers? Why is it allowing concentrated private capital to undermine necessities of life in the interests of profit and power? The “demands” are hardly utopian. They are commonly satisfied elsewhere, even in sectors of the US system. Furthermore, the demands could readily be implemented even without significant legislative breakthroughs. For example, by steadily reducing the age for entry to Medicare.

The question directs our attention to a profound democratic deficit in an atomized society, lacking the kind of popular associations and organizations that enable the public to participate in a meaningful way in determining the course of political, social and economic affairs. These would crucially include a strong and participatory labor movement and actual political parties growing from public deliberation and participation instead of the elite-run candidate-producing groups that pass for political parties. What remains is a depoliticized society in which a majority of voters (barely half the population even in the super-hyped presidential elections, much less in others) are literally disenfranchised, in that their representatives disregard their preferences while effective decision-making lies

largely in the hands of tiny concentrations of wealth and corporate power, as study after study reveals.

The prevailing situation reminds us of the words of America's leading 20th-century social philosopher, John Dewey, much of whose work focused on democracy and its failures and promise. Dewey deplored the domination by "business for private profit through private control of banking, land, industry, reinforced by command of the press, press agents and other means of publicity and propaganda" and recognized that "Power today resides in control of the means of production, exchange, publicity, transportation and communication. Whoever owns them rules the life of the country," even if democratic forms remain. Until those institutions are in the hands of the public, he continued, politics will remain "the shadow cast on society by big business."

This was not a voice from the marginalized far left, but from the mainstream of liberal thought.

Turning finally to your question again, a rather general answer, which applies in its specific way to contemporary western democracies, was provided by David Hume over 250 years ago, in his classic study of the First Principles of Government. Hume found "nothing more surprising than to see the easiness with which the many are governed by the few; and to observe the implicit submission with which men resign their own sentiments and passions to those of their rulers. When we enquire by what means this wonder is brought about, we shall find, that as Force is always on the side of the governed, the governors have nothing to support them but opinion. `Tis therefore, on opinion only that government is founded; and this maxim extends to the most despotic and most military governments, as well as to the most free and most popular."

Implicit submission is not imposed by laws of nature or political theory. It is a choice, at least in societies such as ours, which enjoys the legacy provided by the struggles of those who came before us. Here power is indeed "on the side of the governed," if they organize and act to gain and exercise it. That holds for health care and for much else.

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Maatschappijleer is er om de leerlingen te laten functioneren in de samenleving. Een interview met Henk A. Becker



Prof.dr. Henk A. Becker

Prof.dr. Henk A. Becker (1933) kijkt opgewekt naar de toekomst. Natuurlijk, ook hij weet dat het er op dit moment niet alleen maar rooskleurig aan toegaat in de samenleving, maar hij ziet de contouren van een nieuwe generatie in opkomst waar hij een positief levensbeeld aan durft te ontleen.

Auke van der Berg: U noemde een paar keer dat er een schok gaat komen met de nieuwe generatie twintigers. Wat voor schok?

Henk Becker: Dat ze, bijna alle leden van Generatie Z, ongelooflijk meer kennis en vaardigheden ten aanzien van het hanteren van computers hebben dan de vorige generaties.

Daar kunnen ze feitelijk gebruik van maken bijvoorbeeld door ook in het Engels te werken terwijl ze in Nederland zitten. Je kunt je brood verdienen. Of denk aan de jonge Roemenen die programmeren voor Nederlandse ondernemingen. Wat voor

die Nederlandse ondernemingen uiteraard belangrijk is omdat de salarissen daar aanmerkelijk lager zijn.

Dat is een praktische vertaling. Het is ook de generatie die op grote schaal de mogelijkheid heeft om op verschillende manieren kennis tot zich nemen. Wat voor invloed heeft dat?

Daardoor zullen ze veel meer dingen kunnen uitvoeren. Op een andere manier geld verdienen dan vorige generaties. Dat studenten via digitale communicatiemiddelen eenzame ouderen begeleiden. De mogelijkheden om je maatschappelijk nuttig te maken, om geld te verdienen, zijn enorm uitgebreid.

Is daar uw optimisme op gestoeld? Ondanks deze warrige tijden.

Ja, omdat de mogelijkheden om actief te zijn, om je geld te verdienen om een reputatie op te bouwen, zo ongelooflijk zijn toegenomen. Daar zit het positieve in.

Maar dit is ook de tijd waarin we worden geconfronteerd met een overvloed aan informatie, op allerlei niveaus. Wat voor invloed heeft dat op ons gedrag?

Dat is onderzoek voor specialisten. Maar voor iedereen in de samenleving, die bijna iedere dag het woord generatie tegenkomt, is het één van de denkwerelden waarmee hij zijn omgeving begrijpt. En waarmee hij op die omgeving inspeelt.

Hoe leer je daarmee om te gaan?

Door te kiezen voor maatschappijleer. Maatschappijleer is er om de leerlingen te laten functioneren in de samenleving. Het moet één van de belangrijkste vakken worden.

Het vak is op de achtergrond geraakt omdat het relatief makkelijk is op het eindexamen. Wis- en natuurkunde is moeilijk omdat het moeilijk is. En de scholen gebruiken het om discipline af te dwingen.

U bent één van de belangrijkste gezichten van het vakgebied Generatie sociologie. Wat is dat, Generatie sociologie?

Generatie sociologie is een onderdeel van de empirische sociologie. Door generaties in te voegen komt er de tijdsdimensie bij in de discussies en publicaties.

Het boeiendste beeld om aan te geven dat er een tijdsdimensie is, is dat van de

python. De slang die een groot aantal konijnen ingeslikt heeft. Langzamerhand schuiven die konijnen door dat slangenlichaam heen. Wat betekent dat de kenmerken van een generatie in de loop van de tijden veranderen omdat de leden ouder worden. Dat proces moet je in de gaten houden.

Het vakgebied kreeg voet aan de grond door het essay Das Problem der Generationen van de Hongaars-Duitse socioloog Karl Mannheim. Mannheim stelde dat een generatie een objectieve sociale formatie is, een aanwijsbare groep in de samenleving. Een gezamenlijk beleefde historische gebeurtenis zorgt voor binding binnen een leeftijdsgroep. Zijn essay was het antwoord op allerlei esoterische gedachten over de Zeitgeist die toendertijd in zwang waren. Van Generationsimpuls naar Generationszusammenhang zou je samenvattend kunnen zeggen.

Generatie sociologie is boeiend, maar ook gecompliceerd. Je hebt niet één beeld van een generatie dat hetzelfde is. Je moet denken aan een doos waarin meerdere beelden zitten die langzaam in de tijd opschuiven. Daar zitten ook vaak de vergissingen in het weergeven van de zaak.

Het is een enorm breed terrein waar je je mee bezighoudt. Je hebt gedetailleerde beschrijvingen, bijvoorbeeld van het Centraal Planbureau of het Centraal Bureau voor de Statistiek. Daarnaast heb je vereenvoudigde beelden, zogenaamde idealisaties. Wat je in de kranten tegenkomt, zijn meestal idealisaties. Dus de kenmerken van een groep.

In het algemeen spraakgebruik kom je het woord generatie dagelijks tegen. Of de vereenvoudiging, leeftijdscategorieën. De dertigers, veertigers, enzovoorts. Iedereen die in de samenleving functioneert, is in zekere mate generatiesocioloog, zou je kunnen zeggen.

Je hebt drie manieren om generaties weer te geven. De ene manier bestaat uit gedetailleerde onderzoeksrapporten met gecompliceerde theoretische verhandelingen. De tweede manier maakt gebruik van vereenvoudigde beelden, de idealisaties. De derde is de weergave van wat in het algemeen spraakgebruik bij bepaalde generaties bedoeld wordt.

Maatschappelijke partijen kunnen baat hebben bij het bestuderen van het vakgebied. Door de kenmerken van een groep weer te geven, kun je de kansen en de bedreigingen in kaart brengen. Daarvoor heb je dit soort methoden en gebruiken nodig.

Maar binnen een generatie is de groep toch heel divers?

Ja, een generatie is heel divers, toch kun je daar je observaties goed gebruiken. Neem bijvoorbeeld de twintigers. Die hebben bepaalde kenmerken. Denk aan seksualiteit, verhoudingen, het is de periode dat relaties ontstaan. Dat heb je niet bij zestigers.

Dat is één van de dingen die van belang zijn, ieder van die leeftijdscategorie heeft op een bepaald moment kenmerken die men in de maatschappelijke discussies aan de orde stelt en bij het oplossen van maatschappelijke problemen in de gaten moet houden.

Je zoekt naar overeenkomsten in plaats van verschillen. Denk aan oorlogstrauma's. Die heb je op totaal verschillende manieren. Ik heb bijvoorbeeld in de Tweede Wereldoorlog bewust dingen meegemaakt, maar mijn kleinzoon moet je uitleggen wat een oorlogstrauma is. Dat kent hij eenvoudigweg niet.

Dat zijn dus kenmerken die een generationele aanpak vereisen om duidelijk te krijgen hoe het in elkaar zit.

Je kunt generatie sociologie ook gebruiken als middel om naar de toekomst te kijken. Of je twintiger bent in een tijd van economische recessie of van hoogconjunctuur, maakt erg veel verschil uit. De kansen, de oplossingen voor je als je bijvoorbeeld werkloos wordt, verschillen erg door de maatschappelijke situatie.

Wat zegt u tegen die negentienjarige kleinzoon als hij naar het belang van het vak vraagt?

Hij moet als twintiger omgaan met mensen van zestig, hij moet omgaan met mensen van vijftig, veertig. En daarbij inschatten wat de kansen en bedreigingen van die mensen zijn. Hij moet rekening houden met het feit dat er generatieverschillen zijn. De kennis die hij van generatiepatronen heeft, inzetten om het gedrag van mensen in te schatten. En dat geldt ook vica versa.

Iedereen die in de samenleving functioneert is in zekere mate generatie socioloog. Sommige mensen hebben gekozen om het aan een universiteit te bestuderen. Zij houden zich bezig met de vakliteratuur.

Wat is het sterkste pleidooi voor het vak? Hoe krijg je maatschappelijke partijen zover dat ze inzien dat het belangrijk is?

Denk aan politieke verkiezingen. Dat men inspeelt op de kansen en bedreigingen

van bepaalde bevolkingsgroepen. En daar zijn generatiebesef en generatie-indelingen strikt noodzakelijk.

Je moet politieke propaganda ten aanzien van de samenleving kunnen differentiëren ten aanzien van de generaties waar je over praat. Of een bepaalde lezing die je houdt of een bepaalde campagne die gericht is op een bepaalde categorie van de bevolking, rekening houdt met wat die generatiekenmerken zijn. Zodat je je argumenten aanpast, zodat je gericht kunt werken.

Als je het over vrouwendiscriminatie hebt, is het belangrijk te weten of je het tegen zeventigers of vrouwen van dertig hebt. Hun geschiedenis is totaal verschillend.

Zoals met alles, kent ook de belangstelling voor het vak een golfslag. U zegt dat het vak in de komende tien jaar weer meer in de belangstelling komt.

Omdat de Generatie Z, de huidige twintigers, in het maatschappelijke verkeer, zo sterk aan belang gaat winnen, dat men er wat mee moet gaan doen. Er komt een belangrijke generatie aan, met in haar kielzog nog meer veranderingen. Dat is duidelijk voorspelbaar, het is ondenkbaar dat het niet zal gebeuren.

Je zou kunnen zeggen dat de eerste tekenen van heropleving zichtbaar zijn. The New York Times is begonnen aan een serie waarin de ene generatie over een andere laat vertellen. De publieke omroep zond in november 2016 de reeks Marlijn: De dolende dertiger uit. Een serie over de keuzes waar de generatie van de dertigers mee worstelt. (Zie: <http://www.npo.nl/marlijn-de-dolende-dertiger/>)

In de loop van dit jaar begint de publieke omroep aan een nieuwe reeks programma's over de vijftigers. Met als werktitel De verscheurde generatie.

Is dat niet een wat zware term voor de vijftigers, De verscheurde generatie?

De term, de verscheurde generatie, is gebruikt door de KRO-NCRV. Ik was erg onder de indruk van de reeks 'Dolende dertigers'. Toen ze mij vroegen om mee te werken aan het programma over de vijftigers, over verscheurde vijftigers, heb ik even na moeten denken. Maar je kunt generaliserend zeggen dat je als vijftiger inderdaad keuzestress hebt.

Of je zegt, ik heb een mooi resultaat in mijn leven opgebouwd. Vanaf nu ga ik kalm door en glij af naar de zeventig.

Ik was op mijn vijfendertigste hoogleraar. Ik heb tot mijn vijftigste in alle rust aan de Utrechtse universiteit mijn beroep uit kunnen oefenen. Dat is één kant.

De andere kant is dat je zegt, nee, ik wil toch nog een eindsprint maken die me uittilt boven het niveau wat ik al bereikt heb. Ik wil meer bereiken dan wat ik tot nu toe bereikt heb. Dat zat hem in het bestuderen van generaties. In het publiceren daarover. Gaandeweg proberen een internationale reputatie op te bouwen op het gebied van generatie-economie en alles wat daarmee samenhangt.'

Als je verscheurd interpreteert als keuzestress, kun je dat ook zeggen over de vijftigers. Of ze de term handhaven, is nog niet duidelijk. Als hij blijft, kan ik ze laten weten dat ik het een zinvolle uitdrukking vindt.

Wij hebben een aantal keren de wens uitgesproken om een maatschappelijk debat te organiseren over de grote thema's waar de samenleving mee wordt geconfronteerd. Over de gezondheidszorg, de toekomst van de arbeidstijden, over de economie bijvoorbeeld. Welke rol kan uw vak in een dergelijk debat spelen?

De grote thema's zijn de wijze waarop je volwassenheid, je leeftijd invult. Wat voor hulpmiddelen je daarvoor kunt inschakelen. Denk aan de mensen die zestig en ouder zijn. De wijze waarop zij omgaan met de mogelijkheid dat ze wat moeilijker mobiel zijn, de wijze waarop ze omgaan met mooie buitenlandse reizen, de wijze waarop ze omgaan met het verwerken van nieuws en daardoor een beeld van de samenleving te houden. Omgaan met de rassenverschillen in de samenleving, omgaan met politieke verschillen.

Bij deze discussies kan de wetenschap een belangrijke rol spelen. Niet alleen door de informatie die zij kan delen, maar ook door te wijzen op de vormgeving van een dergelijk debat.

Eén van de methodes om een maatschappelijk debat te organiseren en in banen te leiden, is gebruik te maken van science courts. Wat wordt er precies onder verstaan?

In de politiek kom je alsmaar discussies tegen. Die kun je structureren met de vorm van science court.

Door gebruik te maken van een dergelijke rechtbank kun je de sterke en de zwakke punten van bijna alle groepen waar je over discussieert verhelderen en de kansen en bedreigingen waar ze mee geconfronteerd worden in kaart brengen.

Om dat te doen, zijn er bepaalde technieken, denk aan simulatie. Waar het nu om gaat is dat je simuleert op basis van een methode die uit het strafrecht komt.

Waarbij je een aanvaller en een verdediger hebt en een leidende rechter, die

luistert en vraagt. Die rechter gaat daarna op een andere stoel zitten en spreekt een vonnis uit.

Bij de maatschappelijke discussie, ook al schrijf je een artikel over iets, moet je je afvragen wie zijn de voorstanders, wie zijn de tegenstanders. Wat moet er aan kennis komen om tot iets te komen en dan, hoe kom je tot een uitspraak? Wie geef je gelijk, wie geef je ongelijk? Welke veranderingen, welke verbeteringen, voorzichtigheden ga je aanbevelen? Je speelt strafrechter. Dat is een science court. We willen graag een oordeel. Je ziet het ook op televisie. De rijdende rechter is er een goed voorbeeld van.



In 2012 verscheen *Generaties van geluksvogels en pechvogels* van Prof.dr. Henk A. Becker bij Rozenberg Publishers.

Binnenkort verschijnt de derde, gewijzigde druk van dit boek. In de afgelopen periode verschenen al verschillende aanvullingen op de Rozenberg Quarterly.

http://rozenbergquarterly.com/category/europe_generations/

Het boek verschaft informatie ter ondersteuning van onderwijs. Het dient als onderbouwing van lessen maar ook voor het schrijven van werkstukken en het samenstellen van presentaties. Verder kan het boek dienen als basis voor beleidsvorming en uitvoering van strategieën.

Het boek is in het Nederlands en in het Engels verkrijgbaar. In paperback en als e-boek. Zie:

<http://rozenberggps.com/generaties-van-geluksvogels-en-pechvogels>

Voor een uitgebreide biografie van Prof.dr. Becker zie: <http://rozenbergquarterly.com/de-levensloop-van-een-workaholic/>

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Trump's America And The New World Order: A Conversation With Noam Chomsky



Noam Chomsky ~ Photo:
en.wikipedia.org

For the prelude to this interview, read yesterday's conversation with Noam Chomsky on "[Trump and the Flawed Nature of US Democracy](#)", which exposes the pitfalls of the political system that made Trump's rise to power a reality.

Are Donald Trump's selections for his cabinet and other top administration positions indicative of a man who is ready to "drain the swamp?" Is the president-elect bent on putting China on the defensive? What does he have in mind for the Middle East? And why did Barack Obama choose at this juncture — that is, toward the end of his presidency — to have the US abstain from a UN resolution condemning Israeli settlements? Are new trends and tendencies in the world order emerging? In this exclusive Truthout interview, Noam Chomsky addresses these critical questions just two weeks before the White House receives its new occupant.

C.J. Polychroniou: Noam, the president-elect's cabinet is being filled by financial and corporate bigwigs and military leaders. Such selections hardly reconcile with Trump's pre-election promises to "drain the swamp," so what should we expect from this megalomaniac and phony populist insofar as the future of the Washington establishment is concerned?

Noam Chomsky: In this respect — note the qualification — Time magazine put it fairly well (in a Dec. 26 column by Joe Klein): "While some supporters may balk, Trump's decision to embrace those who have wallowed in the Washington muck has spread a sense of relief among the capital's political class. 'It shows,' says one GOP consultant close to the President-elect's transition, 'that he's going to govern like a normal Republican'."

There surely is some truth to this. Business and investors plainly think so. The stock market boomed right after the election, led by the financial companies that Trump denounced during his campaign, particularly the leading demon of his rhetoric, Goldman Sachs. [According to Bloomberg News](#), "The firm's surging stock price," up 30 percent in the month after the election, "has been the largest driver behind the Dow Jones Industrial Average's climb toward 20,000." The stellar market performance of Goldman Sachs is based largely on Trump's reliance on the demon to run the economy, buttressed by the promised roll-back in regulations, setting the stage for the next financial crisis (and taxpayer bailout). Other big gainers are energy corporations, health insurers and construction firms, all expecting huge profits from the administration's announced plans. These include a Paul Ryan-style fiscal program of tax cuts for the rich and corporations, increased military spending, turning the health system over even more to insurance companies with predictable consequences, taxpayer largesse for a privatized form of credit-based infrastructure development, and other "normal Republican" gifts to wealth and privilege at taxpayer expense. Rather plausibly, economist [Larry Summers describes the fiscal program](#) as "the most misguided set of tax changes in US history [which] will massively favor the top 1 per cent of income earners, threaten an explosive rise in federal debt, complicate the tax code and do little if anything to spur growth."

But, great news for those who matter.

There are, however, some losers in the corporate system. Since November 8, gun sales, which more than doubled under Obama, have been dropping sharply, perhaps because of lessened fears that the government will take away the assault

rifles and other armaments we need to protect ourselves from the Feds. Sales rose through the year as polls showed Clinton in the lead, but after the election, [the Financial Times reported](#), “shares in gun makers such as Smith & Wesson and Sturm Ruger plunged.” By mid-December, “the two companies had fallen 24 per cent and 17 per cent since the election, respectively.” But all is not lost for the industry. As a spokesman explains, “To put it in perspective, US consumer sales of firearms are greater than the rest of the world combined. It’s a pretty big market.”

Normal Republicans cheer Trump’s choice for Office of Management and Budget, Mick Mulvaney, one of the most extreme fiscal hawks, though a problem does arise. How will a fiscal hawk manage a budget designed to massively escalate the deficit? In a post-fact world, maybe that doesn’t matter.

Also cheering to “normal Republicans” is the choice of the radically anti-labor Andy Puzder for secretary of labor, though here too a contradiction may lurk in the background. As the ultrarich CEO of restaurant chains, he relies on the most easily exploited non-union labor for the dirty work, typically immigrants, which doesn’t comport well with the plans to deport them en masse. The same problem arises for the infrastructure programs; the private firms that are set to profit from these initiatives rely heavily on the same labor source, though perhaps that problem can be finessed by redesigning the “beautiful wall” so that it will only keep out Muslims.

Is this to say then that Trump will be a “normal” Republican as America’s 45th President?

In such respects as the ones mentioned above, Trump proved himself very quickly to be a normal Republican, if to the extremist side. But in other respects he may not be a normal Republican, if that means something like a mainstream establishment Republican — people like Mitt Romney, whom Trump went out of his way to humiliate in his familiar style, just as he did to McCain and others of this category. But it’s not only his style that causes offense and concern. His actions do as well.

Take just the two most significant issues that we face, the most significant that humans have ever faced in their brief history on earth; issues that bear on species survival: nuclear war and global warming. Shivers went up the spine of many “normal Republicans,” as of others who care about the fate of the species, when

Trump tweeted that “The United States must greatly strengthen and expand its nuclear capability until such time as the world comes to its senses regarding nukes.” Expanding nuclear capability means casting to the winds the treaties that have sharply reduced nuclear arsenals and that sane analysts hope may reduce them much further, in fact, to zero, as advocated by such normal Republicans as Henry Kissinger and Reagan Secretary of State George Shultz, and by Reagan, in some of his moments. Concerns did not abate when Trump went on to tell the cohost of TV show Morning Joe “Let it be an arms race. We will outmatch them at every pass.” And it wasn’t too comforting even when his White House team tried to explain that “The Donald” didn’t say what he said.

Nor do concerns abate because Trump was presumably reacting to Putin’s statement: “We need to strengthen the military potential of strategic nuclear forces, especially with missile complexes that can reliably penetrate any existing and prospective missile defense systems. We must carefully monitor any changes in the balance of power and in the political-military situation in the world, especially along Russian borders, and quickly adapt plans for neutralizing threats to our country.”

Whatever one thinks of these words, they have a defensive cast and as Putin has stressed, they are in large part a reaction to the highly provocative installation of a missile defense system on Russia’s border on the pretext of defense against nonexistent Iranian weapons. Trump’s tweet intensifies fears about how he might react when crossed, for example, by unwillingness of some adversary to bow to his vaunted negotiating skills. If the past is any guide he might, after all, find himself in a situation where he must decide within a few minutes whether to blow up the world.

The other crucial issue is environmental catastrophe. It cannot be stressed too strongly that Trump won two victories on November 8: the lesser one in the Electoral College and the greater one in Marrakech, where some 200 countries were seeking to put teeth in the promises of the Paris negotiations on climate change. On Election Day, the conference heard a dire report on the state of the Anthropocene from the World Meteorological Organization. As the results of the election came in, the stunned participants virtually abandoned the proceedings, wondering if anything could survive the withdrawal of the most powerful state in world history. Nor can one stress too often the astonishing spectacle of the world placing its hopes for salvation in China, while the leader of the free world stands

alone as a wrecking machine.

Although — amazingly — most ignored these astounding events, establishment circles did have some response. In [Foreign Affairs](#), [Varun Sivaram](#) and [Sagatom Saha](#) warned of the costs to the US of “ceding climate leadership to China,” and the dangers to the world because China “would lead on climate-change issues only insofar as doing so would advance its national interests” — unlike the altruistic United States, which supposedly labors selflessly only for the benefit of mankind.

How intent Trump is on driving the world to the precipice was revealed by his appointments, including his choice of two militant climate change deniers, Myron Ebell and Scott Pruitt, to take charge of dismantling the Environmental Protection Agency that was established under Richard Nixon, with another denier slated to head the Department of Interior.

But that’s only the beginning. The cabinet appointments would be comical if the implications were not so serious. For Department of Energy, a man who said it should be eliminated (when he could remember its name) and is perhaps unaware that its main concern is nuclear weapons. For Department of Education, another billionaire, Betsy DeVos, who is dedicated to undermining and perhaps eliminating the public school system and who, [as Lawrence Krause reminds us in the New Yorker](#), is a fundamentalist Christian member of a Protestant denomination holding that “all scientific theories be subject to Scripture” and that “Humanity is created in the image of God; all theorizing that minimizes this fact and all theories of evolution that deny the creative activity of God are rejected.” Perhaps the Department should request funding from Saudi sponsors of Wahhabi madrassas to help the process along.

DeVos’s appointment is no doubt attractive to the evangelicals who flocked to Trump’s standard and constitute a large part of the base of today’s Republican Party. She should also be able to work amicably with Vice-President-elect Mike Pence, one of the “prized warriors [of] a cabal of vicious zealots who have long craved an extremist Christian theocracy,” [as Jeremy Scahill details in The Intercept](#), reviewing his shocking record on other matters as well.

And so it continues, case by case. But not to worry. As James Madison assured his colleagues as they were framing the Constitution, a national republic would

“extract from the mass of the Society the purest and noblest characters which it contains.”

What about the choice of Rex Tillerson as Secretary of State?

One partial exception to the above is choice of ExxonMobil CEO Rex Tillerson for Secretary of State, which has aroused some hope among those across the spectrum who are rightly concerned with the rising and extremely hazardous tensions with Russia. Tillerson, like Trump in some of his pronouncements, has called for diplomacy rather than confrontation, which is all to the good — until we remember the sable lining of the beam of sunshine. The motive is to allow ExxonMobil to exploit vast Siberian oil fields and so to accelerate the race to disaster to which Trump and associates, and the Republican Party rather generally, are committed.

And how about Trump’s national security staff — do they fit the mold of “normal” Republicans, or are they also part of the extreme Right?

Normal Republicans might be somewhat ambivalent about Trump’s national security staff. It is led by National Security Advisor Gen. Michael Flynn, a radical Islamophobe who declares that Islam is not a religion but rather, a political ideology, like fascism, which is at war with us, so we must defend ourselves, presumably against the whole Muslim world — a fine recipe for generating terrorists, not to speak of far worse consequences. Like the Red Menace of earlier years, this Islamic ideology is penetrating deep into American society, Flynn declaims. They are, he says, being helped by Democrats, who have voted to impose Sharia law in Florida, much as their predecessors served the Commies, as Joe McCarthy famously demonstrated. Indeed, there are “over 100 cases around the country,” including Texas, Flynn warned in a speech in San Antonio. To ward off the imminent threat, Flynn is a board member of ACT!, which pushes state laws banning Sharia law, plainly an imminent threat in states like Oklahoma, where 70 percent of voters approved legislation to prevent the courts from applying this grim menace to the judicial system.

Second to Flynn in the national security apparatus is Secretary of Defense Gen. James “Mad Dog” Mattis, considered a relative moderate. Mad Dog [has explained](#) that “It’s fun to shoot some people.” He achieved his fame by leading the assault on Fallujah in November 2004, one of the most vicious crimes of the Iraq invasion. A man who is “just great,” according to the president-elect: “the closest thing we have to Gen. George Patton.”

In your view, is Trump bent on a collision course with China?

It's hard to say. Concerns were voiced about Trump's attitudes toward China, again full of contradictions, particularly his pronouncements on trade, which are almost meaningless in the current system of corporate globalization and complex international supply chains. Eyebrows were raised over his sharp departure from long-standing policy in his phone call with Taiwan's president, but even more by his implying that the US might reject China's concerns over Taiwan unless China accepts his trade proposals, thus linking trade policy "to an issue of great-power politics over which China may be willing to go to war," the business press warned.

What of Trump's views and stance on the Middle East? They seem to be in line with those of "normal" Republicans, right?

Unlike with China, normal Republicans did not seem dismayed by Trump's tweet foray into Middle East diplomacy, again breaking with standard protocol, demanding that Obama veto UN Security Council resolution 2334, which reaffirmed "that the policy and practices of Israel in establishing settlements in the Palestinian and other Arab territories occupied since 1967 have no legal validity and constitute a serious obstruction to achieving a comprehensive, just and lasting peace in the Middle East [and] Calls once more upon Israel, as the occupying Power, to abide scrupulously by the 1949 Fourth Geneva Convention, to rescind its previous measures and to desist from taking any action which would result in changing the legal status and geographical nature and materially affecting the demographic composition of the Arab territories occupied since 1967, including Jerusalem, and, in particular, not to transfer parts of its own civilian population into the occupied Arab territories."

Nor did they object when he informed Israel that it can ignore the lame duck administration and just wait until January 20, when all will be in order. What kind of order? That remains to be seen. Trump's unpredictability serves as a word of caution.

What we know so far is Trump's enthusiasm for the religious ultraright in Israel and the settler movement generally. Among his largest charitable contributions are gifts to the West Bank settlement of Beth El in honor of David Friedman, his choice as Ambassador to Israel. Friedman is president of American Friends of Beth El Institutions. The settlement, which is at the religious ultranationalist extreme of the settler movement, is also a favorite of the family of Jared Kushner, Trump's son-in-law, reported to be one of Trump's closest advisers. A lead

beneficiary of the Kushner family's contributions, [the Israeli press reports](#), "is a yeshiva headed by a militant rabbi who has urged Israeli soldiers to disobey orders to evacuate settlements and who has argued that homosexual tendencies arise from eating certain foods." [Other beneficiaries](#) include "a radical yeshiva in Yitzhar that has served as a base for violent attacks against Palestinian's villages and Israeli security forces."

In isolation from the world, Friedman does not regard Israeli settlement activity as illegal and opposes a ban on construction for Jewish settlers in the West Bank and East Jerusalem. In fact, he appears to favor Israel's annexation of the West Bank. That would not pose a problem for the Jewish state, Friedman explains, since the number of Palestinians living in the West Bank is exaggerated and therefore a large Jewish majority would remain after annexation. In a post-fact world, such pronouncements are legitimate, though they might become accurate in the boring world of fact after another mass expulsion. Jews who support the international consensus on a two-state settlement are not just wrong, [Friedman says](#), they are "worse than kapos," the Jews who were controlling other inmates in service to their Nazi masters in the concentration camps — the ultimate insult.

On receiving the report of his nomination, Friedman said he looked forward to moving the US embassy to "Israel's eternal capital, Jerusalem," in accord with Trump's announced plans. In the past, such proposals were withdrawn, but today they might actually be fulfilled, perhaps advancing the prospects of a war with the Muslim world, as Trump's National Security Adviser appears to recommend.

Returning to UNSC 2334 and its interesting aftermath, it is important to recognize that the resolution is nothing new. The quote given above was not from UNSC 2334 but from UNSC Resolution 446, passed on March 12, 1979, reiterated in essence in UNSC 2334.

UNSC 446 passed 12-0 with the US abstaining, joined by the UK and Norway. Several resolutions followed, reaffirming 446. One resolution of particular interest was even stronger than 446-2334, calling on Israel "to dismantle the existing settlements" (UNSC Resolution 465, passed in March 1980). This resolution passed unanimously, no abstentions.

The Government of Israel did not have to wait for the UN Security Council (and more recently, the World Court) to learn that its settlements are in gross violation

of international law. In September 1967, only weeks after Israel's conquest of the occupied territories, in a [Top Secret document](#), the government was informed by the legal adviser to [Israel's] Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the distinguished international lawyer Theodor Meron, that "civilian settlement in the administered territories [Israel's term for the occupied territories] contravenes explicit provisions of the Fourth Geneva Convention." Meron explained further that the prohibition against transfer of settlers to the occupied territories "is categorical and not conditional upon the motives for the transfer or its objectives. Its purpose is to prevent settlement in occupied territory of citizens of the occupying state." Meron therefore advised that "If it is decided to go ahead with Jewish settlement in the administered territories, it seems to me vital, therefore, that settlement is carried out by military and not civilian entities. It is also important, in my view, that such settlement is in the framework of camps and is, on the face of it, of a temporary rather than permanent nature."

Meron's advice was followed. Settlement has often been disguised by the subterfuge suggested, the "temporary military entities" turning out later to be civilian settlements. The device of military settlement also has the advantage of providing a means to expel Palestinians from their lands on the pretext that a military zone is being established. Deceit was scrupulously planned, beginning as soon as Meron's authoritative report was delivered to the government. As [documented by Israeli scholar Avi Raz](#), in September 1967, on the day a second civilian settlement came into being in the West Bank, the government decided that "as a 'cover' for the purpose of [Israel's] diplomatic campaign," the new settlements should be presented as army settlements and the settlers should be given the necessary instructions in case they were asked about the nature of their settlement. The Foreign Ministry directed Israel's diplomatic missions to present the settlements in the occupied territories as military "strongpoints" and to emphasize their alleged security importance.'

Similar practices continue to the present.

In response to the Security Council orders of 1979-80 to dismantle existing settlements and to establish no new ones, Israel undertook a rapid expansion of settlements with the cooperation of both of the major Israeli political blocs, Labor and Likud, always with lavish US material support.

The primary differences today are that the US is now alone against the whole

world, and that it is a different world. Israel's flagrant violations of Security Council orders, and of international law, are by now far more extreme than they were 35 years ago, and are arousing far greater condemnation in much of the world. The contents of Resolutions 446-2334 are therefore taken more seriously. Hence, the revealing reactions to 2334 and to Secretary of State John Kerry's explanation of the US vote.

In the Arab world, the reactions seem to have been muted: We've been here before. In Europe they were generally supportive. In the US and Israel, in contrast, coverage and commentary were extensive, and there was considerable hysteria. These are further indications of the increasing isolation of the US on the world stage. Under Obama, that is. Under Trump US isolation will likely increase further and indeed, already did, even before he took office, as we have seen.

Why did Obama choose abstention from the UN vote on Israeli settlements at this juncture, i.e., only a month or so before the end of his presidency?

Just why Obama chose abstention rather than veto is an open question; we do not have direct evidence. But there are some plausible guesses. There had been some ripples of surprise (and ridicule) after Obama's February 2011 veto of a UNSC Resolution calling for implementation of official US policy, and he may have felt that it would be too much to repeat it if he is to salvage anything of his tattered legacy among sectors of the population that have some concern for international law and human rights. It is also worth remembering that among liberal Democrats, if not Congress, and particularly among the young, opinion about Israel-Palestine has been moving toward criticism of Israeli policies in recent years, so much so that 60 percent of Democrats "support imposing sanctions or more serious action" in reaction to Israeli settlements, according to a December 2016 Brookings Institute poll. By now the core of support for Israeli policies in the US has shifted to the far right, including the evangelical base of the Republican Party. Perhaps these were factors in Obama's decision, with his legacy in mind.

The 2016 abstention aroused furor in Israel and in the US Congress as well, among both Republicans and leading Democrats, including proposals to defund the UN in retaliation for the world's crime. Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu denounced Obama for his "underhanded, anti-Israel" actions. His office accused Obama of "colluding" behind the scenes with this "gang-up" by the Security Council, producing particles of "evidence" that hardly rise to the level of sick humor. A [senior Israeli official added](#) that the abstention "revealed the true face

of the Obama administration,” adding that “now we can understand what we have been dealing with for the past eight years.”

Reality is rather different. Obama has, in fact, broken all records in support for Israel, both diplomatic and financial. The reality is [described accurately by Financial Times Middle East specialist David Gardner](#): “Mr. Obama’s personal dealings with Mr. Netanyahu may often have been poisonous, but he has been the most pro-Israel of presidents: the most prodigal with military aid and reliable in wielding the US veto at the Security Council.... The election of Donald Trump has so far brought little more than turbo-frothed tweets to bear on this and other geopolitical knots. But the auguries are ominous. An irredentist government in Israel tilted towards the ultraright is now joined by a national populist administration in Washington fire-breathing Islamophobia.”

Public commentary on Obama’s decision and Kerry’s justification was split. Supporters generally [agreed with Thomas Friedman](#) that “Israel is clearly now on a path toward absorbing the West Bank’s 2.8 million Palestinians ... posing a demographic and democratic challenge.” In a [New York Times review of the state of the two-state solution](#) defended by Obama-Kerry and threatened with extinction by Israeli policies, Max Fisher asks, “Are there other solutions?” He then turns to the possible alternatives, all of them “multiple versions of the so-called one-state solution” that poses a “demographic and democratic challenge”: too many Arabs — perhaps soon a majority — in a “Jewish and democratic state.”

In the conventional fashion, commentators assume that there are two alternatives: the two-state solution advocated by the world, or some version of the “one-state solution.” Ignored consistently is a third alternative, the one that Israel has been implementing quite systematically since shortly after the 1967 war and that is now very clearly taking shape before our eyes: a Greater Israel, sooner or later incorporated into Israel proper, including a vastly expanded Jerusalem (already annexed in violation of Security Council orders) and any other territories that Israel finds valuable, while excluding areas of heavy Palestinian population concentration and slowly removing Palestinians within the areas scheduled for incorporation within Greater Israel. As in neo-colonies generally, Palestinian elites will be able to enjoy western standards in Ramallah, with “90 per cent of the population of the West Bank living in 165 separate ‘islands,’ ostensibly under the control of the [Palestinian Authority]” but actual Israeli control, [as reported by Nathan Thrall](#), senior analyst with the International Crisis Group. Gaza will

remain under crushing siege, separated from the West Bank in violation of the Oslo Accords.

The third alternative is another piece of the “reality” described by David Gardner.

In an interesting and revealing comment, Netanyahu denounced the “gang-up” of the world as proof of “old-world bias against Israel,” a phrase reminiscent of Donald Rumsfeld’s Old Europe-New Europe distinction in 2003.

It will be recalled that the states of Old Europe were the bad guys, the major states of Europe, which dared to respect the opinions of the overwhelming majority of their populations and thus refused to join the US in the crime of the century, the invasion of Iraq. The states of New Europe were the good guys, which overruled an even larger majority and obeyed the master. The most honorable of the good guys was Spain’s Jose Maria Aznar, who rejected virtually unanimous opposition to the war in Spain and was rewarded by being invited to join Bush and Blair in announcing the invasion.

This quite illuminating display of utter contempt for democracy, along with others like it at the same time, passed virtually unnoticed, understandably. The task at the time was to praise Washington for its passionate dedication to democracy, as illustrated by “democracy promotion” in Iraq, which suddenly became the party line after the “single question” (will Saddam give up his WMD?) was answered the wrong way.

Netanyahu is adopting much the same stance. The old world that is biased against Israel is the entire UN Security Council; more specifically, anyone in the world who has some lingering commitment to international law and human rights. Luckily for the Israeli far right, that excludes the US Congress and — very forcefully — the president-elect and his associates.

The Israeli government is, of course, cognizant of these developments. It is therefore seeking to shift its base of support to authoritarian states, such as Singapore, China and Modi’s right-wing Hindu nationalist India, now becoming a very natural ally with its drift toward ultranationalism, reactionary internal policies and hatred of Islam. The reasons for Israel’s looking in this direction for support [are outlined by Mark Heller](#), principal research associate at Tel Aviv’s Institution for National Security Studies. “Over the long term,” he explains, “there are problems for Israel in its relations with Western Europe and with the U.S.,”

while in contrast, the important Asian countries “don’t seem to indicate much interest about how Israel gets along with the Palestinians, Arabs, or anyone else.” In short, China, India, Singapore and other favored allies are less influenced by the kinds of liberal and humane concerns that pose increasing threats to Israel.

Are we then in the midst of new trends and tendencies in world order?

I believe so, and the tendencies developing in world order merit some attention. As noted, the US is becoming even more isolated than it has been in recent years, when US-run polls — unreported in the US but surely known in Washington — revealed that world opinion regarded the US as by far the leading threat to world peace, no one else even close. Under Obama, the US is now alone in abstention on the illegal Israel settlements, against an otherwise unanimous Security Council. With President Trump joining his bipartisan congressional supporters on this issue, the US will be even more isolated in the world in support of Israeli crimes.

Since November 8, the US is isolated on the crucial matter of global warming, a threat to the survival of organized human life in anything like its present form. If Trump makes good on his promise to exit from the Iran deal, it is likely that the other participants will persist, leaving the US still more isolated from Europe.

The US is also much more isolated from its Latin American “backyard” than in the past, and will be even more isolated if Trump backs off from Obama’s halting steps to normalize relations with Cuba, undertaken to ward off the likelihood that the US would be pretty much excluded from hemispheric organizations because of its continuing assault on Cuba, in international isolation.

Much the same is happening in Asia, as even close US allies (apart from Japan) — and even the UK — flock to the China-based Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank and the China-based Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership, in this case including Japan. The China-based Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) incorporates the Central Asian states, Siberia with its rich resources, India, Pakistan and soon, probably Iran, and perhaps Turkey. The SCO has rejected the US request for observer status and demanded that the US remove all military bases from the region.

Immediately after the Trump election, we witnessed the intriguing spectacle of German chancellor Angela Merkel taking the lead in lecturing Washington on liberal values and human rights. Meanwhile, since November 8, the world looks to

China for leadership in saving the world from environmental catastrophe, while the US, in splendid isolation once again, devotes itself to undermining these efforts.

US isolation is not complete, of course. As was made very clear in the reaction to Trump's electoral victory, the US has the enthusiastic support of the xenophobic ultraright in Europe, including its neofascist elements. The return of the right in parts of Latin America offers the US opportunities for alliances there as well. And the US retains its close alliance with the dictatorships of the Gulf and Egypt, and with Israel, which is also separating itself from more liberal and democratic sectors in Europe and linking with authoritarian regimes that are not concerned with Israel's violations of international law and harsh attacks on elementary human rights.

The developing picture suggests the emergence of a New World Order, one that is rather different from the usual portrayals within the doctrinal system.

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