

Johan Galtung: **THE WORLD IN 2050: SOME APPROACHES** Draft for comments

In 2017 there are 33 years to 2050; the same time distance as at the 1967 conference in Oslo to "The World in The (magic) Year 2000". One future studies approach comes up: go back 33 years, to 1984, 1944; look at what happened, not to identify and prolong trends--a method without jumps--but for how much change can be packed into 33 years. With history accelerating, there will be more in the next 33 years.

1984 was "Orwell Year"; in 1985 it came. Reagan-Thatcher tried his irreversibility, Anglo-American world capitalism, and still try. Crises: stocks tumbled like October 1987, June 2008, and still do.

Add structural crisis: more inequality, structural violence within and between states; sustained by Anglo-American warfare around the world for the irreversibility of both capitalism and inequality.

Not unrelated and also increasing, it seems: the erratic climate.

But there is also peacefare, positive togetherness going on. In Nordic countries, EU, ASEAN (Southeast Asia), maybe even in China and Russia. But not in India and USA, ridden by caste-racial civil wars.

Africa, Latin America-Caribbean aim at unity (maybe also Sudan?). 57 years Ecuador-Peru war led to peace in 1998. 52 years Colombia civil war FARC-Government led only to cease-fire in 2016, masking a flagrant inequity that gave rise to the war, and will do so again.

But the Third World is generally moving away from both violences.

That leaves us with three global danger spots carrying the seeds of even nuclear world wars: East Europe, the Middle East, East Asia; over Ukraine, Israel, and US-Japan vs Russia-the Chinas-the Koreas.

Add five major world trends those past 33 years: the decline of the US Empire

economically-politically-militarily but not culturally; the economic decline of the West; the decline of the state system and rise of regionalism-localism; the rise of the Rest; the rise of China. The world is becoming more diverse. Less Western. Less state-ist.

And more capital-ist. A finance economy of financial objects, on top of a real economy of goods and services for end consumption.

More changes: a new virtual internet world, robotics, eugenics, cosmic travel. A lot. There will not be less in the coming 33 years.

In Aspen CO, USA, an elite gathering made a forecast for 2050: "global warming, famine, unending terrorism"<sup>i</sup>. These were elites--not common people in 1967 predicting Year 2000<sup>ii</sup> and proven right<sup>iii</sup>--with self-denying counter-forces to stabilize a status quo, with less CO2, with less hunger and more war on terrorism, on the "cancer" IS.

There are counter-counter-forces with solar and wind energy; met with cheaper fossil fuels. And the market becomes ever more pervasive, making food-water-health-education commodities, increasing the famine.

IS: custodianship in Mecca-Medina, undoing Western colonization of 56 of the 57 Islamic states with provinces and imam-mosque-sharia courts going IS one after the other is strong. Not easily "crushed".

Prediction for 2050: more of the same. Anglo-American warfare in the three danger spots, maybe nuclear, with USA-West sinking deeper, being "whence the clear and present danger comes". Many governments are aware, and try not to incur their wrath. Their threats may succeed up to a point (see below). But their wars may turn out more like in Afghanistan-Iraq-Somalia: not as fog, nor as chaos; but as fiascos.

The Rest will continue rising. Islam is counter-cyclical to the West, when one contracts, the other expands. Now it is Islam's turn. And China-centric China will rise higher up, between Heaven and Earth.

Such predictions cover the 2050 underbrush; but not tall trees overshadowing all that, negating much of it. What could they be?

Another future studies approach comes up: search the permanent, "la longue durée" (Braudel) with forces and counter-forces in balance, in equilibrium, for unstable equilibria. Not the ball at rest at the bottom of a bowl, but the ball on top of a bowl turned upside-down.

First, US domestic micro-management of politicians, governments, business, media; in defeated countries such as Japan-Germany-Italy, in "who won the Cold War, we did" Russia; in Spain, in South Korea, &c. All it takes is a gifted, charismatic politician when time has come. Thus, Putin's Russia did what Yeltsin's did not: said and says Nyet.

Second, US global relations with allies oceans away, NATO in West Europe, US-Japan in East Asia; putting them at risk. All it takes is a gifted, charismatic politician making peace with neighbors. Abe for East Asia? And for West Europe, who are you? A hint: after the 395 split West Rome lasted 80 years, East Rome 1000. US 80, Europe 1000?

However, a "gifted charismatic politician" may turn out fascist; calling for strong states. And people's movements may have turned inward, localist, more ego-oriented, self-digging; less political.

Third unstable equilibrium: the materialist assumption focused on body pain and pleasure, and a turn from the material to the spiritual. The economy would be a target, not as capitalism--to Pope John Paul II socialism was equally materialistic--but as materialism. All it takes is a very gifted, charismatic Pope, leading the way

to spirituality by living in material simplicity, with so much togetherness and sharing that it even takes much of the brunt off the Muslim challenge.

New material technologies--DNA modification, space travel--will attract less attention than social relations inspired by utopias and all civilizations, present and past; not only by the materialist West. The Middle Ages? One source; maybe monasteries for periods, not life. People want deeper lives, more lofty goals, less rat-race for things. Less ego, more togetherness; less body, more mind and spirit. Culture. Look at Cuba, forced to be less materialist, turning culturalist. Look at USA, most belligerent, most materialist. One day maybe forerunners against wars and materialism, turning their innovative genius more to the spiritual. The future also opens for miracles.

<sup>i</sup> See James Miller reviewing Steven B. Smith, Modernity and Its Discontents Yale University Press in INYT, 27-28 Aug 2016.

<sup>ii</sup> (With Helmut Ornauer, Håkan Wiberg and Andrzej Sicinski) (eds.) *Images of the World in the Year 2000: A Comparative Ten Nation Study*. Atlantic Highlands, N.J.: Humanities Press, The Hague: Mouton, 1976, 729 pp.

<sup>iii</sup>"What did people predict for the year 2000 and what happened?", in (0307) *Futures*, Special Issue on "Democracy Works: People, Experts and the Future," Guest editors Johan Galtung and Haakan Wiberg, Vol. 35, No. 2 March 2003, pp. 107-122.