The New Paradigm of Social Evolution: 
Modern Society between Hope and Tragedy

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Abstract

Social evolution is a continuation of biological evolution. The difference is the presence of mind, language and thinking. Therefore, society can be viewed as a living and rational system. The engine of social evolution is knowledge. Development of society is determined bilaterally by objective and subjective factors. Objective factors determine the form of society, subjective – the content. Society has three subsystems: social consciousness, economics and governance. The changes which take place in society are quantitative (evolutionary) and qualitative (revolutionary). The spiral of social evolution begins with a cultural revolution that consistently changes economic relations and the organization of society, leading to the emergence of civilization. Declining civilization is a prerequisite for the emergence of a new cultural revolution. From this point of view humanity today faces dramatic changes – the emergence of social self-consciousness and transition from a hierarchical social structure to a horizontal organization. The New World Order advocated by power and the financial elite is impossible to implement because it contradicts the principles of social evolution.

Throughout human history, social evolution has been a theory of qualitative changes in social structure, aiming to discover the fundamental laws of the origin and development of humanity as a whole. Social evolution complements several basic research fields in human sciences like history, cultural evolution, anthropology, philosophy of history, social and developmental psychology, etc. The process of social evolution is very complicated and controversial. During the last two centuries, a dozen approaches, theories, concepts and paradigms have been trying to describe and explain how society works and evolves. Modern theories provide models clarifying the relationship between social structure, economy, technology, social values, etc. Nevertheless, social evolution remains obscure, because we still do not know the laws and mechanics which determine social development.

1. Problem Stated

Perhaps the most influential social theory today is “economic determinism”. It is largely accepted as “an undisputed law of history”. It attributes primacy of economy over politics in the progress of human history. The law of economic determinism is clear-cut: self-preservation or the pursuit of food, clothing and shelter is the supreme instinct in man. Understandably, because food, clothing and shelter are commodities, which could be bought or sold in society; the pursuit of these commodities is an economic activity. Therefore, according
to this theory, economic laws determine the course of history. Economic determinism is usually associated with Marxism, but it is an important part of many social concepts going far beyond historical materialism. This is so because economic determinism is an outcome of capitalism as a socioeconomic formation, which influenced theoretical thought to a great extent during the last two centuries.

No doubt, the economy or organised pursuit of food, clothing and shelter is of paramount importance for the well-being of humanity. Yet, self-preservation, the pursuit of food and shelter is characteristic of the entire animal kingdom. Therefore, there should be something specific, which distinguishes the animal kingdom from Homo sapiens. This is the consciousness, reason and knowledge, which appear to play a key role in the process of the evolution of humanity. The economy is a product of these factors and cannot be accepted as a primary factor, as the cause. Not everything that looks obvious is right. For instance, the Sun looks like it is orbiting the Earth, but the opposite is the truth. To comprehend social evolution, it is necessary to find its “centre” or the real driving force.

There are good reasons to accept ever-expanding knowledge as the driving engine of social evolution. Knowledge is conscious information. If biological evolution is based on genes, which are units of information, social evolution is based on memes, or units of knowledge. Thus, if genetics is the science of biological evolution, memetics should be the science of social evolution. In fact, social evolution is a process of gathering and the verification of knowledge. Therefore, knowledge is the real driving force of social evolution, and the economy, culture and governance “orbiting” around it.

Changing the point of view from the Earth to the Sun as the centre of the planetary system makes a dramatic shift in our understanding of celestial mechanics and the Universe. In a similar way, accepting knowledge as a driving engine of social evolution reveals a completely different picture of how society works, evolves, what is going on now and what future society will look like, compared with today’s broadly accepted economic determinism.

2. Mechanics of Social Evolution

Social evolution is based on three principles:

2.1. Interaction between Objective and Subjective Factors

Humanity is a self-organising system, as with all-living systems. On the other hand, humanity is not only a living system; it is also a rational system. Because of this duality, social evolution is the outcome of two different factors: a) human reason and b) more fundamental laws of self-organisation, intrinsic to living systems. This is something like a “double helix”, which determines living and rational systems. Accumulation of knowledge makes society more complex. Raised complexity requires a new social structure. “Separation of labour” between subjective and objective factors is simple. Human reason gathers
information, and processes and verifies knowledge, making milliard small quantitative changes in society. This process is known as *culture*. The living part of the system makes rare but very significant qualitative leaps to new stages of development, destroying the existing, obsolete social structure and creating a new one, adequate for the achieved complexity. This is a form of objective self-organisation. These two lines or, to be precise, two stages of development, could be defined as the course of history and helices of social evolution. They cannot be separated ontologically, but epistemologically, they should be differentiated clearly.

The “separation of labour” between subjective and objective factors, or course of history and helices of social evolution, is the first law of social evolution.

According to this principle, accumulating knowledge, human reason or subjective factors makes quantitative changes, raising the complexity of society; periodically, objective factors or the living part of the system make qualitative leaps from an existing to a new, higher social structure, adequate for the complexity already achieved.

### 2.2. Dialectics among Culture, Economy and Governance

As a rational system, society is composed of three equally important sub-systems: social consciousness (or culture), economy and decision-making mechanism (or form of governance). Social evolution is the result of the development and interaction of these three basic sub-systems. Following the described mechanism briefly, all the sub-systems – social consciousness (culture), economy and decision-making mechanism – evolve as well. Throughout history, social consciousness evolved from mythological to religious (polytheism and monotheism) up to today’s dominant political social consciousness. Economy evolved from primitive horticulture to agriculture, advanced agriculture to today’s dominant industrial society. Accordingly, the decision-making mechanism evolved from autocracy, based on individual intelligence, to democracy, based on collective intelligence.

In fact, after the Industrial Revolution, society became so complex that today, it is impossible to be ruled by individual intelligence. Society needed a new, more sophisticated decision-making mechanism in comparison with autocracy. Understandably, at certain times, monarchies were swept out and democracy, which is based on collective intelligence, spread across the world very rapidly.

Interactions among sub-systems in a process of qualitative changes are very important and should be comprehended clearly. The new helix of evolution starts with a cultural revolution, which replaces the domination of one form of social consciousness with a form that is higher, more sophisticated and adequate for new realities. The new culture initiates new economic relations. A new economy raises its complexity and eventually replaces the existing form of government with a new one. This “chain reaction” of qualitative changes in culture, the economy and governance is the second principle of social evolution.
2.3. Moving Forces of Social Evolution – Global and Fundamental Contradictions

Gathering, processing and verifying knowledge is a mode for solving problems. Social problems appear as contradictions. Eventually, the development of society is a result of resolving contradictions. Hence, the contradictions are the driving forces of social evolution. An evolving society resolves milliard contradictions.

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From the point of view of social evolution, contradictions at the system and sub-system levels are especially important, because they describe the line of social development at any particular moment. The contradictions at the system level are fundamental; the contradictions reflecting the status and dynamics of sub-stems could be defined as global.

The fundamental contradiction of society is one, which plays the decisive role in social development, ending inevitably with the emergence of a new helix of social evolution. The fundamental contradiction is on a system level. Moreover, it should be considered as part of the objective course of social evolution, which cannot be influenced subjectively. The fundamental contradiction of modern society is the contradiction between the current hierarchical social structure and the achieved level of social complexity, which requires a horizontal organisation of society.

Hierarchy is typical of simple agrarian societies. Rational systems like religious and military organisations, political parties, etc. are also organised hierarchically because of the simplicity and efficiency, which this structure brings in the decision-making process, implementation of decisions and law enforcement. In hierarchical structures, the lower structural level is controlled by the higher structural level. Gathering experience and knowledge, society becomes more complicated and more complex, and the hierarchical type of organisation becomes insufficient and obsolete. It seems that all natural and artificially created complex systems – like the cosmos, railway networks, the Internet – are organized horizontally. The rising complexity of society gradually makes hierarchical organisation ineffective and even impossible. The human brain is Mother Nature’s solution for complexity and it is organised horizontally. The globalised world is a very complex system, comparable only to the complexity of the human brain, and it should be organised in a similar way. Yet, for historical reasons humanity remains hierarchically organised.

The metaphor of “society as a single organism” represents the process of integration of around 200 hierarchically organised nations into a “living organism”. Hence, the fundamental contradiction of modern society is between the existing hierarchical social structure
and the achieved complexity of society, which requires a horizontal organisation of society. This is a most dramatic clash between subjective and objective factors in modern society today. Now, after 10,000 years of social evolution of hierarchically organised agrarian and industrial societies, it is time for a new reorganisation of humanity from a hierarchical to a horizontal social structure.

According to Marx, the basic contradiction of capitalism is the contradiction between the social nature of production and its private appropriation. From this standpoint – knowledge as the driving engine of social evolution – this contradiction reflects only the capitalist economy as a sub-system; therefore, it is a global contradiction. Similar contradictions could be pointed out for other sub-systems and sub-sub-systems. For social consciousness, this is the contradiction between the concentration of financial capital and the destruction of morality; for the decision-making mechanism – the contradiction between achieving complexity of society and the existing decision-making mechanism. The global contradictions are different aspects of fundamental contradictions.

The first and second principles of social evolution are ontological; the third principle is epistemological by nature. Getting all three principles unified, the global and fundamental contradictions outline the dynamics and direction of ongoing social processes at the sub-system and system levels i.e. the dialectics of social evolution and dialectical logic of its analysis and understanding.

So, economic determinism could explain phenomena relating strictly to the economy such as competition, unemployment, class struggles and so forth, but accepted as “an undisputed law of history”; it creates theories and social myths like the dictatorship of the proletariat, the working class as the gravediggers of capitalism, etc. shaped during the past two centuries. Human sciences such as economics, history, anthropology etc. study the facts i.e. quantitative changes caused by human reason in the course of history. To be precise, they study society as a rational system. The theory of social evolution speculates about the second line – helices of evolution or qualitative leaps caused by self-regulation of living systems. This process of self-regulation periodically makes qualitative changes such as the Agrarian Revolution 10000 years ago, many cultural revolutions, industrial, scientific and technological revolutions. Ever-expanding knowledge brought capitalism to life as a socioeconomic and political formation and in the foreseeable future, will replace this formation with a new one.

3. Social Evolution in Action

3.1. Recent History

During the twentieth century, the knowledge accumulated throughout history made humanity a very complex system. It reached the stage of development characterised by the dominance of political social consciousness, an industry-based economy and the worldwide spread of democracy. At this stage, in violation of the above mentioned principles of social evolution, three engineering projects emerged and have been partially implemented – Communism, National Socialism (Fascism) and Financism (Wall Street capitalism). All three
projects are the result of misunderstanding social evolution i.e. they are a product of confusing the course of history with the helices of social evolution. All three projects are the attempts of groups of people to create a pre-designed model of social structure, implementing qualitative changes, which is the exclusive prerogative of social evolution, therefore impossible.

Communism was an attempt to create an equal society. It is an artificially constructed social structure. It was implemented by a political party (collective intelligence) throughout the bloody revolution and recently collapsed due to the inability to self-organise. National Socialism was also created by a political party based on the idea of national and racial superiority. It triggered the bloody war and ended infamously as all artificial creations did. Financism was created by international bankers and power elites, gradually replacing political power with the power of money. This is a truly profound, peaceful and a creeping revolution, replacing the objectively formed, and self-regulating capitalism with a subjective, artificial and manageable construction through free market and democracy. It is an unelected decision-making mechanism, controlling officially elected governments around the world by using financial mechanisms. Financism is a form of malignant cancer, destroying productive capitalism and pretending to be a “higher form” of capitalism.

Capitalism today is in a state of awakened coma. It cannot be revitalised and does not need to be. The power elite killed capitalism by eliminating its self-regulating mechanisms – free market and democracy. It replaced the free market with a non-regulated economy, which is a completely different story. It also turned democracy from a self-regulating decision-making mechanism into a manageable political show. Financism is another matter; it will collapse and disappear infamously like communism and fascism. When this happens, capitalism will pass away peacefully, as Feudalism did two centuries ago; eliminated by the Enlightenment and Industrial Revolution.

3.2. What is going on now?

Accepting knowledge as the driving engine of social evolution and following the dialectics between the course of history and helices of social evolution, we can expect two types of change forced by self-organisation of society and provoked by human reason.

3.3. Qualitative Changes caused by Objective Factors

3.3.1. Changes in Sub-systems of Society

The most important process today is the ongoing cultural revolution. Social consciousness is in a transition from the domination of its political form to the emergence of social self-consciousness. The emerging social self-consciousness is comparable with the emergence of self-consciousness in individual development during adolescence. They are both the result of expanding knowledge regarding the surrounding environment and concentration on the subject (person or society) itself. If there is an isomorphism between onto- and phylogenesis,
as scientists believe, then society today is at the stage of transition from “puberty” to maturity. This is a truly dramatic change, with many other transformations to come.

The economy is in a permanent crisis caused by Financism and in a process of transition from an industrial to an ecological form, or from a money-based to knowledge-based economy.

The decision-making mechanism is in the process of the downfall of democracy caused by destructive Financism and the pursuit of a new, more adequate form of governance.

3.3.2. The Clash between Religious and Political Ideologies

Humanity today is divided by different levels of development of social consciousness. During the last few centuries, the so-called West passed through significant qualitative changes – the Renaissance, Reformation and Enlightenment, which are three stages of the cultural revolution, replacing the religious consciousness dominant at the time with the domination of political social consciousness. Yet, the Middle East is not influenced by this cultural revolution and is still dominated by religious social consciousness. Because of this reason, today there is a clear clash between people dreaming of a world caliphate and those intending to create a New World Order. The irony of history is that the aspirations of both ideologies are doomed, because the first one is obsolete and the second one was artificially created, like the mentioned Communism, Fascism and Financism. At the end of the day, both ideologies will converge in the emerging social self-consciousness.

3.3.3. Globalisation and Differentiation of Society

Perhaps the most significant qualitative change today is globalisation. Globalisation is a natural process of integration of societies, of tribes into nations and today, of these nations into a “single organism”. Globalisation is a controversial process accompanied with differentiation on the regional and community levels, which resemble the functions of organs and systems in the human body. In this way, through differentiation, humanity tends to self-organise itself as a horizontal social structure.

3.4. Quantitative Changes caused by the Mindset of the Power Elite

These changes are nowadays gravely destructive geopolitics, aspirations for domination, attempts to create a world government or New World Order, terrorism, debt-based financial systems, destruction of morality and so forth.

3.4.1. Financism, World Government, New World Order and Globalism

So far, the power elite have succeeded in transforming the objectively created capitalism, self-regulating through the free market and democracy, into a controllable, artificially pre-designed socioeconomic system and manageable democracy. The ongoing attempt is to create a world government or New World Order. Establishing international organisations like the United Nations, World Bank, IMF, Trilateral Commission, etc., to mention only a few, is the first step in this direction. The creation of the European Union as a super state, followed by several similar regional unions, is a forthcoming step. This is clearly an attempt to create a
strictly hierarchical social structure resembling a national structure and distribution of power and governed by today’s power elite.

Recently, the power elite abandoned the controversial term “New World Order”, replacing it with a term better accepted by the general public, “globalisation”. In fact, this is one more “ism” or globalism in action. “Globalisation” and “globalism” are diametrically opposed terms. They should be differentiated clearly. “Globalism”, as revealed by the power elite, is the creation of an artificial, hierarchical and manageable social structure – world government or New World Order.

4. Expected Structural Changes in the Foreseeable Future

People are not blessed with the ability to see deep into the future, but following the general principles and dialectics of social evolution, we can outline some of the most important upcoming changes as the consequences of social evolution.

4.1. Transition from a Hierarchy to Network

Today, social evolution is in a process of a clash between the objective tendency to form a network and the subjective predisposition of hierarchy. The governing elites in the past and the power elite today have created a hierarchical structure based on core values – land and money – or a dominant form of social consciousness – religion and politics. Newly accumulated knowledge expands the complexity of society and the necessity of horizontal changes in the social structure. In general, the course of social evolution is from a man-created hierarchy to an objective-created network. Hierarchical development is a quantitative process of the accumulation of knowledge. The transition to network is a qualitative leap towards a new social structure adequate for the complexity of modern society. The complexity of society creates a hierarchical network of newly emerged sub-systems. This is the most important transition since the Agrarian Revolution 10000 years ago, which transformed the primitive network of hunting and gathering social groups into a highly sophisticated hierarchy. Today the process is in the opposite direction – finalising the full helix of social evolution.

4.2. Transition from Democracy to Collabocracy

The decision-making mechanism will be transformed from collective to collaborative intelligence or from the already obsolete democracy to the more sophisticated collabocracy. “Collective” and “collaborative” intelligence look misleadingly similar, but they are different in principle. Collective intelligence is a ground of democracy. This is a quantitative mode of making decisions based on a voting system, choosing one of several options. It is typical for political parties and organisations. Collaborative intelligence is a qualitative mode of solving problems and making decisions based on the verification of feasible models. For instance, science and technology, among many other fields, employ collaboration as a method, i.e. there is no voting system at all. The downfall of democracy today is objective by nature, because the complexity of modern society generates global problems that cannot be resolved by a voting system. They require a problem-solving mechanism, which is collaborative by nature and involves experts. This situation is similar to the situation when
individual intelligence (autocracy) was not in a position to solve the emerging problems generated by the industrial society. Therefore, the transition from democracy to collabocracy is inevitable and a matter of time.

4.3. Creating Collaborative Networks Resembling a Virtual Brain & Global Mind

The horizontal social structure is self-governing in principle. This means for the local community to be organised in a manner to manage resources, distribute and redistribute goods and make all vital decisions to ensure the well-being of the local population. The only way to do so is to create networks of decision-makers resembling a virtual brain and mind. These are self-selected knowledgeable people according to their expertise and experience in making decisions in favour of the community as a whole. They are the new elite, incorruptible by definition.

4.4. World Government or Single Organism

Today there are two clear visible and contradicting tendencies – establishing a world government, imposed by the power elite as a continuation of the still alive Financism, and integration of nations into a “single living organism”, presented by the ongoing process of globalisation and differentiation, forced by social evolution. This is a truly horizontally organised social structure. This means that society would be organised by “systems and organs”, resembling the systems and organs in the human body. Which tendency will prevail is a matter of power. The power elite are powerful with respect to the rest of the population, but powerless in regard to social evolution. The only remaining question is the price of this clash.

4.5. Separation of the Power of Money and Political Power

This change is inevitable and perhaps one of the first in a line of changes, because of the emerging social self-consciousness. This will be a transition from a money-driven to moral and knowledge-based society and the premise for the transition from today’s technological to tomorrow’s humanitarian civilisation.

5. Modern Society between Hope and Tragedy

5.1. Peaceful and Bloody Transitions

Qualitative changes are known as revolutions. As a rule of thumb, cultural and economic revolutions are peaceful by nature; only the replacement of governing elites tends to come with bloody upheavals. Cultural revolutions are initiated by a few people and grow to become a “critical mass” of people able to change the existing social structure. For instance, Christianity is a cultural revolution that replaced polytheism with a more sophisticated monotheism, and only 12 apostles initiated it. The Renaissance, Reformation and Enlightenment are three stages of the cultural revolution, which replaced the religious form of social consciousness that was dominant at the time with today’s dominant political social consciousness. Only a
few Italian artists, German priests and French philosophers initiated it. In a similar way, the emerging social self-consciousness needs to reach “a critical mass” to be fully implemented and provoke qualitative changes in the economy and decision-making process.

The ongoing cultural revolution, the emerging social self-consciousness and the transition from “social puberty” to social maturity are objective necessities and a new helix of social evolution. They are peaceful and a great hope for humanity. However, these qualitative changes cannot be taken for granted. They face the desperate resistance of today’s governing and power elites. Financism created the power elite, who have clear aspirations for world dominance, implementing world governance or a New World Order. These aspirations resemble the Soviet’s notorious “World Revolution” and the Nazi’s thousand-year Reich. Financism, the power elite and New World Order are predetermined to end due to the same reasons – inability to self-regulate. The only question is – how? A peaceful collapse like communism or in bloody upheavals like fascism?

5.2. The Clash between the Outdated Mindset of the Power Elite & Social Evolution

Today there is only one time bomb, treating to destroy humanity. This is outdated, hypocritical, egocentric and highly self-delusional, not to say the pathological mindset of the power elite. This is a group of people very good at ripping-off society and truly mediocre at comprehending morality, social values and humanity as a whole.

The most dramatic challenge for modern society is the clash between the outdated mindset of the power elite and objective self-regulating requirements of social evolution. The governing elites in the past and the power elite today are slightly different, but still share similar characteristics. They are arrogant, hypocritical, smug, self-indulgent and highly delusional. Some rulers were considered as geniuses at their time of power, but the historical judgment is that they were megalomaniacs and sociopaths.

At the time of the ongoing qualitative changes, all the governing elites tend to destroy themselves due to their outdated mindset, making profoundly wrong decisions. For instance, refusing to pay taxes in order to fix the fiscal crisis in 1788, the French aristocracy triggered the French Revolution. Apparently, they did not expect something like that to happen, not to say many of them, including the royal family, to be guillotined as a result of this decision. In 1825, the Russian tsar Nicolas I crushed the Decembrist revolt and Russia had an absolute monarchy. A century later, Russia’s aristocracy was swept out. After the assassination of the Austrian Archduke Franz Ferdinand, European monarchies initiated the First World War, and in a decade, most of them disappeared from the map. When the Nazi party leadership started WWII, they were not in a position to predict the terrible outcome for the ruling elite. The Soviet nomenclature survives the collapse, because some of them were tempted to become oligarchs. In fact, the collapse of communism was a transition from Communism to Financism, which is also an artificial social system. In this way, they postponed their destruction to become extinct together with oligarchs, created by Financism.

Analysing how the outdated ruling elites have been replaced by a new one could point out two features outlining the faith of elites and the price paid by ordinary people.
a. Elites gaining absolute power like the French and Russian absolute monarchies were physically destroyed. The French royal family was guillotined; the family of Russian tsars was assassinated. At the end of WWII, Hitler and Eva Braun committed suicide and Hitler’s henchmen were sentenced to death by an international tribunal. Liberal monarchies, which triggered WWI, were wiped off the map, but physically survived. Surrendering its political power, the British monarchy survived and remains as an institution. Therefore, the destiny of governing elites is in direct proportion to the gained and abused power.

b. The price paid by ordinary people tends to rise: communism brought enormous suffering and took at least 20 million lives in the Soviet Union alone. World War II, provoked by fascism, caused three times as much suffering and deaths across the world. Today’s Financism and power elite already cause misery to nearly three billion people, pressing them to live on less than two dollars a day.

5.3. The Dilemma of Modern Society

The clash between the outdated mindset of the power elite and social evolution generated the biggest dilemma of modern society. It is the destruction of society or fundamental changes in the social structure.

The outcome of the clash between the power elite and social evolution is determined by one global contradiction. This is the contradiction between the exponential development of high technologies and the increased vulnerability of humanity.

Briefly, the technologies of the 21st century (robotics, genetic engineering and nanotechnology) provide opportunities for knowledge alone, without significant material resources, to destroy humanity. There can be no doubt that an increase in knowledge also increases the vulnerability of society and at a certain point in its development, could destroy the world. This possibility became a reality with the invention of the atomic bomb and has become even more obvious with the development of chemical and biological weapons of mass destruction. The emergence of 21st century high technologies makes the destruction of humanity almost inevitable. It seems we have learned to use technology to our benefit, but even today, we do not actually realise the full extent of the downside of new inventions until it is too late.

In fact, during the last few decades, science and technology have tended to expand exponentially. Unfortunately, to make things worse, many significant scientific discoveries and technological achievements have been applied to the production of more powerful weapons. They are produced more easily and cheaply rather than for constructive purposes. For instance, if the resources needed to create nuclear weapons are at a national level, the resources for the knowledge enable mass destruction weapons, accessible only to a small group of people. As a result, the technological civilisation faces one terrible dilemma – with the accumulation of knowledge, society becomes simultaneously more powerful and more vulnerable. This point of social evolution is unique and something which humanity should take into account from now on. Therefore, the exponential development of high technologies
and the increasing vulnerability of humanity make structural changes inevitable. Destruction of humanity is not an option.

The idea that a digitally based security system could guard the New World Order is very naïve, not to say stupid. Even the most notorious security systems in the past did not succeed in preserving outdated or artificially created systems. As history teaches us, the Inquisition, Gestapo, KGB and Stasi to some extent worked well. However, after a certain point in social development, they turned their power against the systems they were supposed to protect and became a significant factor in their destruction. The future society does not need a security system typical for hierarchically structured and governed societies like a “digital Big Brother”. It needs an “immune system” intrinsic to horizontally structured systems like living organisms.

The clash between the outdated mindset of the power elite and social evolution could cause the biggest tragedy in human history. Until the power elite choose how to pass on – gaining absolute power and die as absolute rulers in the past did or being forced to surrender by social self-consciousness – humanity will live with hope and fear of tragedy.

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