

A dissenting voice: Part II¹

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Chronic stress in the system

Global human society is rapidly running into general crisis. And rapidly running out of options predicated on the technical fix. The clearest indicator of what is before us is presented through the impact of global warming. In Britain, the seasonal picture has not been simply unusual or unpredictable in recent years; it has rather been an ongoing series of extreme fluctuations and oscillations. Autumn 2001 was the wettest on record since these began in 1659. Yet while this pattern persisted into the winter and spring, bringing in its wake repeated, serious flooding, the following autumn in marked contrast was the warmest on record. The pattern was repeated in spring 2003 with close to drought conditions.² On their own the persistence of such oscillations will have very deleterious consequences for the economic and social stability of this country. However, these ostensibly aberrant weather patterns are not some blip peculiar to the North Atlantic archipelago but—put into a computer frame alongside all the other recent micro-climatic data—one small yet significant indicator of a general shift in the global climate. Significantly, nobody studying this particular phenomenon—at least nobody reputable—would offer a technical fix for its solution, only an increasingly urgent if not shrill appeal for the rapid deceleration of CO₂ emissions by an immediate order of not less than 60%.³

If we fail to respond to what we are being told by the climate modellers, the only issue is not whether we will drive our global ecosystem and with it our species—along with what remains of our bio-diversity—over the precipice, but when. There is, for instance, some current cutting-edge research which suggests that the immediate effects of global warming on the most populated regions of the world are being mitigated by the rainforests, notably the Amazon, acting as a giant sink for over six billion tons of CO₂ emissions.⁴ To which one might be inclined to say “thank you Amazon.” But what this means in practice is that, while temperatures in the Arctic Circle are currently soaring to the tune of 3–4.5 Celsius in winter, bringing in the process the bears and other wild animals of the region to the absolute brink, these rises are currently 10 times the norm for the rest of the planet.⁵ Our insulation from these worst effects, however, is only a temporary respite. The sink, it is argued, will finally rupture, and when it does so it will release its pent-up store in entirety. Don’t blame nature; this is simply

its own regulating mechanism. But when it happens it will act as its own accelerator, possibly leading to a general 20% increase in temperature.⁶

Just looking at the environmental effects of 1 or 2% change in both recent and distant history should be enough to suggest that our actually rather fragile contemporary civilisation will not be able to withstand anything quite so apocalyptic as this.⁷ But this is not a case of what an unmastered nature might do to us. At stake here is how we bring our own activity to bear in order to exacerbate environmental disaster. This, of course, may sound remote from the issue of genocide. But is it? Historical research which looks at the coincidence of political-economic shifts and weather patterns is still quite limited. Yet in a work like Mike Davis' *Late Victorian Holocausts* it is increasingly authoritative.⁸

Davis has sought to correlate the dramatic crop failures brought on by severe El Niño/Southern Oscillations (ENSO) at *fin-de-siècle* to the paradigmatic crystallisation of the modern Western-dominated global economy. The resulting matrix not only brought in its wake a death toll amounting to tens of millions through mass starvation but also a great wave of colonial insurrections driven on not simply by hunger but also desperation at what was seen as first cause of grassroots immiseration—not crop failure *per se* but the reordering of the terms of ordinary people's political, social and economic existence to suit Western market imperatives. The results included the genocidal extirpation of the Umkvela and Chimurenga revolts in Rhodesia, the Canudos uprising in the Brazilian sertao, the Chinese Boxer rebellion, and that of the anti-US liberation movements in the Phillipines.⁹ Surprisingly, Davis does not mention the liquidation of the Herero revolt in South-West Africa which arguably also followed these same environmental-cum-political contours. But no matter. Davis' argument is not about genocide *per se* but the origins of a much broader and more pervasive mass structural violence.

Nevertheless, much of what Davis is speaking about in the age of imperial hegemony could be equally applied to the era of the fully-fledged nation-state. With the succession from one to the other, the modernising imperatives which had been the monopoly of the leading Western avant-gardists now became the prerequisites for all self-respecting state-builders. The desire—indeed demand—for economic growth thereby became both ingredient in, and potential accelerator towards, a renewed more virulent wave of genocide. In order to stay afloat and genuinely independent in the openly Darwinian stakes of the global capitalist economy, state elites in the inter-World War period increasingly opted for the most desperate measures. The most desperate regimes, indeed, took their own crisis-ridden shortcuts in conscious contradiction to liberal capitalism, via command economies, autarky and or territorial expansion through war. And when things went critically, dreadfully wrong, or the state's integrity through their self-inflicted mistakes seemed to be under outside threat, they took it out on communal groups who stood as tangible or imagined obstacles to their programmes and/or on those who were perceived to be in some sense linked to exactly those outsider interests. The picture will be familiar to anybody who has

studied Nazi Germany, Stalinist Soviet Russia, or later, Maoist China. But if these represented some of the most radicalised “catch-up” agendas, the creation of a worldwide system of nation-states in the era of decolonisation and beyond simply ensured not an end to genocide but actually a ratcheting up of its potential in all hemispheres.¹⁰

True, this potential in the post-1945 era has not been equal amongst all new or reformulated states. Nor, however, is it limited to those who would consider themselves consciously at odds with Western hegemony. The incestuous relationships between the leaders of the Cold War “free world” and genocidal regimes in Indonesia, Guatemala, Turkey and more ephemerally Iraq should suffice to scotch any such notion of that kind.¹¹ Nevertheless, it is from a wide band of what this author would describe as second tier states—relative that is to the genuinely powerful “Western-dominated” first tier—whose leaderships are most obsessed about the need to either make good within or in spite of the global rat race (even when this is completely against an objective assessment of their potential to do so), who are most vulnerable to these tendencies. This, usually fuelled by a strong sense, on the one hand, of their country’s mytho-historical greatness, and on the other by a deep grievance against those—including the genocidal victims—who they blame for having denied them that birthright.¹²

However, if this would seem to lead us to back to some well-known recidivists on both sides of the pre-1991 Cold War divide, the very way “the system” has demanded fast-speed development of all modern polities presents us with some critical uncertainties about the future direction state: communal conflict might itself take. In the face of the imperative to “catch up” economically, many of the weakest tier-two states, for instance, have found themselves increasingly smashing into a brick wall of limiting factors: economic bankruptcy, demographic explosion, resource scarcity and massive ecological degradation. Seventeen countries in Africa according to the UN Food and Agriculture Organisation are currently facing starvation.¹³ As it happens extreme climatic variables, either in the form of drought or alternatively mass flooding accompanied by giant cyclones—as in the case of Mozambique and Madagascar—have been prominent accelerators of these potential breakdowns. But the phenomenon is hardly exclusive to Africa. In Central America, Honduras has had a long-term drought described as being of biblical proportions.¹⁴ In Central Asia, as a result of the current war the Afghani plight on this score, though not that of neighbouring Tadjikistan, is now marginally better known.¹⁵ Again, by contrast, in the Indian state of Orissa, there have been great waves of catastrophic floods.¹⁶ Yet, ironically, such extreme effects are (to excuse the pun) only the tip of the iceberg. As a more general environmental deterioration proceeds in the Indian countryside, migration to the cities is expected to lead to a doubling of their populations within the next 20 years to some 300 million.¹⁷ Nobody can predict exactly how the consequent overcrowding and air and water pollution will impact on basic issues of health and social welfare. But even less are the intermeshings of environmental and economic collapse taken into

consideration when it comes to assessments of future urban (as well as rural) inter-group relations in a notably multiethnic environment such as India's.¹⁸

For instance, Ted Gurr, a notable American authority on the subject of ethnic conflict worldwide, has recently assured us in a prestigious US journal that the phenomenon is actually on the wane, the inference being that under the guiding hand of Pax Americana, ably supported by a general commitment to conflict resolution, the Second and Third Worlds can be made safe for the West's globalising agenda.¹⁹ But Gurr seems to elide the fact that ethnicity is not actually at the root of most ethnic conflict but rather economic immiseration. Granted, at what point or in what form, for instance, the slashing of global coffee prices might directly or if ever) translate into monoculturally straight-jacketed peasant producers in countries such as Tanzania and the Dominican Republic turning to communal violence is not easily foreseeable,²⁰ anymore than one can gauge how the "cash crop" deforestation of the Bangladesh's remaining uplands will exacerbate already highly charged animosities between equally impoverished peasants and hill peoples.²¹ The point is that where intercommunal violence occurs (such as for instance recently witnessed in all its visceral power at a variety of flashpoints throughout the Indonesian archipelago)²² it nearly always comes together as a matrix of causes but always exacerbated by the impact of globalisation on local economies. And as more of the already impoverished or marginalised are brought to the brink in this way, the more we are likely to see outcomes, such as in the Zapatistas in Chiapas, Mexico or the Sem Terra, landless labourers movement in Brazil where the world's increasing numbers of "have-nots" join together in utterly desperate movements of resistance against the state.²³ Under such circumstances, "crisis" state responses in turn are as likely to be just as lethal as those which Mike Davis has charted in the "Third World," a hundred years ago, the difference now being that in place of empires it will be nation-states doing the killing.²⁴

If this carries with it the likelihood for the persistence of genocide throughout the globe in the twenty-first century, such a forecast nevertheless is based on the assumption that the nation-state will remain the norm. But this is a very big assumption. After all, the self-justification for the ongoing perpetuation of Second and Third World nation-state regimes rests on the premise that they will remain able to hitch a ride on the globalising economic accelerator—even where this might involve taking radical shortcuts in the process—and hence, allegedly be able to deliver to their populations increasing material prosperity. But then, how are they going to cope in the face of nature's own counter-accelerator: global warming?

Post-genocide?

It is certainly true that the climate modellers may not yet have all the answers. For instance, even though the El Niño of 1990–1995 was "the longest in the historical, or indeed paleoclimatic records," the long-term effect of global warming on ENSO still remains a matter of much speculation.²⁵ Yet when

combined with the other limiting factors referred to above, it is clear that even moderate climatic change will raise quite unprecedented challenges for weak states, the 40 poorest of whom are expected to sustain a 20% cut in food production over the next 80 years.²⁶ Such basic issues of long-term bio-security may be a long way away from the thoughts of first world consumers, a significant majority of whom are entirely cocooned from such basic realities through a seemingly never-ending supermarket conveyor belt of gastronomic cornucopia. Yet, if one happens to be one of the thirty million Bengalis expected to be imminently displaced from their marginal land holdings through deltaic inundation, the matter literally becomes one of life or death.²⁷ Under such catastrophic social-cum-environmental pressures the question has to be posed: how long will an already markedly crisis-ridden polity such as Bangladesh be able to survive?

Admittedly, the relationship between its largely low-lying topography, up-state deforestation and projected sea-level rises in the Bay of Bengal make this country's vulnerability to global warming a particularly acute one. But all this extreme example really highlights is the degree to which all tier-two states—i.e. states who are still trying to respond to the demands of the international system—will be prepared to resort to increasingly draconian methods of social and economic control in order to keep themselves afloat,²⁸ or whether the sheer effort will simply precipitate their early fragmentation, disintegration or collapse. Of course, if the general trend turns out to be one of fragmentation into a plethora of smaller states, as predicted in a suitably frightening recent article by Maurice Strong,²⁹ we can be assured that genocide scholarship as we know it will still be kept busy and thriving. More intensely nationalistic, “Balkanised” states all struggling against the odds to catch up in a global economic system already entirely monopolised and determined by a G7 coterie and against a backdrop of rapidly intensifying resource scarcity will be a certain recipe for the perpetuation of genocidal-style conflict.

An equally plausible scenario for some (not necessarily all) of the very poorest states—particularly in sub-Saharan Africa as well as parts of Central and South East Asia, and possibly Central America—might be one where they leave the interlocking international framework of nation-statehood altogether. Having been utterly exhausted and bankrupted by their efforts to participate in the “system” race in the first place, these “failed” states or more exactly tier-three ex-states, as I posit them, will be characterised by the total retreat of centralised state fiscal power to the point where key administrative, legal, educational, health and simple policing functions in entire regions will cease. In this way their circumstances will in some respects reflect that of, for instance, the post-imperial period in the Roman West after c. 400 AD. As then, so now, the political vacuum will not be filled, at least not initially, by state-builders *per se* but local warlords whose authority over a territorial range will have nothing to do with the rule of law and everything to do with a clientage based on the enlistment and service of primarily young men armed with a sufficiency of the most up-to-date weaponry with which to keep other rival bodies of equally

armed young men at bay. If the resulting territorial and social stand-offs may well follow historic ethnic, clan or tribal cleavages the critical point is that with only violence to sustain control and legitimacy, these zones are likely to be plunged into an endemic instability and warfare, exemplified by indiscriminate atrocity and genocidal killing. Worse, as these zones of lawlessness will have been created by near-total environmental collapse, famine, disease and mass movements of refugees in the first place, the turn to warlordism can only have the effect of spreading the phenomenon into fragile, contiguous regions both within and across increasingly defunct if formally existing international borders.

Here then is a nightmare scenario which is not genocide but rather post-genocide. Mass killing beyond the state: beyond the specificity let alone intent of destroying communal group targets. Committed by two or possibly many more communal or sub-state players. Without logical goals or boundaries. And without end. Yet what is being posited is neither science fiction nor some idle armchair speculation. When Robert Kaplan described exactly this “coming anarchy” in a famously provocative *Atlantic Monthly* article in early 1994, he sent shock waves through his urbane American readership.³⁰ Much of his report focused on what was already happening in West Africa and most particularly in Sierra Leone, a country whose desperate plight became more familiar to a Western audience through media attention focusing on the high incidence of child soldiers amongst the country’s major insurgency movement and other “gangs” and the sort of atrocities particularly involving the amputation of limbs which these outfits regularly committed across gender and age barriers.³¹ Yet while Sierra Leone may, proportionate to its population, have taken the lion’s share—an estimated 1.8 million—of the children orphaned, abused and violated as an outcome of contemporary internal war, the total estimated figure of 20 million worldwide according to a 2000 Save the Children Fund (SCF) report suggests that this is hardly a phenomenon peculiar to one “failed” region.³²

Indeed not. Hardly had the SCF report been published when another compiled by epidemiologists working for the International Rescue Committee reported that some 1.7 million had died in the previous two years as a direct result of another ongoing war in the Democratic (sic.) Republic of Congo, primarily in the east and north east of the country. Of these there had been some 200,000 direct war deaths, with the rest primarily the casualties of the disintegration of the food and health infrastructure.³³ However, these cannot be taken as total mortality figures, not only because they are confined to one albeit large region but also do not include either the deaths from the onset of the war three years earlier, or those since.

Nevertheless, there are some striking points of relevance for our argument emanating from these two particular African examples. The first is that, despite all the much-repeated eyewash about the CNN factor, wars such as these remain largely off the Western cognitive map. Sierra Leone entered more fully onto it when British troops were committed in 2000, providing an ephemeral opportunity for a wider media coverage of rebel atrocities—and their involvement in illegal diamond smuggling.³⁴ By contrast, despite the gargantuan scale of the

equivalent Congo killings these remain not only for the majority of Westerners a subject of which they know nothing, but even for most scholars of genocide a matter of relatively little importance or concern. Here lies, surely, a second item for some speculative comment. Are we to take it that these killings remain largely out of sight and hence out of mind, even for the scholarly community of genocide specialists, because they do not fit some neat, clearly defined categorisation of genocide? Or could it even be that scholars' mental resistance to get to grips with the matter has something to do with the fact that amongst the key perpetrators is the very same government of Rwanda which claims to speak on behalf of the victims of the 1994 genocide in that country?³⁵ If everybody is a potential victim and everybody a potential perpetrator in these sort of conflicts, Western genocide scholarship is either going to have to drastically rethink its terms of reference with regard to these cases,³⁶ or alternatively concede that alongside genocide there now stands an entirely new category of post-genocidal conflict. There is, however, one connecting link between these two categories which again can only serve to problematise the Western neo-liberal perspective.

The paradox of sub-Saharan countries such as the Congo and Sierra Leone is that despite their administrative collapse they still have critical resources, particularly bauxite, rutile and diamonds in the case of the former, copper, cobalt and coltan—amongst others—in the latter which determine that their futures will hardly be a matter of complete indifference to the West. Indeed, in a twenty-first century world which Michael T. Klare has identified as being one in which control of primary, extractive resources and energy supply will be fundamental to continuing Western prosperity, one can be assured that whatever else happens, those resources and energy supply will not be relinquished.³⁷ Thus, while in the first instance, the struggle for control of coltan in the Congo is being conducted by predatory neighbouring regimes, including particularly Rwanda and Uganda, Western state and corporate interests are deeply implicated and enmeshed in their efforts.³⁸ And where these interests have not got their way by supporting either putative governments, warlords or insurgents, they have often simply shortcut the problem—as in one particularly notable instance in Sierra Leone—by giving the green light (entirely unofficially of course) to outfits such as Sandline International and Executive Outcomes Ltd to do the job for them. Though organisations of this ilk now call themselves private military companies (PMCs), this is simply an ornate corporate new-speak for what in reality are old-style mercenaries. Yet in an astonishing paper to none other than the International Association of Genocide Scholars at its biennial conference in Minneapolis in June 2000, John H. Heidenreich proposed that these very same PMCs might be legitimately employed and deployed by US administrations to deal with genocidal regimes in lieu of effective UN action.³⁹

Where as a species are we going? Some concluding remarks

With Heidenreich's paper we have almost come full circle. We began in the first part of this article by critiquing the standard assumption that genocide is

extrinsic to Western liberalism, proposing in its place that actually it is the latter's global system which provides the key to understanding how genocides can develop out of modern state-building agendas. And we conclude by noting that when such regime efforts impinge directly on Western interests that it is only then that the West absolutely demands their eradication. The blind spot however remains. Even when it comes to Iraq, the inability to acknowledge that "our" direct or indirect long-term responsibility for the processes by which such a regime is formed, shaped and perpetuated and in turn became thoroughly toxic seems to be beyond the ken of mainstream Western analysis.

This is a statement about the Western-dominated "international system," not about its parallel albeit much more nebulous existence as "international society." This author does not take the latter to be a complete figment of the imagination. A genuinely universalistic, humanitarian aspiration has remained a key facet of the West's idea of progress since enunciated by Kant, Rousseau and others at the optimistic height of the Enlightenment. And in the contemporary world, while not able to provide a genuine preventative antidote to genocide, this positive tendency, concretised most obviously through juridical instruments of international law, and most particularly in the conception of the ICC, has remained the most achievable aspect of Lemkin's own Enlightenment-informed hope for the punishment of at least some genocidaers. Intent on capturing the hearts and minds of Western political leaders in its favour, protagonists of the International Criminal Court did at least seem to have for the very first time in the wake of Soviet collapse a genuinely global framework with which to advance their case. And tangible outcomes in the form of the Hague and Arusha tribunals as proof of the system's support. But if the notion that international "system" interests could be brought somehow into some sort of consensual equilibrium with those of "society"—even assuming there ever was such a genuine basis for such an understanding—all came to an abrupt foreclosure on 9/11 and the immediate US decision to use the al-Qaida connection as a pretext for making war on Afghanistan.

The growing distance between ourselves and that series of events can only confirm that international society's increasingly shrill alarm at the behaviour of the Taliban was *not* at the root of the US decision to go to war against them. Not only was the latter contemptuous of any notion that surviving Taliban leaders be tried at the Hague, even retributive post-September motivations were rapidly decoupled from the war effort, save in so far as they gave to it a UN legitimisation. Armed with this imprimatur the US set out in the following months to carry through an agenda which it now appears was already in place at least a month before the 9/11 rupture.⁴⁰ And as accurate information—as opposed to misinformation—has emerged, it has become even clearer that this has revolved entirely around a US geo-strategic objective to guarantee control of oil supplies being developed or envisaged by major US oil conglomerates in Central Asia.⁴¹ As this is also tied up with the creation of an oil terminus on the Indian Ocean, a pipeline through Afghanistan (as well as Pakistan) thus represents an agenda *sine qua non*. One in which, as is also now well known, the

Taliban—regardless of their ideology or behaviour—were originally envisaged as a pliant tool.⁴²

The “coalition” (sic.) victory over Afghanistan was, therefore, a victory of “pure” system. Moreover, in the space of little more than a year since then, these hegemonic interests have moved rapidly on; beyond understandings with proxy warlords of the ilk of the Northern Alliance, whatever the dubiousness of their own human rights credentials.⁴³

They even lie beyond Heidenreich’s beloved PMC’s,⁴⁴ pointing towards a direct military demonstration *vis-à-vis* Iraq designed to ensure a much tighter, long-term control over the remaining resource potential of this entire oil-rich region.⁴⁵ Humanitarian concerns, whether the long-term ones emanating from the 20 years of war-induced social, economic and infrastructural breakdown, and war-related drought in Afghanistan or that of further mass displacements, casualties and immiseration caused directly by the Iraq war are nowhere to be seen in this agenda save in some rather shabby window-dressing for public consumption “back home.”⁴⁶

With this muscular assertion of realpolitik we can also assume that the aspirations for even limited international social goals, as naively envisaged under the assumed post-1991 New World Order window of opportunity, have now been firmly closed shut. The ICC, we may remember, already had had its ground cut from under its feet by a firm US refusal to participate. Lined up alongside the Bush administration’s renegeing on a whole tranche of further international agreements, including the Kyoto Protocol, biological weapons verification, the comprehensive test ban treaty—plus the tearing up the ABM treaty and the decision to carry on, even post-9/11, with the national missile defence system—and we are now witnessing not simply an ephemeral right-veering tendency but the apparently unfettered and irresistible perpetuation of hegemonic “system” interests into the foreseeable future.⁴⁷ Such interests are as entirely inimical to the aims of human rights activists as they are to those who would desire to save the planet. By definition, they are also interests which, on the one hand, act as direct obstacles to those who would seek to halt specific cases of genocide, as they are on the other, the very determinants which will ensure more genocide and post-genocide in the twenty-first century.

It is time to offer prognosis. Whether the destiny of major parts of the globe will be one of genocide, post-genocide or most likely a mix of both, the extreme violence of the near future, at least in critical part, will be the outcome of a world the capitalist West has not only created and inspired but also continues to shape and manipulate in its own interest. Indeed, after Afghanistan and the heady mixture of naked corporate greed and retributive paranoia which precipitated it, what role there will be for international justice let alone genuine peacekeeping in what is now being advertised as “global security,” one can only wonder.⁴⁸ For genuine advocates of genocide prevention to stay aligned to this new “New World Order” would in short be to capitulate to the very terms under which genocide will continue to flourish.

Starting afresh thus first demands a series of rejections: a rejection of the

notion that the “real” world is essentially a matter of transactions, that people can be bought—and sold—or realigned to do what corporate business demand of them, or even that throwing money in their direction, in the form of strings-attached aid will somehow “buy” their allegiance; a rejection of the idea that Western global dominance is essentially sound and benign when so many of its elements—the arms trade and global fiscal and trading institutions not even having been considered in this piece—directly contribute to the structural violence which breeds more extreme violence; a rejection above all of a globalising agenda which makes the rich in the richest countries richer and the poor in the poorest even poorer.⁴⁹ Globalisation, of course, with the oil transnationals as among its most fervent advocates, is also the very motor to global warming and hence—the ultimate precipitant of all our woes. But let us be assured that it will drag the weaker, the poorer, the more desperate there first.⁵⁰ The very fact that genocide more often than not emanates out of the efforts of particularly aggrieved or desperate polities attempting to take completely lunatic shortcuts to independent empowerment and thus to realise what is actually unrealisable⁵¹ is indicative of just how deeply enmeshed this phenomenon is in a much deeper and wider systemic malfunction.

This, secondly, is not to deflect the issue away from the genocidaires who must also always be rejected. However, defeating the Saddams of the world can only truly come about by denying them the societal conditions in which they might otherwise gain power. Paradoxically that may actually mean enabling and empowering ordinary people in potential genocidal societies—including those who might otherwise become potential genocidaires themselves—to genuinely take control of their own lives and destinies. Yet it is exactly the current globalising imperatives which deny and emasculate such localised possibilities,⁵² except, that is, for those of us—and then only some—who live in rich, Western tier-one countries or, less obviously who are part of heterogeneous but nevertheless usually minority elites elsewhere.⁵³ As environmentalist Satish Kumar said in a BBC radio broadcast recently: “There is enough in the world for everybody’s need, there is not enough in the world for everybody’s greed.”⁵⁴ Is this a statement about genocide? However obliquely, the answer must be: yes, of course!

For decades, Westerners have been—to use an English colloquialism—“having their cake and eating it,” reaping the rewards of the plundered peripheries while at the same time preaching to those whom they have plundered and/or aggrieved of the unacceptability of their human rights behaviour. Genocide, it is true, is currently not part of the Western domestic scene. But then the phenomenon is not a cause but an effect. An interconnected world without genocide can only develop in one in which economic domination as well as political hubris have been outlawed, in others words, in which principles of equity, social justice, environmental sustainability—and one might add genuine human kindness—have become the “norm.” This assumes a radical cultural as well as a more obvious economic shift in terms of ownership and control which, of course, the “system” will certainly do everything in its power to prevent.

George Kennan as head of the State Department planning staff said as much over 50 years ago when he argued for “a pattern of relationships which will permit us (the US) to maintain this position of disparity without positive detriment to our national security.”⁵⁵ What should make Kennan’s statement strikingly redundant now is the threat which stands to engulf all mankind—the United States included. While the estimated \$6.5 trillion bill for climate change over the next 20 years will doubtless fall most perilously on the poorest, Third World countries, a former director of the corporate insurance company GNCU believes it will bankrupt the entire global economy by 2050.⁵⁶ This is just to put the matter in stark financial terms. It says nothing about the ability of mankind to psychologically withstand a relentless wave of environmental catastrophes and their repercussions.

Or, to state the issue slightly differently, the avoidance of genocide can neither be cordoned off from the broader struggle to save the human species anymore than it can be achieved by technical fix-style tinkering when the social and environmental fabrics of vast swathes of the Second and Third Worlds are in absolute freefall.⁵⁷ How we really begin to undertake this essential process of transformation is another matter. Blaming it all on global institutions and transnational corporations and demanding their reform or even liquidation is easy enough. Perhaps, however, simply the sheer act of recognition—that “we” ourselves by our very actions, lifestyles and assumptions about what we think is ours by right might be contributing enormously to this very selfsame crisis—could represent a small start. How many genocide scholars, for instance, even consider the contribution they are making to the crisis every time they get onto an aeroplane? A recent report noted that an individual taking a single flight to Rio de Janeiro is using up as much fossil fuel as if he or she were to make 630 trips between Oxford and London.⁵⁸ 9/11 briefly may have put the future of civil aviation in jeopardy. But arguably all those prestigious conference trips upon which the airlines depend could be put to a more appropriate and local use anyway. Would it be so ludicrous, for instance, to propose that as a symbol of both our humility and prescience we stopped meeting each other at international events and organised our global interchange and networking in different ways? Could one not even advance the proposition that to genuinely think globally—as genocide scholars clearly want and need to do—entails our basic commitment to act locally, as another great environmentalist E. F. Schumacher argued some 30 years ago?⁵⁹

All this may sound at one remove from the subject of our expertise. But however faint the signal the phenomenon of modern genocide both in terms of cause and cure cannot be fundamentally divorced from the broader crisis of humankind which Schumacher and Kumar, among many others, identified long before 9/11. Indeed, until we in the West have recognised that we are an intrinsic part of the problem, we are not well positioned to start offering solutions. Instead, the sooner we recognise the scale of that problem, the more chance we have—as an entire species—of being able to confront and just maybe withstand a global Nemesis.

Notes and References

- 1 Postscript: readers will not have failed to notice that this two-part essay originally completed in late 2001 with reference to then very recent or contemporary issues has lost some of its immediacy. That said, more than two years on, the basic thrust and argument of the piece remains as pressing and urgent as ever.
- 2 Tim Teeman and Phillip Pank, "Now the darling buds of October," *The Times*, October 29, 2001.
- 3 "The overwhelming weight of scientific opinion is that we need to make cuts of sixty per cent or more in carbon dioxide emissions": Mark Lynas, "Kyoto could make things even worse," *Guardian*, July 27, 2001. Actually, this 60% figure is considerably out of date, this being the original cut proposed by the 1988-founded UN Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) in its first Scientific Assessment Report in 1990. For authoritative accounts of the emerging scientific consensus, see Ross Gelbspan, *The Heat is On: The Climate Crisis, the Cover-Up, the Prescription* (Reading, MA: Perseus Books, 1997); Jeremy Leggett, *Carbon Wars, Dispatches from the End of the Oil Century* (London: Allen Lane, Penguin Press, 1999). Leggett is particularly good on probing the efforts of corporate-backed lobbies such as the Global Climate Coalition in their efforts to rubbish the scientific consensus. Thanks to my colleague, David Cromwell, himself a climate change specialist in the Department of Oceanography, University of Southampton for bringing these books to my attention.
- 4 "The day the oceans boiled," *Equinox* series, Channel 4, June 17, 2001.
- 5 Duncan Campbell, "Greenhouse melts Alaska's tribal ways," *Guardian*, July 16, 2001.
- 6 "The day the oceans boiled." Even putting aside this single apocalyptic scenario, possible "feedbacks" from a matrix of ozone depletion, reduced ocean circulation and, arguably most serious of all, a massive release from a warming Arctic of methane hydrates—a greenhouse gas even more potent, molecule for molecule, than CO₂—are likely to lead to runaway climate change. See Leggett, *Carbon Wars*, pp 6–7, 45–46, David Cromwell, *Private Planet, Corporate Plunder and the Fight Back* (Charlbury: Jon Carpenter Publishing, 2001), pp 103–107. *Ibid*, Chapter 6, "Millenarian revolutions."
- 7 At the critical IPCC meeting in 1990 Dutch scientists submitted the following statement: "Despite many uncertainties we are concerned about our finding that future rates of climate change may exceed any rate of change experienced by humankind in the past. There are no reasons to expect that humankind itself, or the ecosystems on whose functioning humankind depends, will be able to adapt to such rates of change." Quoted in Leggett, *Carbon Wars*, p 7. This is not to suggest that the causes of societal breakdown in the past have been determined simply by climatic conditions. Multifaceted complexity has been the rule in historical studies. See, for instance, T. M. Wigley, M. J. Ingram and G. Farmer, *Climate and History: Studies on Past Climates and their Impact on Man* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981); Hubert Lamb, *Weather, Climate and Human Affairs* (London: Routledge, 1988). The obverse argument might be however that: (1) nothing like this in the historical record has happened before, (2) the very complexity of modern global society may make it peculiarly vulnerable to *exactly* this sort of sustained climatic shift.
- 8 Mike Davis, *Late Victorian Holocausts, El Nino Famines and the Making of the Third World* (London and New York: Verso, 2001).
- 9 *Ibid*, "Millenarian revolutions."
- 10 Harff and Gurr, "Toward empirical theory," and more recently *idem*. "Victims of the state: genocides, politicides and group repression from 1945 to 1995," in Albert J. Jongman, ed., *Contemporary Genocides: Causes, Cases, Consequences* (Den Haag: PIOOM, 1996), pp 33–58 for the worldwide incidence.
- 11 Phillip N. S. Rumney, "Getting away with murder: genocide and Western state power," *Modern Law Review*, Vol 60, No 4, 1997, pp 594–608 for an emerging critique specifically related to the phenomenon of genocide. See also Adam Jones, ed., *Genocide, War Crimes and the West, Ending the Culture of Impunity* (London: Zed Press, forthcoming).
- 12 Levene, "Connecting threads," for a fuller rendition of this argument.
- 13 Victoria Brittain, "Millions face starvation in Africa gripped by famine," *Guardian*, August 2, 2001.
- 14 Mike Lanchin, "Central America faces 'biblical' famine," *Guardian*, July 28, 2001. Cromwell, *Private Planet*, p 102 for further climate-related catastrophes worldwide.
- 15 The continuing plight of Tadjikistan indeed is a classic example of a disaster region in which—as it has not yet impinged on ourselves—Western media evinces only the most minimal interest. This despite a civil war ending in 1997 in which 60,000 were killed and severe ongoing drought-related food shortages which says the UN is affecting at least half of the country's 6.2 million population. The latter situation is exacerbated by water overuse for cotton production. Cross-reference with note 58 for the global picture on this score, *Guardian*, November 17, 2000. Patrick Cockburn, "As heart of Asia heads for famine, villagers face retribution if they dare to grow food," *Independent*, October 16, 2000.
- 16 Climate change report, "Today programme," BBC Radio 4, July 16, 2001.

- 17 India report, "The world tonight," BBC Radio 4, July 27, 2001; Gelbspan, *Heat is On*, pp 156–158.
- 18 See however writers such as Jeffrey Leonard, *Environment and the Poor: Development Strategies for a Common Agenda* (New Brunswick, NJ and London: Transaction, 1989) and Thomas Fraser Homer-Dixon, "On the threshold: environmental changes as causes of acute conflict," *International Security*, Vol 16, No 2, 1991, pp 76–116 for those who are asking the right questions.
- 19 Ted Robert Gurr, "Ethnic conflict on the wane," *Foreign Affairs*, May/June 2000, pp 52–64.
- 20 Steve Crawshaw, "Coffee prices are slumping (not that you would know it in Starbucks)," *Independent*, May 17, 2001; Kevin Watkins, *Bitter Coffee* (Oxford: Oxfam, 2001).
- 21 See Abdul M. Hafiz and Nahid Islam, "Environmental degradation and intra/interstate conflicts in Bangladesh," Environment and Conflicts Project, ENCOP, Zurich and Bern, Occasional Paper No 6, May 1993.
- 22 John Aglionby, "Indonesia on the brink of meltdown," *Observer*, July 9, 2000.
- 23 Neil Harvey, *The Chiapas Rebellion, the Struggle for Land and Democracy* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 1998); James Scott, *Weapons of the Weak: Everyday Forms of Peasant Resistance* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1985); John Vidal, "The long march home," *Guardian Weekend*, April 26, 1997.
- 24 Colombia provides a useful indicator of this situation. At the time of initial writing for this article in December 2001, I was receiving email reports of a major repeat massacre by government-supported paramilitaries in the Naya river region of the Pacific coast in Colombia. This despite recent US and EU military or financial assistance the Colombian government in its programme of "social" stabilisation (sic.). This necessarily points to the perpetuation of patterns of colonial or neo-colonial dominance including mass murder between the late nineteenth and early twenty-first centuries. For more on the rise of people protest and resistance in Colombia, see "Coca or death," *Unreported World*, Channel 4, October 12, 2001.
- 25 Davis, *Late Victorian Holocausts*, p 238.
- 26 BBC Radio 4 news report, July 10, 2001, on Amsterdam conference on global warming. For a broader and quite devastating assessment of the connections between climate change and mass human starvation and dislocation, see Norman Myers and Jennifer Kent, *Environmental Exodus: An Emergent Crisis in the Global Arena* (Washington, DC: Climate Institute, 1995).
- 27 Leonard Doyle, "Bangladesh in dread of rising sea levels," *Independent*, March 15, 2001; Hafiz and Islam, "Environmental degradation."
- 28 See Gelbspan, *Heat is on*, Chapter 7, "The coming permanent state of emergency," on the global warming-induced potential for totalitarianism.
- 29 Maurice Strong, "World gone wild," *Guardian (Society)*, May 9, 2001. Strong, who has been advisor to both Kofi Annan and World Bank president James Wolfensohn, takes as his starting point an imagined report to the shareholders of Earth Inc. in the year 2031 concerning the dissolution of another 32 states on the previous year's tally and their replacement by 69 new ones.
- 30 Robert D. Kaplan, "The coming anarchy," *Atlantic Monthly*, February 1994, pp 44–74.
- 31 See Max A. Sesay, "Sierra Leone's intractable war," *Africa World Review*, November 1997–March 1998, pp 8–9; "The business war," *Dispatches*, Channel 4, April 10, 1998.
- 32 Rupert Cornwall, "A world of suffering for 20 million children left orphaned, abused and brutalised by war," *Independent*, May 9, 2000.
- 33 Hrvoje Hranjski and Victoria Brittain, "2,600 a day dying in Congolese war," *Guardian*, June 11, 2000; Les Roberts, International Rescue Committee (IRC) "Mortality in eastern Democratic Republic of Congo, results from five mortality studies (2001)," < <http://www.the IRC.org/mortality.cfm> > .
- 34 Sierra Leone made headline news when a British soldier was killed in an engagement with the "West Side boys" a rebel gang. See Chris McGreal and Ewan MacAskill, "Hostages freed in jungle battle," September 11, 2000. Significantly, the knock-on effects of the crisis in the form of the 400,000 refugees who fled to neighbouring Guinea, which a few months later the UNHCR was attempting to publicise as the largest humanitarian crisis in the world at that moment received almost nil attention. Alex Duval-Smith, "On the Sierra Leone border, a human crisis unfolds. And Britain is nowhere to be seen," *Independent*, September 11, 2000.
- 35 Peter Uvin, "Difficult choices in the new post-conflict agenda: the international community in Rwanda after the genocide," *Third World Quarterly*, Vol 22, No 2, 2001, p 184.
- 36 Chalk and Jonassohn, *History and Sociology*, p 23, may have been unusual in part defining "genocide as a form of one-sided mass killing" nevertheless, the notion of the phenomenon as involving a clear-cut group of perpetrators on the one hand and of an equally clear-cut group of victims on the other, is prevalent in genocide scholarship.
- 37 Michael T. Klare, "The new geography of conflict," *Foreign Affairs*, May/June 2001, pp 49–61. More biting and acutely see Susan George, *The Lugano Report: On Preserving Capitalism in the 21st Century* (London: Pluto Press, 1999).

- 38 See Bjorn Willum, "Foreign aid to Rwanda: purely beneficial or contributing to war?" <<http://www.willum.com/dissertation/index.htm>>; Chris McGreal, "The cost of a call," *Guardian* (G2), August 8, 2001; Thomas Turner, "Genocide and war crimes in Congo/Zaire," in Jones, *Genocide, War Crimes and the West* (forthcoming) For parallels in Sierra Leone, see T. Zack-Williams, *Tributors, Supporters and Merchant Capital: Mining and Underdevelopment in Sierra Leone* (Aldershot: Avebury, 1995).
- 39 John G. Heidenreich, "Genocide prevention, American conservatives and the phenomenon of the butterfly ballot," unpublished paper, IAGS conference, Minneapolis, June 2001; David J. Francis, "Mercenary intervention in Sierra Leone: providing national security or international exploitation?" *Third World Quarterly*, Vol 20, No 2, 2001, pp 319–338, for the necessary corrective.
- 40 Jonathan Steele *et al.*, "Threat of US strikes passed to Taliban weeks before NY attack," *Guardian*, September 22, 2001. See also <<http://www.truthout.com/12.06C.Book.Oil.htm>> on the recent book by Jean-Charles Brisard and Guillaume Dasquie, *Bin Laden, la verite interdite*, which claims that in negotiations some months before 9/11 US representatives told the Taliban, "either you accept our offer of a carpet of gold, or we bury you under a carpet of bombs."
- 41 The US Department of Defence reassignment of Central Asia from Pacific Command, to Central Command, in October 1999 opens Klare's "New geography" article, p 49, on US strategic thinking and resource control. Previously, on February 12, 1998, John Maresca, Vice President, International Relations, of the oil giant Unocal Corporation testified to the House Committee on International Relations (sub-committee on Asia and the Pacific), setting out its programme for a projected Central Asian pipeline through Afghanistan (http://www.house.gov/international_relations/105th/ap/wsap212982.htm).
- 42 For those with tendencies towards amnesia here is a snippet from a five year old news report: "The West seems ... to have quietly decided that the Taliban, however unpalatable some of its methods, is the horse to back. That might not seem so after America's 20 August attack on the Afghan base of the alleged terrorist Osama Bin Laden. But the US has been careful to distinguish between the Taliban and Bin Laden." Rupert Cornwell, "Politics of oil divides neighbours," *Independent*, September 17, 1998.
- 43 Jonathan Steele, "Our Afghan warlords," *Guardian*, October 6, 2001; Justin Huggler, "How our Afghan allies applied the Geneva Convention," *Independent*, November 29, 2001.
- 44 Notes Heidenreich himself in his "Genocide prevention" paper: "In a world turned increasingly to free market economics ... there are limits to what PMCs can do, however."
- 45 See Michael Klare, "United States: energy and strategy," *Le Monde Diplomatique*, November 2002, pp 1–3.
- 46 See, for instance, Robert Fisk, "We are the war criminals now," *Independent*, November 29, 2001.
- 47 Mary Dejevsky *et al.*, "Bush drops pledge on carbon dioxide emissions," *Independent*, March 15, 2001; Peter Capella and Ewen MacAskill, "US thwarts deal on biological weapons," *Guardian*, July 26, 2001; Martin Woolcott, "It's still America against the world, war or no war," *Guardian*, November 30, 2001.
- 48 See Paul Rogers, *Losing Control: Global Security in the 21st Century* (London: Pluto Press, 2001) for an acute assessment which preceded 9/11. For those with doubts as to this analysis, see "The Project for the New American Century" website, <<http://www.newamericancentury.org>> for an all-too-candid glimpse into the agenda of those who now control the White House.
- 49 It is worth reminding ourselves of some very basic UN statistics here. Currently according to its human development report for the year 2000, the top 200 world billionaires have assets of \$1,135 billion—up by a \$100 billion on the previous year. By contrast an estimated 582 million people in all developing countries have a total income which barely exceeds 10% of that—\$146 billion; Victoria Brittain, and Larry Elliot, "Rich live longer, poor die younger in a divided world," *Guardian*, June 29, 2000. Similarly the UN estimates that the income gap between the richest fifth and the poorest fifth of the world's population, measured by average national income per head, increased from 30 to 1 in 1960 to 74 to 1 in 1997. Quoted in Cromwell, *Private Planet*, p 44. For a old but still perfectly cogent analysis and critique, see Susan George, *How the Other Half Dies, the Real Reasons for World Hunger* (London: Penguin, 1976).
- 50 The Global Commons Institute has predicted two millions direct deaths from climate change in the next 10 years. See Cromwell, *Private Planet*, p 78. Nearly all of these will be Third World peoples. According to a variety of UN and other specialist sources including the World Bank, within a similar time frame the current 25 million environmental refugees could grow tenfold. Gelbspan, *Heat is On*, p 160.
- 51 Ronald Aronson, *The Dialectics of Disaster, a Preface to Hope* (London: Verso, 1983), for more on this argument.
- 52 Colin Hines, *Localisation: A Global Manifesto* (London: Earthscan, 2000) for the need for localised responses to the global crisis.
- 53 See Cromwell, *Private Planet*, pp 51–59, for the growing disparities between rich and poor in First World countries.
- 54 Satish Kumar, "Thought for the day," BBC Radio 4, June 4, 2001.
- 55 Quoted in Noam Chomsky, *Turning the Tide, US Intervention in Central America and the Struggle for Peace* (Boston: South End Press, 1985), p 48.

- 56 Stephen Timms, "Global warming: sue the US now," *Guardian*, July 25, 2001.
- 57 A final extremely sobering item of news. According to a recent Stockholm symposium of experts, severe water shortages could affect one-third of the world's population, some 2.7 billion people, by 2025. As so often this crisis will cut in different directions impacting on fragile ecosystems on the one hand, demanding ever more drastic exploitation of them on the other. Steve Connor, "Scientists search for a way to avert world water crisis," *The Independent*, August 14, 2001.
- 58 John Vidal, "Blyth spirit can lead to a greener Britain," *Guardian*, November 17, 2000.
- 59 E. F. Schumacher, *Small is Beautiful: A Study of Economics as if People Mattered* (London: Abacus, 1973).

