

The **IMTe**[™] Reports

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Glimpses into the Future

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Glimpses into the Future

***Humans are the carriers of the inherent image of Divine creation ...
True happiness is solely a state of the soul in its successful longing for the eternal
Divine ...***

***The seventh cycle symbolizes the earthly life of man, in contrast to the eighth,
which corresponds to the life of eternity ... The seventh cycle concerns human life
within the limitation of historical place and time, in flowing and transient time,
within which the one is accomplished while the other is dissolved ...***

References: Saint Gregory of Nyssa, Saint Gregory the Theologian, Saint Basil the Great

The New Technoscientific Environment

Dwight D. Eisenhower, in his famous 1961 farewell speech, warned us about a *hostile ideology global in scope, atheistic in character, ruthless in purpose, and insidious in method with a prolonged and complex struggle ...* In today's terms, a techno-driven ideology could control public policy, in effect rendering democracy obsolete. Such times may already have arrived without most people realizing it. Sophisticated computer software not only tracks behavior but *prescribes the direction and the outcome in line with a predetermined, targeted result*, through massive database search processes. To mitigate a substantial threat to our liberal free world, politicians and regulators could make *database search engines* publicly available to all. This would rapidly lead to the creation of thousands of different competing search platforms, each appealing to different audiences, all in line with the democratic principles of free market and unobstructed and open competition. The re-enactment of regulation to limit the power of huge social media and tech monopolies would expose them to market competition, handing decision-making power back into the hands of the citizen/consumer and away from state-orchestrated surveillance capitalism.

The world could well be heading towards a techno-dystopia. The *Great Reset* – denoting the emergence of the new era - could dramatically expand the surveillance state via real-time tracking through digital certificates or direct body implants. Future technologies using brain scans and nanotechnology will predict, and to a large extent direct, individuals' future behavior. The *fourth industrial revolution* is merging man with machine and *will lead to a fusion of our physical, digital, and biological identities*, as implantable microchips may ultimately be reading our thoughts and feelings. The fundamentals of a biosecurity state are largely in place in as much as the attempted control over the circulation of viruses (if that is at all possible) may lead to control over what people do. This could become the most radical and oppressive attempt of modern times to transform the relationship between the individual and the state and allowing government suspension of freedoms at will, bypassing democratic processes. Government and techno-media may operate for the sake of the collective good but at the same time also at the expense of individual rights, property, personal wealth, and privacy. A meta-modern near-totalitarian state could function as a substitute for the family, church, and voluntary associations that, for millennia, have given people a sense of purpose and participation. *Citizens become products* in an *imperium computatrum*, a transhumanist singularity, and a future where people have their every movement tracked and every thought read. *Social controls*, once having been accepted by the majority of populations, could be re-enacted on an ad-hoc basis for different reasons, e.g., the environment, health. It is thought that, in a multidimensional, globally interconnected world, such policies are unlikely to be embraced by most people: in our humble opinion, they will most probably be implemented, but to a certain, moderate extent, with boundaries between a free and a totalitarian society not yet discernible.

Estonia envisages the creation of a digital society where all citizens would be technologically literate and governance would be paperless, decentralized, transparent, efficient, and equitable. Estonia, which has digitized 99% of its public services, thereby saving 2% of its GDP annually, enjoys one of the highest ratings of trust in government in the EU. This is an inspiring example and an action guideline for the rest of the world.

The dawning of an era dominated by central banking and the merging of state and corporate powers has increased wealth inequality benefiting a few millions while billions are struggling or destitute. The neoliberal ideal of *invite the world/invoke the world* has destroyed cultural ties within countries while hollowing out their economic prospects. The destruction of the low-income and middle classes undermines social and political cohesion in the West.

The USA

The undoing of American liberty and tradition in just one generation is propagating itself via a nationwide *progressive* movement, penetrating the humanities in academic institutions while spreading throughout the educational and cultural sectors, the mainstream media, the corporate and, ultimately, the political spheres. Wealthy corporations, lobbyists, and special interest groups are trying to expand their control over government in a new center-left governing wave. A re-engineering of America is taking place where government, in alliance with an expert class of technocrats and ideologues, tries to administer top-down solutions to both real and notional problems, an antithesis of representative democracy. It affects democratic institutions, the natural right of people to decide how to live and what to read, how to view things, and how to freely express their opinion. Historical precedents drawn from European history strikingly show that imperial, autocratic, centrally orchestrated top-down politics are guaranteed to fail. A countertrend is already manifesting itself in a patriotic movement based on the ideals that all men are created equal and endowed with God-given rights to life and liberty. Although storm clouds are currently hanging over the United States, we believe that individuals' healthy reflexes will sooner or later lead to the realignment of American liberal governing. Beyond doubt, what is happening, and will happen, in the US will reverberate round the globe and affect the entire world.

Former US President Donald Trump's foreign policy legacy registered major accomplishments from Asia to Europe and across the Middle East, leaving behind peace deals and initiatives while eliminating terrorist centers and confronting strategic threats. The core of Trump's foreign policy view was to avoid random wars and push for peace while at the same time undermining forces that pose a threat to global prosperity, security, and stability by constraining them politically, militarily, and economically. Trump broke the political chain that had prevailed for decades in the US. In the process, he seemed to prove that his base is greater than that of the Republican Party itself.

US President Biden has ended decades of US appeasement of Turkey by recognizing the Armenian genocide carried out by the Ottoman Turks 106 years ago, in effect ending the blackmail Ankara has been exercising for years against the US over the use of the term *genocide*.

The two-decade war in Afghanistan has been a massive failure for the US. More than two trillion USD were spent, a lot of that money ending up in corrupt projects in Afghanistan and elsewhere and incurring about a quarter of a million casualties. The new directions that ex-president Trump had set for this decade in US foreign

policy favored military interventions only where absolutely necessary: hopefully, this new strategic dogma will hold with the new US administration.

America is locked in a quantum computing race with China, with the latest developments pointing towards the possibility of China achieving a significant quantum computational advantage. By the time the Biden team comes round to the fact that Trump was right about China challenging the US on all fronts, the United States may have allowed China to move far beyond the point at which any American sanctions can reliably work. At that point in time, Chinese tech firms will have become so enmeshed in the global system, propagating new technology and products, that it will be nearly impossible to decouple. This could be another successful step forward for the Chinese leadership in its quest for world dominance.

During the latest March 2021 Congress hearings, lawmakers seemed to have been less interested in specific topics than in getting across the message to the CEOs of Google, Facebook, and Twitter, that a wide range of harsh legislative measures is on its way with the power to permanently transform their operations. A breakup of these massive firms will unleash huge hidden investment value.

The European Landscape

Behind the *European reconstruction fund* is a package of Euros 750 billion that is to be distributed to the member states, a major part as non-repayable donations, the rest as loans. The Maastricht system, with its principles of state responsibility and liability, has come to an end. The EU is becoming the new cash distribution power in Europe, an achievement of French diplomacy and German consent, in the restructuring of the European financial architecture.

Amsterdam is becoming one of the largest financial centers in the EU and a key destination for US foreign direct investment. The Netherlands is expected to play a larger role in future US-European transatlantic relationships.

On April 21, 2021, twenty former French generals and more than 1,500 members of the military, the gendarmerie, and the police signed an open letter asking France's leaders *to eradicate threats and safeguard the nation*. Failure could unleash widespread civil unrest and a potential intervention of the military. The warning comes amid a wave of jihadist attacks, with none of the perpetrators, it appears, previously known to French intelligence services, as well as widespread public dissatisfaction with the French justice system. This is a serious warning to the French Republic before chaos sets in. It should, in our view, impel the government to increasingly strengthen its, to date, anemic political action and initiate long-term remedial strategies aimed at addressing France's as well as European erosion of culture, history, ways of life, and values.

Disagreement over the International Criminal Court accepting Palestine as a State Party, friction over EU policies on Iran, Europe's secular view of the religious and nationalist foundations of the State of Israel, as well as a cultural clash of values between pacifist Europe and Israel, firmly committed to defending its homeland by all means, define some of the elements composing the hostile European disposition towards the Israeli nation-state. Nevertheless, after the recent Israel-Hamas conflict, certain European government voices shifted their tone regarding the undisputable right of Israel to defend its homeland against aggression, notably Germany and France.

Spain's growing interest in Africa indicates a longer-term approach to diversify and strengthen its relationships in regions outside Europe, notably at a time when competition for influence in Africa is rising. Its strategy aims to take advantage of

the anticipated economic boom in Africa over the current decade and those to follow. Its pilot countries will be Morocco and Algeria, while its focus will extend to Tunisia, Algeria, and the Sahel region.

EU countries have, over the past few years, significantly lost in competitiveness, with Germany being the one quality-oriented exception. Former major export markets are increasingly becoming the new competitors for the EU. A lot must change fast in Europe, which remains far too bureaucratic and hesitant and lacking a clear strategy, so that more specifically the EU, as a bloc of countries, can claim worldwide a successful and competitive position among leading world powers.

In the future, no European nation will be able to afford an all-encompassing range of military capabilities. Most probably, what is emerging is the collaboration of France, the UK, and Germany with the other EU and NATO partners for the purpose of composing a comprehensive strategic modularity. Joint exercises are being held, European arms industries are merging, and new cooperation agreements are being signed. Once the planning elements of a true consolidation of a European military strategy are in place and the foundations have been laid, the projected EU army (to a larger or smaller extent backed by NATO) will come into being sooner than anyone might expect. Europe is preparing itself for the great conflicts of the coming years.

Greece

As Turkey becomes an increasingly unreliable NATO ally, Greece offers a viable alternative as a stable strategic ally to the US in the South-East of Europe. The 2019 Eastern Mediterranean Security and Energy Partnership Act provides the framework for the US to support the trilateral partnership of Israel, Greece, and Cyprus through energy and defense cooperation initiatives.

The six-week-long Second Nagorno-Karabakh War fought by Armenia and Azerbaijan in late 2020 was a milestone in military affairs as it was the first conflict in which unmanned air vehicles (UAVs) won a war from the air. Azerbaijan's UAVs (with Turkey's support) obliterated Armenia's formidable array of ground-based air defenses. The war offered a glimpse of future battlefields on which unmanned weapons and electronic warfare might predominate over conventional weapons. Greece should learn the lessons offered by this war and prepare its ground-based air defenses, especially its island defenses, against such a threat. Turkish drones have already passed combat tests relatively well and its thriving drone industry may pose a strategic threat for Greece. Hundreds of drones could simultaneously be deployed to weaken or neutralize Greece's defenses on its Aegean Island line close to Turkey in a military confrontation. Greece should be closely monitoring rapid advances in Turkey's domestic defense industry, which could shift the balance of power in the Aegean region, with disastrous consequences for the future of the Hellenic Republic.

The perpetual outrageous claims of Turkey on the Aegean Sea fly in the face of indisputable historical arguments as well as solidly established international treaties. The Aegean islands, unquestionably within Greece's territorial space, have existed as Hellenic territory since antiquity, far beyond the present national boundaries and well into the Asia Minor coastal regions, constituting part of the history of the western world.

On the list of world fleet beneficial ownership ranking, Greece easily maintains the leading position with its fleet at about 445.- million dwt as of November 2020. Second and third in ranking are Japan and China, each with approximately 230.- million dwt.

Crete is looking ahead to a new period of development that will greatly benefit both its local community and the national economy. Greece's largest, most populous island, one self-sufficient in resources with more than 600,000 inhabitants, being the fourth richest region of the country, with a 5% share in GDP, has the potential to maintain its evolving dynamic of the previous years and meet the challenges of the future. With a strong primary sector, a robust tourism industry, unique natural landscapes endowed with a rich flora and fauna, extraordinary historical destinations, spectacular mountains, gorges, and valleys, some of the most magnificent and acclaimed beaches in the world, with leading academic and research institutions plus a thriving business and world class high-tech sector, Crete is a region that aspires to become a model for all of Europe. The Souda Naval Base serves as the second largest naval base of the Hellenic Navy and the largest and most prominent naval base for the United States and NATO in the Eastern Mediterranean Sea.

Greece is increasingly becoming one of the favored places in the world for *working nomads*. These are affluent, mainly young to middle-aged individuals who, via the issuance of a temporary visa, will be allowed to reside and work in the country for a period of up to two years. This new development will not only mean a considerable new source of money inflow for Greece but also continuous global promotion of the country's attractions as a politically stable and safe destination offering multiple natural, cultural, historical, culinary, and recreational options. As a trend, it has the power to transform the entire profile of Greece and the nature of its tourism industry, as one of the most prominent all-year-round destinations for high-quality, incoming, international travel.

What makes Greece so different? One aspect is the climate, which is truly ideal. But more than anything else it is the light, which has something amazingly radiant and quite unique in quality. It is also the combination of so many different landscapes and ecosystems virtually at a stone's throw from each other and from major metropolitan centers, including the capital city of Athens. And then the Greeks themselves, who radiate an exceptional level of warmth and conviviality, amicably coexisting with everyone around them in a natural, unpretentious, and harmonious way. This highly gregarious, affable, and hospitable atmosphere can be experienced everywhere in daily life, but most vividly in public spaces, especially in cafés. The sum total makes for an exceptionally communicative and cordial culture of everyday life that is not easily encountered anywhere else in the world but which in Greece is natural and self-evident. This unique and beautiful, human and compassionate environment is of immense value because it promotes creativity independent of space and time, so that professionalism and recreation can be intermingled and exchanged on a fluid, ad hoc basis spontaneously and uninhibitedly. A major part of the productive future of Greece will be based on the enormous added value of its natural and historical environment in combination with a philosophy, a culture, and a concept of life unique in the world, one that promotes unaffected sociability and fosters creativity in a naturally flowing and relaxed way. The country will become an extremely attractive destination for inspired and imaginative highly skilled people from all over the world in the coming years. A large part of the Greek economy, mainly thousands of small and medium-sized enterprises, will be connected to the wider cultural and leisure industry, which will gradually shift to an all-year-round operational mode. Education will experience a real renaissance around the existing state infrastructure of a multitude of universities and other educational institutions as the main pillars. At the end of this journey, traversing crises, social and political disputes, and conflicts, a positive scenario will materialize for a country that, in the decades ahead, will export natural and civilizational beauty, an enlightened way of life, cultural and spiritual power,

multicultural harmony, unsurpassable symbolism, and a business and recreational model of high productivity.

A special place in the history of the German Philhellenic movement that manifested itself at the beginning of the 19th century is undoubtedly held by those brave scholars and academic people who openly declared their support for *the Greek Struggle for Independence* from its very beginnings. A particularly important advocate for the rights of the Greek revolutionaries, a pioneer and protagonist of German Philhellenism, was Professor of Philosophy at the Albertus-Universität of Königsberg, Wilhelm Traugott Krug (1770 – 1842). His thoughts on the case of the Greek national uprising in 1821 against four centuries of Ottoman rule were influenced by his romantic beliefs and his Christian faith. Many Philhellenes, veterans of the Napoleonic Wars, saw in the *Greek War for Independence* a continuation of their own struggles on the battlefields. European citizens, inspired by a liberal political spirit, perceived in the Greek case the embodiment of *the struggle for justice and freedom*. The extensive writing activity of German academics in favor of Greece served as a catalyst for the evolution of the philhellenic movement.

China

The People's Republic of China is increasing R&D spending by about 7% per year aiming to achieve major breakthroughs in the field of *frontier technology* in such areas as quantum computing & artificial intelligence, semiconductors, genomics and biotech, health sciences, and deep space/earth and sea exploration. Its integration of state-of-the-art foreign research in its own huge research system can be compared to one of the largest transfers of intangible wealth in human history. The potential for Chinese supremacy in key areas of technology, notably biotechnology, is becoming a strategic threat for the US.

China is refocusing on its relations with Central Asian nations with huge investment programs mainly in infrastructure and public facilities, penetrating Russia's geographical sphere of influence. Although Russia cannot match China's financial resources it will, nevertheless, continue to successfully promote the advantages of membership in the Eurasian Economic Union, its regional integration project.

Sri Lanka's Colombo Port City is a masterpiece of engineering, a metropolis of the future, and, potentially, a leading global financial hub of the future. A city famed for its strikingly impressive skyline of modern skyscrapers, pedestrian paths, bike lanes, waterways, green rooftops, and large parks, all to be powered by renewable energy. With the Colombo Port City Economic Commission Bill passed by Sri Lanka's Parliament in May 2021, the new metropolis comes under extensive influence wielded by China, the first such Chinese indirectly «colonized» area in South Asian territory.

China's sociopolitical governance model, extensively relying on *high-tech surveillance* and a *social credit system*, is steadily making inroads into the Middle East and North Africa together with extension of China's soft power over the African continent.

China recently signed a USD 600 billion deal with Tehran (still requiring final verification) which turns Iran into a crown jewel of the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). Iran may receive up to USD 400 billion in Chinese investments over the next 25 years in such sectors as energy, telecommunications, defense, banking, roads, railways, and ports. The agreement could also expand into military assistance, training, and intelligence-sharing. Iran in return should provide long-term discounted oil & gas as well as other natural resources to China. China has

succeeded in establishing economic ties with Israel as well as comprehensive strategic partnerships with Saudi Arabia and the UAE without so far having to compromise its business links to Iran and Turkey. It has signed deals on the BRI with 19 Middle East countries and has already invested billions of USD in Egypt. China has become the Middle East's largest foreign investor, with its USD 150+ billion worth of investments for the past period 2013-20 accounting for over 40 percent of the total direct foreign investments in the region during this period. Nevertheless, unless regional stability is established in the Middle East, BRI longer-term investment returns will remain questionable.

China controls about 80 percent of the global supply of rare earth minerals, while the United States imports about 80 percent of its rare earth elements directly from China. If China were to weaponize its dominance in rare earth minerals, the timeline for the US to increase production capacity for rare earths could, with government support and industry innovation, be decidedly short.

With the establishment of a joint venture between the People's Bank of China and SWIFT, a new digital version of the Chinese Yuan is about to be introduced with the potential to challenge the US dollar's supremacy.

The People's Republic of China has the world's largest fishing fleet, with anywhere between 200,000 and 800,000 fishing boats (including up to 20,000 boats in distant waters), accounting for almost half of the world's fishing activity. Its commercial fishermen often serve as paramilitary personnel, whose activities can conveniently be labeled as private actions.

China may already be engineering *super soldiers* in the hope of developing human fighters with biologically enhanced capabilities, a new race of *homo robocopus*. The country, a leader in biotechnology, is already the largest collector of the world's DNA. If the Chinese race can become genetically stronger, that could mean that the next pandemic may provide the Chinese with a distinct advantage over the rest of the world's population.

China's next-generation stealth *Xian H-20* strategic bomber has been revealed in computer-generated image. Once operational, the plane could hit targets at great distances; it would have an intercontinental range, the ability to carry nuclear weapons, and most probably also air-launch hypersonic weapons.

A new National Defense Law now allows the Communist Party's Central Military Commission to mobilize all of Chinese society for war at any given time with minimal governmental processes.

China is proceeding with its plans to own the next frontier of connectivity in space by launching up to 10,000 satellites in the next five to ten years, a *space infrastructure system* with a global satellite network for communications, remote sensing, and navigation. Apart from the worldwide commercial scope of such a project, its other dimension rests on its potential use for mass data collection as well as surveillance and analysis of internet traffic.

Russia

Russian President Vladimir Putin has transformed Russia's defense forces into one of the most sophisticated armies in the world. Over the last decade, Russia's aged air force has been transformed into a modern, sleek, and efficient outfit, with around 1,200 combat aircraft and 400 attack helicopters. The Russian nuclear modernization effort is now nearing completion. Russia's military posture is both

defensive and offensive, with an ability to initiate conventional strikes against its adversaries backed up by its nuclear weapon capabilities.

In the Middle East, Russia maintains open channels with all power blocs competing for primacy: Iran, Syria's Assad regime and its allied powers, the Turkey Sunni bloc plus Qatar and other associated parties, and the pro-US bloc including Israel, the UAE, and Saudi Arabia. In the highly fragmented Arab world, this masterfully molded tactical flexibility has enabled Russia to become the mediator in various core issues arising between the above-mentioned groups. Medium-term *mediation* often turns into longer-term *coordination* and the scoring of geostrategic and, potentially, geo-economic benefits for Russia, which cares neither about resolution of conflicts nor about type/ideology of governance. This strategy, at ease in an environment of divided countries and frozen conflicts, is unknown to the West, focusing as it does on intimately shared interests to potentially turn some of those into longer-term permanent gains. Russia possesses maximum tactical flexibility, as permanent commitments in resources are kept at the lowest required level. As a striking example, one of Russia's successes has been the reconquest by its ally Assad of almost the entirety of Syria.

Russia and India have taken several significant steps towards strengthening military ties in a way that reveals how obstacles to forming a pan-Asian military alliance could be overcome. India seems to be more committed to its relationship with Russia than to that with the US, with the former supplying some 80 percent of India's military equipment.

Russia has tested transportation along the Northern Arctic Sea Route, which Moscow proposes as an alternative trade route between Europe and Asia. It would almost halve maritime travel time to Europe from Asia (customarily via the Suez Canal), while providing alternative routing in the event of another costly blockage of the Suez.

Russia's media supervisory and censorship authority has announced the slowdown of Twitter messaging services on the basis that it had failed to delete malicious content. The punitive action may be seen as a test for tougher measures against foreign social networks, as the Russian government focuses on protecting Russia's ideological, cultural, religious, and physical sovereignty.

For the first time in history, Russia holds more gold in its reserves than US dollars. The Russian Central Bank reports that only 22 percent of its international reserves are in USD; gold accounts for about 23 percent. President Putin has made de-dollarization his country's key policy aim to reduce the Russian economy's exposure to the USD, as a response to ongoing heavy sanctions. Russia's largest reserve currency holding is the Euro, accounting for a third of all reserves. On an international basis, around 60 percent of global trade is still conducted in USD.

Turkey

An emergent strategic alliance between Turkey and Pakistan has significant implications both for the Middle East and for Central/South Asia. Both nations are seeking an alternative alignment to their former ties with the West, which, in a time of growing global polarization, is leading them towards greater closeness to China. Turkey possesses both the will and the raw materials to develop nuclear capacity, only lacking the scientific knowledge to do so. Pakistan, which is not a signatory to the nuclear non-proliferation treaty, possesses this knowledge. The alliance between Pakistan and Turkey is coming into being in a rapidly shifting strategic landscape where the old post-Cold War US-led security architecture is becoming obsolete. Given a relative US absence in the region, new connections and new

power nexuses are emerging. The Ankara-Islamabad axis could develop into a significant presence on the complicated geopolitical chessboard of West and Central/South Asia. Turkey's transformation into a nuclear military power at some point in time (not likely in the short to medium term) could entirely disrupt balances of power in the Eastern Mediterranean, the greater Levant, the Caspian, and the South Asian regions.

The three seas that surround Turkey are the Black Sea, the Aegean Sea, and the Eastern Mediterranean. In line with its *Blue Homeland* maritime geostrategic concept, Turkey is aiming at a return to the sea on a grand scale, bridging Anatolia and the Eastern Mediterranean, to control energy resources and to impose unchallenged domination over a wide region. Such a strategy presents an ongoing direct threat to Greece's sovereignty.

TURKEY : REGIONS OF INFLUENCE & GEOSTRATEGIC PROJECTIONS OF POWER



Turkey has developed a remarkable defense industry, meeting about 70 percent of the country's military needs, with plans to become self-sufficient within the next three decades. It manufactures warships and is working on building a modern battle tank and a fifth-generation fighter. Turkey's economic development over the past 30 years has been impressive. Its economy is the world's 19th largest and is in 13th place in terms of purchasing power parity, with a modern economic structure and an allocation of about 65% of its labor force in the services sector, 27% in industry, and 8% in agriculture. Plans have been announced for the landing of an unmanned spacecraft on the surface of the moon in 2023 and the launching of its first home-made communications satellite in 2022. Despite the current coronavirus pandemic, the Turkish economy is expected to grow by 4 percent this year.

Over the past two decades, Turkey has increased its influence in all the geopolitically important regions around its borders, notably the Balkans, the

Mediterranean, the Black Sea, South Caucasus, and the Middle East, mainly Iraq and Syria. President Erdogan's vision is nothing less than the unification of a large Islamic population of 300 million people from the Adriatic to the Great Wall of China and parts of the Middle East, under a new Islamic leadership. Rather than being attached solely to the Western alliance axis, over the past two decades Turkey has been pursuing a well calculated multi-vector approach to foreign affairs, a hallmark of Turkish political thinking since Ottoman times. Under President Erdogan, Turkey has exercised power projection over neighboring countries and across the seas with formidable conventional and proxy military capacity. Turkey will pursue its grandiose strategic foreign policy objectives by simultaneously trying – at least for now - not to detach itself from the West and the NATO alliance. In our view, Turkey has stretched itself thinly over a wide geographical area and with multiple geostrategic/geopolitical objectives commensurate only to a superpower - which Turkey certainly is not. The country is, at best, a regional power beset with challenging internal sociopolitical and economic issues, additionally having angered too many powers in its vicinity. Once delicate connecting links start breaking apart or an implosion manifests itself due to mounting internal sociopolitical, and financial challenges, such a strategy could well fail disastrously and endanger both Turkey's viability as a grand regional power as well as its entire fabric as a nation.

Israel and the Middle East

The task facing Israeli strategists has been to develop, apart from the means of diplomacy, a means of war with minimal domestic disruption, where societal calm and normality is maintained and within which economic activity and innovation can flourish. The purpose of Israel's strategy is two-fold. Foremost to hinder Iran's ongoing efforts to develop nuclear weapons capability and second to reverse Iranian efforts to create an extensive infrastructure of support across Iraq, Syria, and Lebanon, with embedded advanced weapon systems directed at Israel. The latter military development plan, characterized by a clear civil perspective stretching over a wide time horizon, aims for a military that can destroy enemy capabilities on multiple fronts and in record time while minimizing Israeli casualties. The entire Israeli military, with the integration of air, naval, ground, and cyber-attack capabilities, is to be interconnected in such a way as to allow units to detect and share information and destroy enemy targets in merely a few seconds, consequently shortening the period during which the Israeli home front and economy could suffer damage or even be paralyzed by incoming enemy fire. This calls for the unprecedentedly efficacious cooperation of a variety of advanced technology units, data engineers, analysts, and IT experts working closely with one another and breaking down traditional barriers between units. The recent hostilities between Israel and Hamas in Gaza will - as a lesson in military strategy - be instrumental in materializing these objectives, in achieving the enhancement of security systems and their respective technological background, and in actualizing Israel's overall strategic military dogma regarding threats and adversaries. What is probably emerging is a new means of warfare but also a new way of implementing deterrence measures and ensuring internal stability in its most advanced form. Once again, Israel stands at the absolute forefront of modern warfare capacities.

Maritime attacks on Israeli commercial vessels, happening more frequent lately, have substantially increased the risk for conflict and may ultimately become the catalyst of a broader military confrontation between Israel and Iran.

Israel is embarking on an initiative aiming at developing a national drone network for commercial delivery, urban air mobility, and medical transport. It could shape the future of mobility in innovative airspace management. Israel's remarkable capacities in desert agriculture, medical tech, artificial intelligence, and other fields will enable long-term peaceful initiatives to flourish in the entire Gulf area. This is

what makes this country such an indispensable partner for regional states in the civilian realm and at the same time a lasting guarantor of peace.

The role of Israel - an active member of the *Mediterranean Dialogue* (involving the non-NATO countries of Jordan, Israel, Egypt, Tunisia, Algeria, Morocco, and Mauritania), initiated in 1994 by the North Atlantic Council, will prove to be highly significant in the context of NATO's 2030 holistic approach for linking multiple frameworks and activities. The *Dialogue* reflects the Alliance's perspective that security in Europe is closely interlinked with security and stability in the wider Mediterranean region. NATO's efforts for policy coordination with the *African Union* have also been elevated in importance following, in diplomatic terms, the recognition of Israel by Sudan and Morocco (along with Bahrain and the UAE). Despite the ambivalent stance of the new US administration, *The Abraham Accords* represent an important strategic development on the regional level: Israel now has powerful local military allies in the face of Iranian imperialism. The *Accords* have the potential to lead to a new period of stability for the Middle East and, undoubtedly, to influence the entire African continent in the longer term.

Palestinianization of large parts of the Israeli-Arab community within the Israeli state has, beyond any doubt, been an utter failure in terms of improving living standards in these areas. Mansour Abbas, head of the Arab Islamist Ra'am Party, recently declared the party's willingness to participate in a governing coalition, breaking with decades of Arab party nationalist and rejectionist rhetoric against the state of Israel. This can be seen as an acknowledgement that Israeli Arabs must ultimately accept that Israel is the national homeland of the Jewish people - and, as such, it is here to stay - and work within the system to advance their communal interests. Whether this may or may not lead to an active political governing cooperation, this is historically breakthrough thinking within the Israeli-Arab community and opens the way to a new direction for Arab parties. It also offers new prospects for the Palestinian cause, with all the benefits it can bring in lieu of the continuous misery, armed conflict, and loss of lives. It is another step that reinforces the trend toward cooperation and peaceful accommodation in the broader Middle East, while further isolating antagonistic Arab states. We do not see that the recent Israel-Hamas hostilities centered in Gaza, or Palestinian uprisings within Israel along the West Bank and Jerusalem will, in the longer term, affect or derail such powerful initiatives towards peace and reconciliation. So many times, throughout history permanent peace emerges after meaningless hostilities mounted by one side and evoking a devastating response by the other side.

The initiation of the historic peace deals between Israel, Bahrain, and the UAE in late 2020 (*the Abraham Accords*) form the beginning of the end of Israel's conflicts with Arab states over the past 70 years. Israel is still facing a large adversary, namely, Iran, along with its proxies, the latter forces being disliked in most of the region's countries. Although antisemitism is still prevalent throughout most of Europe, nevertheless, the anti-Israel crowd is becoming less relevant within the big picture of global events. The current generation may in fact represent the last of organized anti-Israel activism. The scandalous one-state Israeli-Palestinian solution (a situation in which Israel would practically lose its character as a Jewish state and the Palestinians would also fail to achieve their national independence, while hostilities may remain active) remains alive but with diminishing importance and largely within Western academic and journalistic circles of a leftist orientation. Consequently, we may be seeing the last generation of professional Israel critics, while the discussion in the West is slowly shifting to a more pragmatic attitude concerning how Israel's policies and technological know-how can play a positive, stabilizing role in the Middle East, not only for Israel but for Arabs, including Palestinians.

Social & Cultural Narratives

We live in a world of *radical ignorance*, where knowledge is available, but not necessarily easily found or accessed. Ignorance is widespread, as all too many people lack evidence-based knowledge as well as the ability to objectively comprehend established facts and concepts. Special interest groups, whether business, political, public, or institutional, willingly or not, are constantly engaged in fabricating and disseminating a massive cloud of both information and disinformation, which creates perpetual confusion, thus hindering the public from arriving at realistic, logical and factual conclusions. The internet – on the positive side – propagates information and knowledge on a global scale at a volume unprecedented in human history, while - on the negative side – it allows the spreading of toxic information which increases ignorance. The internet is a place where everyone has the possibility to become his own expert. However, in such an environment, individuals remain largely unconscious of the forces that are at work molding and manipulating their minds. At the same time, *the engineering of consent*, that is, *how to maneuver and manage the will of the public*, the understanding of the mental processes and social patterns of the masses, becomes the mechanism employed by various interest groups to direct and, to a large extent, control society (without the individual knowing what is happening), for the attainment of a variety of objectives in the commercial, civic, educational, and political domains.

Negative sentiment about big-tech companies has been growing as the pandemic made life more dependent than ever on their products and services. Although the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic opened a major window of opportunity to technology giants and social networking corporations to bolster their image by constructively assisting during the crisis and productively expanding their vital global roles in delivering goods, distributing, and channeling communication and information, they have sadly missed that chance and largely forfeited their beneficial role in society. The fact is that, as the connecting media in a digitized world, they are ideally positioned to foster connectivity, creativity, ingenuity, and productivity on an unprecedented scale. Instead, they are selectively turning against their customers, politicizing their services, and, in certain instances, even depriving them of their services because they freely express their views. This is certainly not the way social media conglomerates can prosper in the long run.

Predominantly in the US, but also other developed western world regions, public trust in government has eroded, while business has become the most trusted and competent institution and a guardian of information accuracy and quality. The pandemic has deepened inequalities around the world and impoverished the low and middle classes, while it has exponentially enriched specific economic elite centers, mainly in the communications/technology and social media sectors. Government and societal leaders are suspected of too often concealing the truth and misinforming the public. Trust in major information centers has reached a record low. It is anticipated that the corporate sector will, largely, fill the vacuum of mistrust and incompetency of government, while CEOs are expected to lead on the most important societal issues in the years ahead.

People are practicing *civil resistance*, i.e., nonviolent action, opposition, and unarmed struggle, more frequently than ever before round the world. It is a method of conflict historically used to change the status quo through which unarmed civilians employ a variety of coordinated methods, such as protests, strikes, demonstrations, or boycotts, without harming or even threatening to harm an opponent. *Civil resistance* has a high success rate in achieving its goals in contemporary society.

Although lockdowns may have achieved a certain virus containment goal, the experience of *open societies* in such regions as the US state of Florida, and lately Texas, and in Sweden, has led to the assertion that the extent of such success is a topic for further study. What is, however, clear is that indiscriminate all-out lockdowns have resulted in significant collateral harm to health, businesses, liberties, law, and civilized life. Many children have had their mental health damaged as they could not attend school or play and interact with their friends, while, scientifically and statistically, it remains debatable to what extent children are at risk of either spreading SARS-CoV-2 or of becoming very sick from it. The negative effects of lockdowns and school closures for children have led many parents to consider alternatives to public schools, such as private schools or homeschooling. Humanity must deal intelligently with pathogens and stop pretending that political forces and oppressive measures can control them, which may ultimately lead societies to a new *medicalized distorted normality!*

New trends in American museums and private galleries point the way to the emerging new sociocultural paradigm. *Diversity, equity, and inclusion* are the expressions of new morality codes, far removed from power relations that have victimized minorities, oriented towards a cultural stance that seeks to ameliorate, as far as possible, the most striking inequities built up over centuries. We are not, however, at all convinced that these new tendencies express a true interest in *the individual* and are not mere expressions of the new center-left political thinking, as predominantly propagated in the US and the Anglo-Saxon world. We are also skeptical as to whether these novel social positions will achieve anything significant and truly positive in societal terms, as some of the inequalities form part of the history and evolution of human civilization on Earth and will only evolve further in a positive direction through a deeper spiritual process and naturally arising ethical standards and not by imposed norms and directives.

An emerging trend at its very start in the art world calls for *the fractionalization of art* via the partial digitalized ownership of artwork backed by blockchain technology. To a certain extent, it may imply a distancing of the art lover from the physical auction market and the thousands of galleries, museums, and art exhibitions with their wonderful live artwork. If the year 2021 signals the start of an *era of fractualization*, this, in our view, indicates another worrisome trend away from *socialization* and *integration*, basic elements of human existence, towards *isolation*, *sterilization*, and *interaction through digital networks*, all elements alien to human nature and existence.

Digital vaccine passports to be utilized through smartphones and online technology, apart from facilitating health management, provide a convenient system for governments to surveil their citizens. The fundamentals of a *biosecurity state* could be under construction on the foundation of achieving optimal security for citizens, with no real public debate so far, which development would simply mean the end of liberty as we knew it.

Millennials and the younger *Generation Z* have grown up in an era of endless social disruptions and alarming events: financial meltdowns, terror attacks, infectious diseases, and the reality of global climate change. Their susceptibility to fear is developing into a generalized anxiety about life. In a single-minded pursuit of safety, adult society has, throughout the Covid-19 crisis, deprived the young of education and community, thrown their employment prospects into confusion, and left them with the burden of towering public debt. Both generations will overcome those profoundly negative effects on their lives but at a cost to society, unascertained as to its nature and unquantifiable as to its magnitude and the social reactions unleashed.

Pope Francis reiterated lately his case for the *Great Reset*: a shift away from financial speculation, military build-up, and fossil fuels, towards a green economy based on inclusiveness, the establishment of a *new world order* based on solidarity, innovative technologies, and the eradication of poverty and corruption. The path to humanity's salvation should be redirected towards the creation of a new global model with a focus on human coexistence in harmony with Creation. Political action should be the outcome of international cooperation, marking an end to short-sighted nationalism and other forms of political self-interest, and in favor of multilateral solutions. A truly inspiring vision - as long as those new directions do not end up as policies in the hands and for the benefit of a few elite centers seizing responsibility for the management of life on earth.

Economic Viewpoints

The global coronavirus pandemic has accelerated several troubling trends that were already in motion. Among them are exponential debt growth, rising public overdependency on government, and massive central bank interventions into markets and the economy. The next frontier of the seemingly unlimited mandate of central banks is digital currencies. Tangible assets and precious metals may be the ultimate hedge against the new world monetary order where electronic digits representing currency can be created out of thin air in unlimited quantities.

India has quickly become a global cryptocurrency hub, with about 8 million investors holding an estimated USD 1.4 billion USD in crypto assets. In the same way that Indian culture always promoted savings (India has always been a huge holder of gold), among the nation's tech-oriented younger citizens, Bitcoin may simply represent the modern technology version of wealth preservation. The Indian government may introduce laws banning the possession and use of cryptocurrencies, the only exception being a digital/cryptocurrency possibly to be launched by the Reserve Bank of India.

Germany, at the heart of European financial policies, is currently projecting rather nebulous economic plans. One of the primary reasons is its exit from nuclear and coal energy and its redirection towards green sustainable energy, with a deficit gap in structural bridge-investments at an approximate value of up to Euros 1.0 trillion. On the positive side, German exports may in the next 3-4 months reach pre-corona crisis levels. Determining factors for the catch-up of German industry in the post-COVID-19 era are huge investments necessary for completely digitized production platforms. This will be the strategic turn-around for German industry unparalleled in scope, breadth, and depth for the past 50 years since the last oil shock. In our view, Germany will probably perform another economic miracle once again in its modern history.

In the US, Fed holdings of financial assets quadrupled during 2008-2019, reaching USD 7.50 trillion in February 2021. One has to go all the way back to World War II to find anything comparable to the money supply increases of the past 12 months. The resulting low interest rates reduce the opportunity cost of holding money. Mandated shutdowns due to COVID-19 caused the velocity or turnover rate of money to plummet, one of the main factors explaining the temporary low level of inflation. This has resulted in a huge pent-up demand for products/services. At some point, velocity of money will surge as consumers go on a buying spree, while travel, tourism, sporting events, and other entertainments are simultaneously opening, which is what is already happening now in many countries. Higher nominal interest rates will cause the velocity of money to further increase, unleashing additional inflationary pressures. We believe that inflation will rise spectacularly, perhaps even to double-digit levels, becoming the big story of the post-pandemic economy. US total debt, including government, business, household, and non-profit

private, was about 410% of GDP in 2020, compared to almost 300% in 1932, three years after the start of the Great Depression. In 1981 total debt was about 170% of GDP starting its steep ascent that year to the present exorbitant levels. The Fed could implement a policy of *control of the yield curve* for an extended period, creating deep negative real interest rates. *Yield curve management plus inflation* are one of the few options left for the US to lower its debt burden.

Bitcoin is just one of more than 7000 cryptocurrencies. There are currently just over 18.5 million Bitcoins in circulation, with the total amount limited to a maximum of 21 million. As Bitcoin does not generate income, no intrinsic value can conventionally be attached to it. *Bitcoin's value is based on its underlying technology* (and the same goes for other major cryptocurrencies), which is an open-source ledger that keeps track of ownership rights and permits the transfer of these rights, worth as much as the next buyer is willing to pay for it. Similarly, to the case of gold, the marginal production costs can be used to define a kind of minimum value, between USD 4,000 and 7,500 in hardware and energy to *mine* a new Bitcoin. Bitcoin bundles its unit of account with a payment system that rests on the ledger, transferred between individuals without a third party. It is a new system for the digital age. *It represents both a payment system and a monetary instrument*. The payment system is the source of value, interlinked with the accounting unit merely expressing that value in terms of price. *The digital coin unit only expresses the value of the network*, i.e., *blockchain*, a digital accounting system that absorbs and carries the value of the network through time and space. It is *a ledger that lives in the digital cloud*, a distributed network observable in operation by anyone at any time. The ledger records the amounts, the times, and the public addresses of every transaction and is shared across the globe and constantly updated. The virtual ledger guarantees the integrity of the system and allows the currency unit to become a digital form of property with a title. If it were possible for *blockchain* to be somehow separated from *Bitcoin* (something unfeasible), the value of the currency would instantly fall to zero. This is how a new form of money has been born. This money has all the best features of money as known through history but adds a weightless and spaceless payment network, one that is reliable and verified in real time and which enables the entire world to trade without having to rely on third parties. *Bitcoin has performed for 12 years as a deflationary asset*. This is to say that the unit has been growing ever more in value compared to that of a standard basket of goods and services. Future widespread ownership and use of Bitcoin and other cryptos can make a breakthrough contribution in cultural and economic terms in a new liberal age. Cryptocurrencies could eventually offer the hope of a new monetary system that improves upon the shortcomings of the physical and fiat money. Cryptocurrencies still have a rather low transaction acceptancy rate and governments enter the field by competing with their own versions of digital money. As such, Bitcoin and other cryptocurrencies have as yet an asymmetrical volatile risk profile, also displaying characteristics of a speculative bubble with a unique digital technology attached to it. This bubble may burst, but its underlying technology together with the concept of digital currencies will survive!

Low growth reduces velocity of money, without which sustained general inflation is impossible: however, now the shift is from low to high growth. Abundant liquidity boosts stock/asset/housing prices and undoubtedly creates bubbles, which are at the root of economic crashes. In the post COVID-19 era, raw materials may recover strongly, including the energy sector, i.e., oil and natural gas. Modern energy production is shifting towards solar, wind, hydrogen, and a revolution in battery storage capacities. Major oil companies view hydrogen power as the most promising alternative next to their traditional business. A rotational change from *growth* to *value* is taking place. A huge shift of capital flows from the largest winners to the largest losers of yesterday is underway and will be one of the changing trend bets for this present year.

The Reserve Bank of New Zealand's potential policy line of *including asset price fluctuations in measuring inflation* is a simple but revolutionary concept. In the same way that in the 1990s New Zealand pioneered *inflation targeting*, an approach followed by every major country since then, today, incorporating asset price movements into monetary policy may define a new worldwide trend with global financial implications.

Technology, Energy & the Environment

Quantum computing, based on the processing of information represented by special quantum states, will revolutionize entire industries, from finance and the health sciences to cybersecurity. Quantum computers conduct calculations by manipulating *qubits*, the quantum version of bits used in classical computing. *Qubits can represent both parts of binary information at the same time*, as long as a measurement has not been triggered. The more qubits are entangled together, the more combinations of information can be simultaneously represented. At trial stages, claims have been made of calculations by quantum computers up to 100 trillion times faster than in an ordinary computer. Quantum computing will eventually help develop artificial intelligence (AI) systems that increasingly act in a more human-like way. Quantum, undoubtedly, holds the promise of revolutionizing computing, though there are still serious hurdles related to hardware and software challenges to be overcome. Trial achievements currently advertised may contain a lot of hype and may largely represent as yet officially unverified and untested performance outcomes. Though the new direction is clear, and the potential is revolutionary and enormous, traditional computing technology will be with us for quite some time.

There may be a wide sphere of defensive uses for AI-capable robots, e.g., *robotic dogs* for routine security surveillance on military bases, robotic platforms which can find and take out attacking enemy mortars, artillery, drones, and even certain missiles, all operating without the human response time delay. The concept is to ease the cognitive burden upon human decision-makers by performing various processes more quickly and efficiently.

China is still heavily reliant on externally produced semiconductors, with Chinese production capable of meeting only about 25 percent of internal demand. Taiwan is the largest manufacturer of semiconductors worldwide, accounting for more than 50 percent of global supply.

Solar (photovoltaic) energy has over time become far more cost-effective. *Solar* has dropped from an energy generation cost of about 350 USD/MWh in 2009 to anywhere between 110 and 36 USD/MWh, approximately at the same level as that of *onshore wind* energy at 60 to 40 USD/MWh, if compared at the lowest end. Comparatively, *wind offshore* energy generation costs range between 135 and 85 USD/MWh, *geothermal* at around USD 80-60/MWh, *nuclear* energy stands at between 165 and 55 USD/MWh, while *storage* cost ranges anywhere between 190 and 130 USD/MWh. The above statistics concern the year 2020.

Hydrogen can be a zero-carbon fuel source, making it a highly attractive alternative to polluting fuels. Green hydrogen (produced by splitting water by electrolysis into hydrogen and oxygen) can be described as a zero-emission fuel source, requiring, however, a large energy input. Its mass production should be in synchronization with abundant natural renewable energy sources, such as solar, to avoid the secondary polluting effect from these sources.

Ethereum (crypto) mining consumes about 26.5 terawatt-hours of electrical energy a year, nearly as much as the entire country of Ireland with its 5 million residents. For a cryptocurrency with no physical presence or utility outside the digital realm, the process of producing the *digital coins* seems to be tremendously inefficient and environmentally damaging.

On February 18th, 2021, the Mars rover *Perseverance* landed safely on the surface of the red planet. *Perseverance* is NASA's robotic astrobiologist in search of traces of former life. The US is still by far leading the way in space exploration.

According to simulations conducted by leading space agencies, Earth, with its present rocket technology, lacks the ability to stop a massive asteroid from wiping out large parts of the planet, while governments are unprepared for this kind of massive catastrophe. NASA is working on advanced technologies to potentially deflect asteroids, with a test mission scheduled for later this year, the first planetary defense test. NASA is tracking some 25,000 near earth objects (NEOs) and is discovering around 30 new NEOs per week.

Security

What is largely overlooked on the civic front is that future wars or mass terrorist attacks could to a large extent affect citizens and their everyday lives and not only military personnel, with the public having virtually no capacity to do anything about it. Once digital networks, electricity, and communications are affected, apps will simply fail to function, communication/computing systems will cease operating or will operate in an erratic and random way, and supply chains will experience serious disruptions, causing extensive damage or complete shutdowns to businesses and normal life processes.

Life Sciences & Health

The COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted the revolutionary potential for mRNA therapies, a transformational concept in medicine, where cells use mRNA strands to translate the mRNA sequence into specific proteins. There are currently 500+ ongoing clinical trials testing mRNA across more than 20 disease categories. mRNA therapies could potentially address a variety of conditions, such as in the use of vaccines for infectious diseases, therapies for rare genetic illnesses, the regulation of dysfunctional protein expression to improve or restore health, and personalized cancer immunotherapies. mRNA therapies simply reprogram the human body to produce its own therapies.

Touchless technology has become the new goal where physical things become the untouchables, reminiscent of certain ancient religions that considered the physical world to be a force of darkness, while, by analogy, today the digital world points to the light. Many billions have been spent globally on cleaning products when there is poor evidence of contracting a serious case of COVID-19 infection by touching a contaminated surface. The frequently conflicting health guidelines issued by governments, health institutions, and the medical-scientific world is eroding public trust in the scientific paradigm.

Compared to other countries around the world, Taiwan, with its 23 million inhabitants, saw considerably low case and death numbers during the COVID-19 pandemic: between January 2020 and early May 2021, the country reported a mere 1,200 cases and 12 deaths. Taiwan's well planned, well executed, and well monitored approach rested on multiple parameters: travel controls on incoming travelers granted only to Taiwanese citizens, efficient mask distribution, contact tracing, and designated spaces for quarantine. Inbound travelers could be picked

up only by their family or else use the *epidemic-prevention taxis* available at the airport. In addition, they had to present a health declaration and SIM card during their self-health monitoring or quarantine period, this enabling Taiwan's outstanding contact tracing system to function effectively. The government provided quarantine spaces in facilities such as dorms and spare military camps. In addition, 2,000 beds were lined up in negatively pressurized isolation spaces to prevent infected persons from infecting others, which eased pressure on the national health system. Individuals voluntarily wore masks and sanitized their hands, while the government kept its promise of transparent and open communication to promote both public trust and voluntary cooperation among its citizens, thus avoiding uncertainty and hysteria. Although some actions by the Taiwanese government were harsh — such as fines up to USD 10,000 for quarantine violations and USD 100,000 for propagating fake news about the pandemic — many of the measures implemented were minimally invasive. Taiwan never locked down, merely capping gatherings outdoors to ten persons and indoors to five. The future may or may not hold additional or new restrictions, but Taiwan undoubtedly serves as a beacon of freedom where children still attended school, professionals continued with their work, and society kept open. It serves as an example worthy of deep study for the entire world.

Synthetic biology aided by AI and automation technologies comprise the revolutionary effort to re-engineer nature from scratch using the basic biological building blocks, RNA and DNA. It is already reshaping the environment, the food industry, and the material and life sciences. In the latter case, it is the technology behind new state-of-the-art vaccines, novel medicine, and diagnostic tests. The principal axiom is that the base pairs of DNA operate in a somewhat similar manner to the binary code in a computer, leading scientists to the premise that the (re)programming of cells bears an analogy to the programming of computers. Synthetic biology makes the astounding but also controversial claim to possessing the power to simply reprogram the living world, which risks stepping into the territory of challenging the eternal laws of Divine creation.

The digital revolution will allow the global health community to accelerate community-based care models and support data-driven health solutions primarily in low- and middle-income countries, with a focus on the African continent.

The year 2020 could ultimately be recorded in history as the year when synthetic biology with its revolutionary m-RNA technology achieved a head start for the final resolution to many illnesses rather than the year when a virus almost ruined life on earth. *Life sciences, medical & health technologies* will probably dominate this decade and beyond.

A Clash of Civilizations?

Denmark, with some of the most restrictive immigration policies in Europe, is now at the helm of European efforts to preserve local traditions and values against mass migration and unchecked multiculturalism in Europe, by opposing *culturally and religiously parallel societies*, discouraging *ethnic and social self-segregation*, and phasing out *ghetto areas*. Thinking on the same wavelength, France is embarking on a new effort to limit the influence of minorities which have the means to create a parallel order with their own values around the Republic's laws. Hungary is declaring its will to protect its national interests against illegal migration. Non-governmental organizations and certain non-European power centers, that are alien if not hostile to European history, support mass migration to Europe. Plans – without the affirmative voting support of the citizens of Europe - aiming at bringing about 35 million migrants across European borders to become EU citizens (i.e., nearly 8 percent of the current EU population) represent an outright danger for

Europe. Switzerland, Austria, France, Germany, the Netherlands, Sweden, Italy, Belgium, Denmark, Bulgaria, and Latvia have all in one way or another, directly or indirectly, started to express their determination to preserve their traditions and values in the face of an ill-conceived, corrosive multicultural movement on the European continent. There is a growing trend in Europe towards a return to national identities, history, and tradition and away from a dilution of European culture by alien civilizations.

Every day around the world, about 12 Christians are killed for their faith, the same number are illegally arrested or imprisoned, around five are abducted, and approximately 12 churches or other Christian buildings are attacked. About 350 million Christians around the world suffer high levels of persecution and discrimination for their faith. Between 2018 and 2021, the persecution of Christians has increased by nearly 60%.

To the extent that Islamism's ideology seeks to propagate and implement God's law on earth (a noble cause per se), while, however, largely viewing the West as an obstacle to that end, inevitably brings it onto a confrontational course with Western values. An expression of this is in many cases concealed in the refusal of non-western minorities to accept their host cultures.

A battle within the Islamic world between Middle Eastern and Asian powers involves the following players: Turkey, seat of the last Islamic caliphate of the late medieval and the early modern era, with a vision to lead the Islamist world; Saudi Arabia, home to the faith's holy cities; the UAE propagator of a moderate statist interpretation of Islam; Qatar, with an inclination for a more radical political Islam; Indonesia, promoting a humanitarian, pluralistic notion of Islam that reaches out to other faiths across the globe; Morocco, which uses religion as a way to position itself as the face of moderate Islam; and Shiite Iran, with its revolutionary face. The course of the battle will determine the future face of Islam, in a rivalry that goes to the heart of the relationship between state and religion. As the battle for religious soft power between rival states intensifies, the lines dividing state and religion have become blurred, particularly in autocratic countries. It is to be hoped that out of this struggle will emerge a more tolerant and pluralistic face of the Islamic world.

The West and Islam have, over long periods of time, been enemies, specifically starting from the latter's birth some 14 centuries ago. Christian Europe's unending pursuit of victory over Islam throughout extended periods of history has poisoned the atmosphere and, to a lesser extent, continues to do so today. On the other hand, for approximately 1,000 years, from the advent of Islam in the 7th-8th centuries until the second siege of Vienna in 1683, Christian Europe was under constant threat from Islam. A glance at the dispersion of Christians and Muslims in 600 AD and in 1600 AD renders that conclusion indisputable. The legacy of the long, sad past is still very much with us and will unfortunately continue to color images and poison relations between the West and the Islamic World for a long time to come.

China's vision, encompassing the Western world, may consist in a longer-term endeavor towards replacing the Westphalian state sovereignty principle (arising from the *Treaties of Westphalia in 1648* - a system where each state has exclusive sovereignty over its territory), with a new imperial-era system where, traditionally, Chinese emperors had the right to rule all under heaven. Probably no nation in history has been as ambitious as the Chinese nation under its current leadership. In this process, China's leadership may be equating race with civilization, which is becoming one of the world's new dividing lines.

The Emerging Geopolitical & Geostrategic Reality

After decades of pursuing a policy of disarmament, the British government intends to increase its number of nuclear warheads again, probable reasons being improved Russian missile interception systems, the tensions with China, and the overall uncertain global geopolitical situation. Great Britain is embarking on a new re-armament, defense, and security era. More consistently than any other country in Europe, the UK is overhauling its security and defense policy with a new focus on cyber weapons, hybrid warfare, and drones, all backed by artificial intelligence systems. The UK is increasing its defense budget by about USD 22 billion over the next four years, which is the most significant increase since the end of the Cold War. Cyberspace and outer space are gaining in importance alongside the dimensions of land, air, and water. Since Great Britain can no longer claim to be a superpower, its partnership with the USA and NATO should considerably gain in importance. Thanks to its strategic planning and innovative strength along with authority and leverage regarding security issues, the UK is expected to contribute significantly to a new partnership with continental Europe.

The highest defense expenditures of NATO countries as a percentage of GDP in 2020 were approximately: USA 3.90%, Greece 2.60%, and Great Britain 2.45%.

A non-paper appearing in April 2021 on an allegedly Slovenian portal about the political reorganization of the West Balkan region resting on radical border changes has made waves in European foreign policy circles. The unofficial letter proposes a new border demarcation based on ethnic criteria, strengthening Serbia, Croatia, and Albania, to the detriment of Bosnia-Herzegovina. The non-paper proposal breaks with all the cornerstones of international Balkan policy since the end of the Yugoslav wars. If taken seriously, it would inevitably lead to a revival of conflicts in the Balkan region affecting other stable EU states, e.g., Greece in the south, and potentially drawing in larger powers such as Russia. In light of the issue, the EU emphasized its commitment to international treaties and to the territorial integrity of Bosnia-Herzegovina and the countries involved.

Russia massively built up its military assets close to the Ukrainian border, only to partially retreat recently following a de-escalation of the situation. This has been in response to Ukraine's official policy to de-occupy Crimea. The situation will, nevertheless, remain critical and could at any time ignite a major war. Europe seems rightly determined to steer clear of this minefield of a situation.

Russia is building up unprecedented military power in the Arctic abundant in natural resources - renovating Soviet-era airfields and radar systems, building new ports and search and rescue centers, and modernizing oil and gas production facilities, while at the same time testing its newest weapons in ice-free regions. Among those super-weapons is the Belgorod nuclear submarine, which can carry an autonomous, nuclear-powered, nuclear-armed torpedo, the Poseidon, which could devastate entire coastal regions via radioactive tsunamis. The Belgorod can additionally carry a broad range of underwater craft and robots, the engagement of which would, in an armed conflict, provide control over vast sea areas. Russia's policies are aimed at strengthening its ability to repel attacks and defend territory over key parts of the Arctic. In preparation for potential future conflicts, Russia is upgrading its military cooperation abilities with its neighbors. It will probably participate in nine military exercises with foreign troops during 2021, keeping up the intensity of combat training from the northern Arctic front all the way to the West European, Central Asian, and Pacific fronts.

President Putin, in line with Russia's historical geostrategic dogma, is endeavoring to secure strategic depth on Russia's Eastern European front as well as in the

Caucasus region. From a western perspective, the reestablishment by Russia of its historically protective buffer zones creates an arc of instability from Eastern Europe to the South Caucasus. Facing rising competition for regional influence, Moscow is trying, via several political initiatives, to build up the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU). This is a shift of Russian strategy away from an ad hoc interventionist approach of past decades towards a subtler, more coherent approach, at minimal cost and designed to be more long-lasting. The EAEU is a formidable visionary project. It comprises Russia, Armenia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, and Kyrgyzstan as members; China, Tajikistan, Vietnam, Iran, Egypt, and Serbia with financial/trade agreements; Mongolia, India, Singapore, and Indonesia with a cooperation status; plus, observer states. The EAEU is a grand project of long-term geostrategic and geopolitical scope and the potential to include under its wings all of Asia and partially further expand into the eastern Middle East region.

The President of Russia delivered his *Address to the Federal Assembly* in the Manezh Central Exhibition Hall on April 21, 2021. This all-important speech delivered several critical messages. Old geopolitical rules where a single world power, namely the US, directly or indirectly imposed its will is over. Russia will exhibit a patient, responsible, self-confident approach in world affairs as well as in the pursuance of its long-term national interests. It will not threaten anyone, but nor will it allow anyone to threaten Russia. If any power misunderstands this doctrine and does cross those red lines, Russia's response will be swift, powerful, and asymmetric. World powers should strive towards the creation of an environment of conflict-free coexistence based on collective security, covering not only strategic weapons such as intercontinental ballistic missiles, heavy bombers, and submarines, but also any and all offensive and defensive systems, all of this against a background of equality. This will be the goal of the Eurasian Economic Union in its wider mission to solve national policy and developmental issues. The speech, noted in Western circles, may mark the start of de-escalation in US-Russian relationships, which have lately seen their worst level since the Cold War. It may also provide room for Europe to reapproach Russia in a friendlier tone.

The Islamic Republic of Iran's pursuit of hegemonic power in the greater Levant will continue unabated together with its support for proxy armies and the continuation of its covert ballistic and nuclear programs, no matter who is in charge in the US. For the United States, future success in the Middle East will ultimately depend upon a firm projection of power and on its cooperation with such regionally influential allies as, primarily, Israel, the UAE, Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Bahrain, and Jordan. An ambivalent and weak policy serves neither the geostrategic interests of the US nor the national interests of its allies.

Abu Dhabi Crown Prince Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahyan, an inspiring and strong leader, is dedicated to transforming the UAE into an economic empire, shielded by an efficient military and a foreign relations network with strong partners, the leading among them being Israel and the US.

The geographic location of the Middle East has historically made it an arena for great-power competition between the Persian and Ottoman empires with the West, while Russia has constantly been infiltrating the region to exert influence. Turkey and Iran alike have complicated relationships with Russia, which has vested geostrategic interests in the Middle East. Ultimately, Russia and Turkey are unlikely to become permanent allies as both have different agendas in the Middle East, notably in Syria, and also due to the fact that Turkey's increasing involvement in the South Caucasus is a direct intrusion into Russia's strategic spheres of influence. Iran and Turkey, despite their economic need for each other, are longer-term rivals in the effort to unite the Arab world as well as to gain influence over the Caspian region, where the two nations clash with Russian strategic interests. Turkey is

seeking permanent new sources of oil & gas in the Caspian Sea, as well as in the Eastern Mediterranean. In the latter case, the legitimacy of its operations there raises serious concerns as regards Hellenic and Cypriot maritime space. Turkey's ambitious neo-Ottoman policies of expansion in the Aegean Sea and the East Mediterranean could, whether accidentally or not, ignite conflict with Greece, which could be disruptive for the entire region. Iran's controversial nuclear armament program is regarded by Israel as an existential threat. Any containment of Iran requires partnerships among the Gulf States and Israel. Even though the *Abraham Accords* undoubtedly open a new and promising chapter for long-term stability, permanent peace in the wider region will remain a goal to be only gradually attained, with many ups and downs along the way.

Any attempt to stabilize Libya, Syria, Iraq, Yemen, Somalia, and areas of Africa where extremist threats exist will in the future be anchored increasingly in the newly established diplomatic and economic corridor that stretches from Jerusalem to Abu Dhabi. A multifaceted approach is emerging with long-lasting diplomatic peace initiatives, backed by permanent defense ties, and ending with trade and a new corridor of strategic stability in the Middle East.

The US Pentagon's decision early this year to relocate Israel to the area of responsibility of the *United States Central Command (CENTCOM)* is a milestone development. It is a direct operational reflection of the *Abraham Accords* and reflects a growing need to coordinate military activities between Israel, the US, and pragmatic Gulf States in the face of the common adversary, the Iranian axis.

It is probably in America's interest to help resolve outstanding issues between Iraq and the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRD), ultimately for establishment of a strong and stable Kurdish autonomous region as a barrier to Turkish and Iranian domination of Iraq and a safe base for US forces in the region. A stable Kurdish region rich in gas and oil could longer-term also be appealing to American financial interests.

South Caucasus and Middle East geopolitics are slowly merging. Israel's close relationship with Azerbaijan puts it on a somewhat parallel side with Turkey on the Armenia-Azerbaijan conflict. This reflects the Caspian Basin's inextricable links to the greater Middle East's conflicts as well as the fluid and fragile nature of regional alliances, partnerships, and animosities across the Eurasian landmass.

Countries that invest in military drone technology could have an instant air force without having to spend hundreds of millions of dollars on systems that are often difficult to acquire and even harder to master. Unless an enemy has a sophisticated, integrated air defense system specifically designed to handle large numbers of interceptions, a swarm of drones with loitering munitions can easily overwhelm targets. Whereas elite pilots require years of specialized training to fly F-16s or F-35s, drone operators can be trained in a matter of weeks. In the Middle East, only Israel, with its integrated multi-layered air defense system, including *Iron Dome*, *David's Sling*, and *Arrow*, can intercept any and all airborne incoming threats including drone swarms effectively.

Turkey's unique geostrategic position as a gateway between Asia and Europe makes it one of the leading countries in China's Silk Road geography. The BRI – a monumental project in terms of conception, planning, and execution – is China's grand bid for global economic supremacy and unparalleled worldwide political influence.

In the event of a US–China war, Australia would serve as a vital base for peripheral operations in the Indian Ocean and the Indonesian Straits. From the point of view

of military geography, Australia is located at the junction of the Pacific and Indian Oceans, an ideal location that allows control over the sea and air communication routes connecting both oceans. Due to its geography, its modern infrastructure, and the vastness of its territory, Australia is an indispensable ally for the United States, an excellent base for sea/air intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance. Its proximity to the Indonesian and South Asian main arteries of world trade enables it to exercise operational control over the strategic Makassar, Sunda, Lombok, and, even further out, the Malacca Straits.

CRITICAL SEA ROUTES & STRATEGIC STRAITS IN THE INDO-PACIFIC REGION



It also serves as an ideal base for operations in the Indian Ocean and for the control of Asian sea routes to and from resource bases in Africa and the Persian Gulf. The US's nuclear submarines (one of its greatest military operational advantages over China) together with cruise missile carriers would, in the event of a clash, operate deep in Chinese-controlled waters, targeting inland, ports, communication/air defense systems and facilities, their only limitation being ammunition, which cannot be replaced underwater. Australia could provide vital maritime bases for US vessels on its western coast, air/sea military and highly advanced reconnaissance support, plus control over the Indonesian straits through its navy.

China may be trying to create divisions within the *Five Eyes* intelligence-sharing alliance by establishing closer relations with the left-wing government of New Zealand. The *Five Eyes* alliance, which comprises the US, Canada, Britain, Australia, and New Zealand, dates back to WWII. In sharp contrast to Australia, which is a

firm US ally, New Zealand is pursuing a relatively independent approach on foreign policy and, consequently, may be risking its continued membership in the above western security alliance.

China has actively been investing in the military capabilities/tactics, which would neutralize US *expeditionary warfare*, by first focusing on US operational locations close to its periphery. This approach could rapidly lead to Chinese naval superiority in the East and South China Seas. By 2025, China's army is projected to have three aircraft carriers in the Western Pacific, 12 amphibious assault ships, and about 110 modern multi-warfare combatant ships, significantly outmatching US naval presence in the region. Given China's unprecedented military build-up, a potential invasion of Taiwan would, under present near-future power projections, most likely present the US with a *fait accompli*. It could create the next epicenter for disruption to the advanced microchip technologies' global supply chains, as Taiwan is home to just over 90% of the world's most advanced chip manufacturing operations. US-China rivalry will over time extend to the Indian Ocean as China builds up a powerful ocean fleet to actively control the ports it is building in the Indian Ocean in such strategic locations as Ceylon, Gwadar, Djibouti, the Seychelles, and East Africa.

Panamanian governments have been making extensive concessions to Chinese interests in the Panama Canal Zone with an important part of the free-trade zone's activities currently under Chinese operation, an issue of utmost strategic security concern for the US. Panama became the first Latin American country to officially cooperate with the BRI program in 2018. China could at any time theoretically decide to partially or fully militarize its vast holdings in commercial ports around the world.

Following the Cold War and a comparatively reserved approach to South America, the United States is in the process of reengaging itself with Latin America. Its preferred entry point is Uruguay – politically and economically the most stable South American nation – located between the two giants, Brazil and Argentina. The US will thus be able to more effectively address China's mounting competition in the South Atlantic, with Chinese fishing vessels creating an arc of influence stretching from the south of Uruguay all the way around Latin America to Peru, Ecuador, and the Galapagos in the Pacific Ocean.

Space is beyond doubt the ultimate strategic high ground. Although the United States is still dominant in space, America's till now unquestioned hegemony could within the next two decades become questionable. China will soon be launching the components for its modular space station, rivaling the US-led International Space Station (ISS). China's space station will provide wide access to low-Earth orbit and, unlike the ISS, which represents an international peace effort, could become another nationalistic project with a militaristic aspect. Russia would probably link its space station to China's as both superpowers have announced their intention to cooperate with each other in space, one example being a future lunar colony.

An Era of Hope or Despair?

The 19th century in the Western world was one of emerging global connections and expanding political franchises, the 20th one of innovation, mass production, world wars, and statism. In contrast, the 21st century has the chance of becoming a century of genuine liberty in a more peaceful and just world. The larger part of this decade will bring dramatic upheavals, a reshaping of American government, foreign policy, economics, and culture, affecting not only the greatest nation on earth and a bastion of liberty but also the entire world. The United States periodically reaches a point of crisis in which it appears to be at war with itself; however, after a shorter or more extended period, it reinvents itself in a form both faithful to its founding

principles and radically different from what it had been. The latter part of the post WWII era has largely been a period of unilateralism, an era during which progressively the US lost prestige and created discomfort and rifts among its allies. The China threat could eventually help the US redefine its alliance system and reposition America in a new era of trans-Atlantic ties. Within such an environment, a rapprochement with Russia is a distinct possibility, as Moscow executes a masterfully planned foreign relations strategy. It could ultimately place the US in a leading position, redefining a new liberal order within the Western camp of free democratic nations. Europe will most probably within this decade define its new governing directions and policies, its new ideals, and its potential future role as a global power with a far more united voice, maybe as a true federation of independent states. The 2020s will likely be a time of economic hardship as we reckon with the consequences of our past and current policies. It may, however, also spark a renaissance for the ideas of limited government, free markets, and a new liberal movement. Despite all the dark clouds of authoritarianism overshadowing positive developments, the free world may after all win the great struggle, intellectually, culturally, and politically. The wager for humanity is to focus on achieving the very wisest outcomes possible during this critical current decade and not on some unknown future. It will largely be defined by the culmination of the confrontation between sociopolitical and economic liberty versus technoscientific authoritarianism and suppression, a highly advanced technologically, dazzlingly innovative, and spiritually uplifting versus a dark dystopic, sterilized, techno-controlled world. The end of the tunnel should hopefully lead us into a new era of liberty, prosperity, dignity, creativity, and free human enterprise. Global access to information will create an unparalleled dynamism as billions of people exchange ideas and connect instantly all over the globe.

The neoliberal era that started forty years ago under Reagan and Thatcher is over. The COVID-19 pandemic created a virtual separation between a past world and a world yet to emerge. In economic terms, key parameters for the present and the immediate future include state-sponsored capitalism, unorthodox economic policies focusing on such bizarre notions as *Modern Monetary Theory* (calling, for the sake of continuous growth, for a merger of unrestrained monetary and fiscal stimulus), reflation of economies, unsustainable accumulation of debt, and a recurrence of inflation. The longest period of falling interest rates – almost 40 years – has definitely come to an end; a long-term trend reversal is already under way. New industries center around renewable clean energy sources, hydrogen-derived energy, health care technologies, digitized medicine, and genetically induced therapies. An advanced stage of digitization of the entire planet will bring with it the risks of shutdowns and disruptions in large sections of the world economy due to potential cyberattacks. Cyberwarfare will be a large-scale component of the competition for world power. Environmental issues mainly centered round climate change will create shocks as catastrophic events, e.g., volcanic activity, rising sea levels, and extreme weather conditions, are likely to occur. Science and intelligence and their interaction will be the key to ultimately uncovering the genomic origin as well as the direct source of the virus that unleashed the SARS-CoV-2 pandemic.

America is in a deep sociopolitical crisis with certain adverse economic implications and multiple challenges on its foreign policy front. After fierce debates and battles, Americans will in the end do the right thing. This may sound like wishful thinking, but it has a historical element of truth and is also supported by our trust in this great nation. The era of high hopes in Europe's relations with Russia is, at least for now, over, while EU transatlantic ties with the US can be expected to gradually strengthen. A revival of ties between Europe and Russia cannot be excluded as a possibility at some future date. The *Abraham Accords* changed Israel's strategic landscape, opening up the road for Israeli partnerships with the Arab world while isolating the Palestinian leadership and their decades-long hostility towards Israel.

The recent violent Israel-Hamas military confrontation around the Gaza Strip will, in our view, not derail the aforementioned process, to the contrary. The BRI is a grandiose, highly sophisticated Chinese strategic plan to transfer world hegemony from the West and more specifically from the US to China, if possible, without war or conflict. Can the world avoid large-scale military conflict by limiting and defusing crisis situations within *gray zones*? A *gray zone becomes the notional space between peace and war*, inviting action, from intelligent communication, diplomacy to highly targeted limited short-term coercive aggression, usually falling outside the realm of large-scale confrontational exchange and intended to intimidate and deter a target state by threatening further escalation. Our strong belief is that several dangerous future conflicts will be resolved in this manner. Neither China nor Russia is anxious to risk long wars, which, if lost, could cripple their own countries.

Over the past one and a half years, we have witnessed the rebuilding of the infrastructures of human existence. Lockdowns initiated in China have opened the door for states, in the name of collective protection and security, to invade personal space on different levels. With the onset of the SARS-CoV-2 pandemic, radical changes in social behavior have been abruptly introduced throughout the world. People were told not to engage socially insofar as everyone was a potential carrier of illness and death. Avoidance of invisible pathogens and sterilization of our environment became the new norms. Political leaders, armed with the authority of science, claimed responsibility for protecting our world from our unseen viral enemies. These worrisome trends may signal the end of liberal civilization as we have known it. From this point onwards, humanity could easily be drawn into a utopian plan for an idealistic society without pathogens - at the expense of human liberty and freedom of association, all bowing to the techno-medical discipline of disease mitigation. The danger lies in the emergence of nominal democracies with an authoritarian political ideology. Optimism can only be grounded in the huge collective power of the ordinary citizen. Like-minded people will build new coalitions that stand behind our inalienable human rights. This could manifest as alliances of nation states or independent movements of citizens round the world or both. The demand for the recognition of human freedoms will become imperative and impossible to ignore. The world has become accustomed to floods of news communicating the darker aspects of geopolitical rivalries, as well as the negative features of trade wars and the adverse effects of a hyper-technological society upon life, all of which overlook the potentially optimistic side of a great new age of innovation, affluency, and freedom.

A world full of exciting business opportunities is emerging and will stay with us throughout the decade. It will also be a highly unstable period of huge social, geostrategic, geoeconomic and geopolitical shifts, and clashing currents. A period where the task of understanding global, regional, and even smaller scale interacting events, the product of relentlessly competing power centers, will become arduous, complex, and at times seemingly impossible. Geopolitical and geostrategic issues related to the competition for global dominance between the US, China, and Russia introduce new potentials for risk. These critical issues are to a great extent neglected within the business and financial world and, when considered, are too poorly analyzed, understood, and resynthesized to produce viable alternative scenarios for action, safeguard against unexpected shocks, and more specifically identify the optimal asset allocation strategies and protect financial resources. They are rarely included in business plans and profit generation models. The art of investing becomes a daunting exercise that requires, beyond the traditional business analysis and available planning tools, the ability for asymmetric thinking/acting as events will spring up unexpectedly, without warning, and at times randomly. Within such an environment, *hedging* will remain a powerful tool in business and investment planning, strategy, and execution, mitigating, even

eliminating, catastrophic risks while solidifying and stabilizing sound business and investment strategies. We live in a highly innovative environment where emerging opportunities, despite the obstacles and complications, will still abound.

Social cycle theories are not forecasting systems but form elements of a science resting on the study of human history along with the sociopolitical, demographic, and economic patterns shaping life on earth over long periods. The world is indeed at an important turning point, while waves of new geopolitical formations and geostrategically necessitated events, at times overlapping, are yet to reach us. The *winter sub-phase*, a period of *creative destruction* of a *long Kondratiev cycle*, coincides with the *fourth sub-cycle* or *fourth turning* of the *Strauss-Howe generational cycle theory*. Both sub-cycles indicate a volatile period of revolutionary readjustments on the sociopolitical, demographic, and economic spheres. Interpreting the *Strauss-Howe theory*, the previous *Fourth Turning* was sparked by the stock market crash of 1929 and climaxed with World War II. The world is currently in the latter part of a twenty-year period in which, in the free world, institutional life is torn down to be rebuilt from the ground up. Civic authority is on a revival, cultural expression is accommodated within community purposes, and people gather protectively as members of larger groups. These are times when national identities are being redefined for a new start and the outer world of empire, politics, and economy is being radically reshaped. Looking beyond this turbulent decade, an emerging, highly prosperous era with a new social, political, and economic landscape, possessing characteristics distinctly different from the past based on peace, prosperity, human dignity, respect for all life, and freedom, may be lying ahead of us and will leave its mark on humanity's destiny for the next three to four decades. We are optimists by nature but also realists and will always try to see intelligently through the excessive noise and the intangible waste increasingly filling our day-to-day living environment and obscuring the beauty and the positive prospects of life itself. We will, however, continue to assert and repeat that in order to reach the above-described positive threshold, humanity still has to overcome difficult impasses, fight and survive confrontational battles expected to unfold during the current decade.

Epilogue

There have been very many discussions, arguments, counterarguments, and conspiracy theories concerning the SARS-CoV-2 pandemic being the catalyst of the «Great Reset», namely a monumental change in world order directed by one or more power center(s) to the detriment of human liberties and freedom. We do not adhere to such theories and believe that a new and bright future ahead of us, or, alternatively, a dystopic new world order, will neither be the product of any conspiracy theory nor be attributable to a single or multiple power center(s), but ultimately lies in the hands of billions of human beings worldwide, who, in a totally networked, interconnected world, have the sole absolute power to direct future long-term trends. In fact, in today's wonderfully colorful, emerging new world, there are many clashing power centers and rivalries, working synergistically or antagonistically, fashioning a mosaic of competing forces in the political, geostrategic, economic, civilizational, cultural, and religious spheres, creating temporarily, i.e., in the short term, a profoundly unstable world, out of which either hope or despair may arise.

To inject some brief analysis and reasoning into our preceding arguments, in the geostrategic realm we do face intense competition for world dominance between China and the US. This rivalry has the potential to ignite military conflict either geographically focused, i.e., interventionist/defensive, or regional/global. Such a military exchange will, in all likelihood, have a prevailing maritime component, while the theater of likely operations will be the wider area of the China Seas and

the surrounding Indo-Pacific region. Another great power, Russia, is standing on the periphery of this antagonism and, most probably, will opt for a «dynamically passive» stance, using openings to opportunistically intervene as and where its own long-term national strategy dictates. It could well emerge as the great winner out of the historic US-China antagonism for world supremacy. At the same time, Russia's historic rivalry with the US and NATO is indeed being revitalized and could trigger military clashes in regions that possess strategic depth, i.e., buffer zones for Russia around its periphery bordering Europe and Central Asia. In the Arctic region, its competition with the US for dominance will only intensify. In the Middle East, before historic long-term peace is reached between Israel and the Arab world (we firmly believe this process is already under way), a serious military clash between Israel and Iran and/or its proxies is a distinct possibility. Iran's nuclear armament program presents in the eyes of the Israelis the ultimate existential threat. Regional power centers include Turkey (behaving like a superpower, which it certainly is not) with its grand ambitions of reviving the Ottoman Empire and transmuting it into a new pan-Islamic alliance, grandiose plans which, in our view, are doomed to fail. However, before that happens, serious disruptions and military conflict could arise with most probably localized effect. However, a localized war would still have the potential to act as a catalyst, leading to wider military conflict involving other powers as well – the focal area being the arc from the Balkans to the greater Levant, including the Eastern Mediterranean and, notably, the Aegean Sea.

The recent amassing of Russian troops on the Ukraine border, mounting Chinese naval activity around the Philippines plus air force missions in Taiwan's airspace, increased Chinese ground force military exercises on the borders with India in the Himalayan Ladakh region, the recent Israeli-Hamas Gaza conflict, Iran nearing the point of nuclear military capacity, tension between Egypt, Sudan, and Ethiopia related to the «Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam» on the Nile, a commercial aircraft flying from one EU country to another forced to land in Belarus with two of its passengers arrested, the still uncertain origin and genome composition of SARS-CoV-2 which has created a global health disaster - all point to the worrisome fact that great world powers are directly or indirectly challenging each other. A distinctive new parameter on the world's geostrategic chessboard is that neither China nor Russia seems to be any longer impressed by American military power, and this has wide-reaching implications for global stability and security. Looking beyond the obvious frontline events, elements of an unstable period of impending military clashes are progressively falling into place. In a highly volatile global environment, regional conflicts do carry a likelihood of getting out of hand and evolving into larger wars related in particular to the increasing competition between China and the US and to a lesser extent the revival of the antagonism on the geostrategic front between America and Russia. A major or a global war remains a distinct possibility, although one with a smaller chance of occurring, in contrast to regional military confrontations, still highly disruptive but which, longer-term, would probably diffuse international geostrategic tensions and lead us towards a new equilibrium of power and peace.

In the civilizational realm, two different worlds have reached a stage at which coexistence is virtually intolerable, this especially evident on the European continent: the western Christian world versus the Islamic world. This is also a battle for the soul of Europe, its history, its traditions, and its way of life. At the same time, persecution of Christians in Muslim countries around the world has reached an alarming level, which further intensifies this confrontational situation. Within the Christian world, the Catholic Church has its own highly influential voice and represents a power center on its own with its distinctive agenda, at times cooperating with other major political or economic centers of influence. The Christian Orthodox world, as represented mainly by an arc of nations stretching

from Greece through the Balkan region into Russia, is a religious and civilizational force, less visibly active but with huge spiritual power and symbolism. The tiny nation of Greece with its most powerful global shipping industry, its influential «diaspora» all round the world and its huge symbolic power since ancient times could, in our view, play a leading role in the future of Europe as the latter seeks to define its new identity.

Existing global institutions increasingly function in defense of the position of elites and not in defense of the rights and liberties of the working and middle classes. Huge technology and social media conglomerates have amassed historically unprecedented financial as well as sociopolitical power in as much as they effectively control the flow of information around the planet. We would, however, argue that once, through their actions and words, they have declared that they are the ultimate regulators of life on the planet – which is what we are witnessing today – that very moment also marks the start of their decline on the ladder of power and the fracturing of their world oligopolistic influence, a process which may already have started.

On the socioeconomic and political fronts, we are witnessing the decline worldwide of the working class and the over-expansion of an academically educated elite of intellectuals, focusing on such issues as racial and gender equality, against billions of lower income and industrial workers, with the former elite group alienated from the aspirations and needs of the latter. This gives rise to authoritarian demagogues, politicians seeking scapegoats for the effects of deindustrialization and the demise of the eternally vital cultural symbols. An alliance of the «aristocracy of technology, education, and money» with autocratic politicians will certainly not solve the economic problems of the most vulnerable but could exacerbate the spectrum of technological fascism hovering over the world and endangering liberal democratic principles. The culmination of multiple socioeconomic super-cycles against the background of an ever-accelerating onslaught of technological innovation, new digital forms of exchange, biotechnological revolutions, quantum computing and instant computational speed, clean hydrogen-based energy ... etc., means that we have all the necessary components for a complete breakdown of existing institutions and, with it, the loss of legitimacy of the currently governing elite classes. In the US, a huge sociopolitical and economic battle for the soul of America is unfolding. What is at stake is a new high-tech/liberal versus a socialist/left-wing era, which is alien to the US's history and constitution. The outcome of such a battle would affect not only the US but, beyond any doubt, decisively impact the entire western world in multiple ways. Historical evidence suggests that after some fierce debates and confrontations, Americans will, as always and ultimately, do the right thing: we adhere to this view.

As such, yes, we will go through a «Great Reset», but not a «conspiracy reset», nor one that represents the program or agenda of one or a group of powers. It will be the outcome of a natural sociopolitical, cultural, demographic, and economic evolution following the course of human history, of recurring social cycles, human achievements and failures, confrontations and battles, won or lost, ultimately leading humanity into a new hyper-technological age. Terms that have become slogans widely used today such as «multiculturalism», «global governance», «cancel culture» do not carry any significant depth or weight: they are, rather, old terminology dressed in new attire to sound inspiring. The coming system will be multipolar not only in its geostrategic/geopolitical dimension, but across digital network dimensions and cyberspace, the new background of everyday life. It is debatable whether the civilizational aspect of the new world – certainly different from that of today's contemporary society – will be one offering freedom within an open liberal environment or will represent a darker autocratic world centered around the new elites of power. As firm believers in the Divine nature of human

existence, we will as always remain optimistic that a promising world lies ahead of us, but we must caution any critical thinker that the present decade will be a volatile one with social clashes, military conflicts, religious battles, economic disasters, environmental calamities, but also a multitude of immense business and creative opportunities, with bright lights already gleaming on the horizon!

On the global geopolitical map, we would like to briefly examine the potential cooperation possibilities in a new world power-sharing model between leading nations, in terms of their underlying civilizational, sociopolitical, and economic compatibility but also in terms of their geostrategic aspirations. The US and Russia stem from different civilizational and societal origins but could find an accommodative platform of coexistence with key reference points being their Christian origin, their free-market, capitalist system, and their antagonistic position versus China. The US and China derive from entirely different civilizational backgrounds, namely the Christian Western versus the Confucian Eastern world, the latter undoubtedly with an exceptionally long history and impressive philosophical background, of possibly comparable merit to that of ancient Greece, the cradle of Western civilization. Nevertheless, and without wishing to attach any quality scores, we view the two systems as highly incompatible. Adding aspirations for world leadership into the equation, both powers can only coexist temporarily with tremendous energy expenditure and good will and only based on a sharing of economic benefits from an expanding global economy. Should the US decide to hold onto its past world leadership status and/or China push for world dominance, then we will automatically fall into the geostrategic «Thucydides trap» that will inevitably lead to a dangerous military confrontational situation. It seems that this is exactly where we stand at the start of this decade, i.e., the US defending its global leadership position which has stood unchallenged since the end of WWII, and China with its present leadership and its tremendous socioeconomic achievements plus an exponentially growing military might, aspiring for world dominance. Ultimately, it is Hellenism alone, with its open frontiers since antiquity and its huge, soft symbolic power that offers a superb bridge towards all cultures and civilizations. And we do believe that this universal perspective will, in a variety of still undefined and subtle forms, play a determining role in the shaping of our emerging new world.

If we look at how the world has evolved over the last 200 years, we will find that the most important trend has been the replacement of multinational empires by nation states, with the latest echoes being the dissolution of the colonial empires after World War II and subsequently the collapse of the Soviet Union. In light of this year's 200-year celebrations of Greece's War of Independence, the effects of the 1821 revolution - which culminated in Greece's liberation from Ottoman rule - are underestimated in Europe. There is a lack of awareness that modern Europe was born in the south of Greece, in the Peloponnese. Greece's War of Independence was a historical event, a precursor to the beginning of a global historical tidal wave of enormous significance and scope at the forefront of the ideological and political processes of the time. The national virtue of the Greeks has always been their ability to assimilate the new ideological tendencies of history and to transform them into a new sociopolitical order, at critical times serving as a forerunner of developments for the western world. The Revolution for Independence was not about an inner or notional freedom, but about concrete, territorial liberation with a clear historical imperative and necessity as well as a nationalistic dimension where freedom and the nation-state are bound together, against the colonialism of feudal society. Although the first new modern nation state in the west was the American formed in 1776, in Europe, Greece was the first new nation-state, which opened the way for modern European states, twenty years before Switzerland (although the primordial alliance of three cantons dates back to 1291), thirty-three years before Italy, forty-three years before Germany, and well before the modern

European states of Norway, Finland, and Ireland formed in the 20th century. The Greek revolution, as an act of decolonization, deserves a pan-European memory.

Sir Winston Churchill in an essay written in December 1931, pointed to the dangers of technological advancements without ethical standards "... in a future which our children may live to see, powers will be in the hands of men altogether different from any by which human nature has been moulded. Explosive forces, energy, materials, machinery will be available upon a scale which can annihilate whole nations. Despotisms and tyrannies will be able to prescribe the lives and even the wishes of their subjects in a manner never known since time began ... Projects undreamed-of by past generations will absorb our immediate descendants; forces terrific and devastating will be in their hands; comforts, activities, amenities, pleasures will crowd upon them, but their hearts will ache, their lives will be barren, if they have not a vision above material things. And with the hopes and powers will come dangers out of all proportion to the growth of man's intellect, to the strength of his character or to the efficacy of his institutions. Once more the choice is offered between Blessing and Cursing. Never was the answer that will be given harder to foretell."

Hellenism is a timeless culture, resting on the values of democracy, freedom, creativity, and the exaltation of the spirit, constantly adapting to the ages of human evolution without losing its eternal values and spiritual underpinnings ...

There are different levels of worldly life. The sociopolitical level is a secondary-layer structure, the deep foundation of which is the spiritual level. The moral and spiritual condition of humanity is reflected in the mechanisms and structures of society and in political and historical events. These outer events are symptoms of the inner soundness or, alternatively, unsoundness of the human being's mind: in other words, they are an extension or reflection of what is happening on the spiritual level. By healing people on the spiritual level, order and peace are simultaneously introduced at the levels of the family, society, and the state.

Reference: Saint Sophrony of Essex

... everything that passes in life loses its entire meaning if there is no concept of Divine Eternity behind it ... God created our spirit in such a way that in a moment in time it can assume the infinity of Being.

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