

4/30/07

Dear Mr S ,

I am enjoying your book immensely. It's a nail-biter and easy to read. Your voice is authentic. By that I mean that you have marshaled a vast number of facts and used references appropriately. But also, the first person voice is congruent with your persona in real life. Its not always easy to do, but you seem to have pulled it off effortlessly. What will you write next?

One of your core themes is the strength of centrist positioning now most closely associated with Clintonian triangulation. It presumes mathematically smooth and predictable changes within political systems with some minor variance. Quantum physics and chaos theory argue that stepwise progressions may be upended by quantum changes that are not anticipated by the dominant paradigm. Is systemic instability a precursor of quantum change?

An anthropologist whose name I don't recall did a study some sixty years ago on two central African steppe land tribes, and found that when the tribes' populations increased beyond the carrying capacity of their ecosystem a war would ensue and continue until enough people were killed to restabilize the balance between human populations and the ecosystem. Then twenty years of peace would ensue, during which time the tribes would trade and intermarry.

Without an in depth understanding of politics in Yugoslavia, I had previously assumed that its collapse and the subsequent ethnic cleansings were brought about by the withdrawal of Soviet support and the minimal social stability that system provided. How else to explain the apparent need for Yugoslavians to slaughter their neighbors after living together for 400 Years? I was surprised to learn that the UN vote to impose economic sanctions in 1992 may have played a minor part in that instability. While Milosevic carries a great deal of responsibility, this seems to have been a quantum situation where a certain degree of destruction had to be carried out before some sense of normalcy could return. The Kmer Rouge in Cambodia and the killings of Tutsi in Uganda, (which I think holds the current world's record for the largest number of people killed in the shortest period of time), might be other possible examples of quantum change.

One point that you begin to make on Page 149, is that often governmental intelligence agencies analytic capabilities are limited by their partisan perspective, both in terms of the political expediency of the conclusions they arrive at, but in terms of what they are able to “see”. Protecting whistle-blowers and civil service appointments in governmental agencies is not just for the benefit of smoothing out governmental bureaucrats’ lives. It is precisely the “outsider” nature of your work that allows you to perceive the emerging trends before the paradigm has a chance to catch up.

Quantum steps that may erupt in the American political landscape will be fueled by four factors.

The first is the apparent need for members of both parties to “save face” with regard to the wars in Iraq/Afganistan. Sun Tzu said, “No country has ever **profited** from protracted warfare. ..One who excels in employing the military does not conscript people twice or transport provisions a third time...Thus the army values being victorious; it does not value protracted warfare.”

Alexander had the good sense not to dally in Afganistan, and the British and the Soviets learned the futility of fighting on bad terrain with no popular support. Perhaps the next administration will fulfill the decimation ( from the Roman, “ to kill every tenth”) of the Afgan and Iraqi populations, but with China in Menshevik mode the real danger is business-as-usual complacency in the US, not bands of illiterate Islamic insurgents. The process of equilibrium will not begin until **after** the allied forces withdraw. At home, the risk to the Clinton campaign is that voters may plan to vote one way, but then just push the lever for “anything different”. I’m sure you disagree, but I think Hillary needs to propose some quantum changes, within her context, to capture the imagination of America or she may become a victim of one.

The second factor is the crumbling health care system. If what is left of the (non-service) American industry can’t compete effectively on the world market as Germany and Japan are doing because of the cost of health care, and politicians continue to offer only partial solutions acceptable to the insurance industry, a perfect storm may occur ten years down the road when we are less able to absorb the major displacements that a coherent single payer system would produce. I once asked you tongue-in-cheek whether you thought Western societies could function without slaves. I think your answer was

“no”. Duncan Foley in Adams Fallacy reports that distributional inequality has shown a tendency to rise rather than fall over time with globalization. As we approach the carrying capacity of the earth, group health will not have any societal value until populations are stabilized. The default solution is warfare, famine and epidemics.

The third factor is education. SAT scores peaked in 1972. College costs could well be \$40,000 a year by 2020. Public schools are hogtied by federal regulations , and privatization will not produce the numbers of educated workers necessary. Where are we going to come up with the 100,000 or 200,000 engineers to compete with China and India?

And fourth? Oh yes, the weather.

I’m sure you will be relieved to know that I will stop blathering now. Thanks for the book,

Dr J