

# FOUNDATION FOR RESTRUCTURING FOR A NEW AGE

## CHAPTER ONE

### THE PANDEMIC AS A FOUNDATIONAL EXAMPLE

#### *Understanding Reality*

Understanding reality is the place to start when one is making choices with the intent of improving outcomes. The discussion will use COVID-19 as a case example. However, as a prelude, there will be a bit of discussion of behavioral science that goes beyond the analytics normally associated with reasoning.

The analytics normally associated with reasoning are used in the search for truth, facts that correspond to reality. However, sometimes people believe “alternative facts” — statements that are not true. That belief may be detrimental to outcomes, or possibly beneficial depending upon the criteria used, especially in specification of who benefits.

The introduction of a new book, *Useful Delusions: The Power Paradox of the Self-Deceiving Brain* (2021), by Shankar Vedantam and Bill Mesler illustrates the point with the discussion of a con artist, on trial for charges of mail fraud. Some of his victims, knowing they had been defrauded, testified in his defense, *on his behalf*, because they received benefits from his fraudulent love letters. They were not concerned with the truth of the fictitious statements made in letters to them; they were pleased with the feelings that the letters generated. Apparently, the self-deception provided benefits perceived as better than the benefit of understanding of truth. They perceived an alternative reality.

We shall return to this phenomenon when we get to discussing strategic guidance towards improving outcomes. It is in the context of feelings impacting choices, in our quest for a paradigm shift that would take us to a New Age of Enlightenment — one with better outcomes.

## *Understanding the Coronavirus*

[The major source for the first part of this discussion is the February 28, 2021 *The New York Times* article, The Secret Life of a Coronavirus by Carl Zimmer.]

Our discussion focuses on understanding systems, and subsystems, enough to be able to make choices that improve the favorability outcomes; or at least reduce unfavorable consequences. The unfavorable outcomes are associated with three sets of characteristics of various systems. The first set includes the nature of the virus itself, its contagion, and the consequences, especially death. In this section we start off focused on the first set.

The second set of characteristics is associated with our societal structure and processes that impact the contagion with which the virus attaches itself to human beings who serve as the host. The third set provides an additional discussion of understanding human choices in the changing environment that emerges with mutations, and choices made by us as individuals, others in the networks, and collectively as a society.

### **The Nature of the Virus Itself**

As to the nature of the virus itself, the COVID-19 virus is a new strain of the coronavirus family. It has emerged from the pathogen of SARS-CoV2, a successor to SARS-CoV-1, the virus that caused the 2002–2004 SARS outbreak. Understanding its nature is discussed in the article utilizing research that followed the occurrence of SARS-CoV1. The discussion of that research, that characterizes the virus as a contagious living fluid, notes that the entity’s exceptionally small size (examined through electronic microscopes) has led the researchers to conclude that the entity, as a *contagious living fluid*, doesn’t play by “the same rules to live [presumably as a living thing].” Our concern is the nature of the entity as a being and how it relates to *our lives*. The discussion has to do with the nature of life.

A couple of key quotes from the first part of the third column of the lengthy article, are as follows: (1) “Viruses are largely made of protein, as are we. And yet they don’t carry the factories for building protein. They don’t have the enzymes required to turn food to fuel, or to break down waste.” And, (2) “They [the viruses]

multiplied, but not by being, growing, or even reproducing. They simply invaded cells and forced them to do all the work of making new virus.”

Although we are not through with this first set of characteristics, a preview of the next set is in order. The point there is that we humans have assumed that we are at the top of the food chain in which the expansion of species is contained by predators. Furthermore, that our being at the top leaves us free from predators constraining us in the same way that lesser beings are constrained. Although, coronavirus does not qualify for life on criteria of self-generation, it lives by feeding on our biological systems. As such, it is constraining our societal structure and processes.

The sad fact is that we invite the contagion from wildlife into our lives by ingesting some species via acquisition through wildlife trade. After the brief discussion of contagion, we turn to consequences of messing with mother nature without understanding potential outcomes.

### **The Contagion Issue**

Returning to the rest of this section, its contagion, as is generally discussed, is airborne as well as being transmitted by direct contact. What appears likely is that the contagious living fluid can be spread by breath or sneezing, possibly being transmitted over a distance of up to five or six feet. It may linger in the air for an undetermined amount of time, and attach to surfaces. Survival on the surface probably depends upon the nature of the surface; possibly longer on porous surfaces than on smooth surfaces. We just don't have enough data to be confident with great precision. But we do know that wearing masks makes a difference, not only in the spreading of the virus (or poison, using the word's derivation from Latin), but also in fostering the mutation.

The generation of variants is an emerging contagion issue; the extent of which is uncertain. What seems likely at this time is that it could present, not only an extension of the time until the pandemic is really under control, and there is a semblance of what will be a new normal, but also will affect the existing vaccines in graver consequences. The pun on graver consequences is intentional.

The readership is no doubt familiar with the concepts of washing hands, wearing masks, and social distancing. The familiarity with keeping hands away from the face, sanitizing sprays, letting delivered items age before handling, are less common, but especially important for the vulnerable because of age or physical condition. Contagion leads to mutation, and mutation may exacerbate undesirable consequences.

### **The Consequences**

**Direct Consequences.** The direct consequences relate, not only to the health of the individual serving as a host, but also to others, who may end up suffering from a wide range of potential damages to personal health, including death. For those with an impaired homeostatic capability, the virus may be deadly. Some of the others who may become infected, may not even become seriously ill, but they spread the disease serving as the carriers. That is only the start because the contagion operates in networks capable of a geometric expansion of the disease. That is the foundation of epidemics and pandemics.

If the spread of the virus goes unchecked, mutations emerge and exacerbate damage, not only in the number of people infected, but with the extent of potential damage to the health of the infected individuals. Since the extent to which vaccinations that provided protection from viruses for which they were designed may not be protection from mutations emerging from the virus (for which vaccinations have protected those vaccinated early in the chain of mutations), it is wisdom challenged not to prioritize containment so as to curb mutations.

**The Role of Self-Deception.** Homo sapiens have deluded themselves in believing that they are at the top of the food chain. The systems of nature operate with attempts for homeostasis, but interventions in the system may produce unknown and/or unwanted outcomes. One may make the case that mankind's invasion of the natural environment is not only generating financial consequences of global warming, but also driving animal life from wilderness. That is of particular concern because the rising contagion of viruses originating with animals is impacting our quality of life,

and demanding more from the role of government in dealing with the evolution underway.

One thesis on the origin of COVID-19 relates to the sale of captured wildlife in an open market in Wuhan, China, the city in which this particular strain of virus originated. The market sells pangolins, a scaly ant eater, among other foods, some of which can wind up affecting us too in a virus. The mammal can range in size from about one foot to one-yard long. Their meat and scales are used for traditional Chinese medicines. They are captured by poaching, as well as through deforestation. They are a heavily trafficked mammal. There are alternative thoughts on the source of COVID-19; but the point here is that there is a great deal that we don't know about it, and many of the things we think we know, are not so.

When we deceive ourselves, willingly or unwillingly, the consequences may become severe. A single sentence in a book review by Helen McDonald (*The New York Times* on March 14, 2021) of the Elizabeth Kolbert, *UNDER A WHITE SKY: The Nature of the Future*, makes a superb point for our discussion. The sentence is as follows: "The systems that support us are now highbred human-natural ones, and maintaining them increasingly requires us to adapt to inventive strategies to correct for our previous attempts of control, efforts that have frequently led to highly unfortunate outcomes."

We will be discussing the development of strategies for reconstructing our political economy to restore our nation back on the path towards the ideals articulated in the Declaration of Independence. This discussion of the pandemic is simply an opener to the multiplicity of issues we need to deal with to improve outcomes from our dysfunctional systems, globally as well as domestic in our quest to improve our quality of life; especially by outcomes restoring us to a path for success with what has been called *The Great Experiment*. That *Great Experiment*, our American Democracy, is not only failing to do well for the vast majority of the people in our nation, but is setting a poor example for the rest of what we like to think of as humanity.

Some of this failure is in the natural environment, as noted in our discussion of the pandemic. However, a great deal of our concern

is with our policy choices that were intended to prepared us for epidemics, and follow through in dealing with the issues. Especially relevant, is the failure of the Trump administration to share the truth with the public, and to override for political interests, measures such as use of masks and social distancing as part of what is necessary to constrain the spread of virus.

The preceding paragraph is a segue to a 2004 book edited by Bill Fossett and Brian Thomson, *YOU DID WHAT?* It is subtitled *Mad Plans and Great Historical Disasters*. One of the forty-seven illustrative stories is titled *Ecology, African Style*. The vignette is subtitled *You Stocked the Lake with What?* It runs a little over a single page [see pages 167-8]. In summary, a fish (Nile perch) was imported to deal with a food issue. That breed grows big in size of individual fish, and numbers. It wound-up devouring other fish leaving the food source worse than before the intervention.

Beyond this example, there are many poor choices made. Consider a couple of the about four dozen vignettes in the book. Here are two titles: (1) *You Broke In Where?* President Richard M. Nixon, Washington D.C., 1971; (2) *You Vaccinated Whom Against What?* The second item is an epigraph, “The best of intentions, the worst of science. Who says science and politics don’t mix well? Well, this does.”

That entry, authored by E. J. Neiburger, runs about six pages (246-252). It discusses a misdiagnosis in 1976. Politics interfered with the decisions that were made by an underfunded Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. As a start, an error was made, “...It looked to some public health officials like the 1918 flu had returned. It was a false alarm, but thousands would die in the series of errors that tried to deal with a pandemic that did not occur. [page 247].”

The article’s opening sentence was “The great flu epidemic of 1917-1918 was one of the world’s greatest plagues and depopulators of the world.” The narrative continues with a discussion of a couple of disasters. The relevance for our discussion is that it is wisdom challenged to underfund science, and even worse to cut back on what has been advanced. It is even worse to interfere with science for political motivations.

That series of self-deceptions and mismanagement resulted in thousands of unnecessary deaths. The self-deceptions associated with the current pandemic, bolstered by the intentional deceptions motivated by politics, resulted in hundreds of thousands of unnecessary deaths. The indirect consequences of damaging integrity go beyond the damages to our quality of life, they contribute to the global dysfunctionality of what passes for humanity.

**Indirect Consequences.** Before we go to testing and tracing; a subject that will be discussed in the next category that considers societal structure and processes, there are other significant consequences that impact the quality of life. The consequences are best understood in viewing the planet earth as one big system, even though it is a small part of an even larger system.

The next section, dealing with societal structure and process, focuses on our national scale. Although it is arguably the world's leading nation, that role has been declining. The consequences of the pandemic to other nations in the world will generated an impact on our own country.

The coronavirus turned out to be a top priority among a series of crises; although it became rivaled by a new *Day of Infamy*, January 6, 2021. We are exploring strategic approaches to dealing with a rising number of crises, including the divisiveness in our political environment that is hampering progress in a multiplicity of crises. **Our focus here is on the COVID-19 pandemic, but what we learn here may well help us with the other crises.**

### *Understanding Societal Structure and Process*

#### **Scale and Control**

Understanding societal structure and process relative to the coronavirus necessarily deals with scale. The contagious living fluid of the virus is minuscule to the human body; and the human body is minuscule to the societal structure of the nation with the political and military power for personal protection. **In this section we are focused on societal structure and process dealing with the protection from the contagion.**

The United States of America, as a nation, has performed miserably in the containment of the contagion resulting in a huge proportion of deaths in relation to population. The societal structures that have done best in dealing with the contagion resulting in the lowest of death rates are characterized by a structure of centralized control and national health programs that include personal identification cards coded to track location. The processes include testing for contagion and tracing contacts; followed up by isolation of those infected enough to contain spreading the disease.

The virus does not respect borders. COVID-19 spread globally very quickly with the movement of hosts and multiple contacts. In the United States, preparation for epidemics was reduced during the Trump administration. The administration failed to reveal the truth regarding the extent of the danger, and lacked the proper preparation. The nature of control is split between the federal government and the states, and there was a lack of appropriate coordination in that relationship. Additionally, while there was some progress between contiguous states, a coordinated structure by region barely got started. There were significant differences between so-called red and blue states reflecting the extent of political control by state and local governments, and by the behavior of the residents, especially with the use of face masks, the nonuse of which became a political statement.

Our political structure was not designed for maximization of control for containment of pandemics. Rather it was designed to avoid tyranny. It is a great challenge to get a balance of concentration of power between the role of government under law, and the voluntary compliance for the common good. This takes us to the issue of human behavior.

### **Political Structure**

Our structure as a nation was first conceived as a confederation of states declaring sovereignty when countering the tyranny of King George III who was unresponsive to their complaints. It took about a decade to transform the Confederation to become a federation of these [sic] United States. That transformation has



been called *America's Second Revolution*. It pioneered the creation of constitutional democracies in the form of a constitutional republic with a federal structure of three branches of government: legislative, administrative, and judicial.

The design was to avoid the concentration of power that would facilitate transformation into a tyrannical regime. The Constitution provided federal authority only to the extent delegated by the sovereign states. It was the first ten amendments, protecting the rights of individuals, that appears to reflect the individual rights claimed in the Declaration of Independence, to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.

The Constitution does not call for the direct election of the president by the voters. It calls for an Electoral College with each of the states having the number of votes corresponding to the sum of their allocated members of the House of Representatives, authorized using the data of the decennial census plus two, the number of senators authorized per state, irrespective of population.

The false claims of a rigged election, made by Donald Trump while serving as president, led to the invasion of the Capitol building on January 6, 2021 in an attempt to stop the Congressional process of counting state votes submitted through the electoral college, in favor of redirecting some states to submit votes determined by the state legislatures, instead of the official ballot counting. Although it interrupted the process for hours, the counting resumed, and the newly elected president and vice president were inaugurated on January 20, 2021. The insurrection marked a new national crisis with a *Day of Infamy* intending to destroy what remains of American Democracy, in favor of an autocracy.

The political structure was designed to avoid tyranny of the masses, as well as tyranny of an individual or a collection of individuals. The design calls for a peaceful transfer of power. Our evolution of suffrage, as a nation, started with voters being white males of age owning property. A century later, it went on to include black males via the Fifteenth Amendment, adopted in 1870, as part of the Reconstruction era following the Civil War. It took an additional half century for the establishment of women's suffrage — codified in the Constitution by the Nineteenth Amendment in 1920. A third

of a century later, the Voting Rights Act of 1965 aimed to overcome legal barriers at the state and local levels that prevented African Americans from exercising their voting rights.

The suppression of voting at the state level is being revitalized by Republican-led legislation in some states utilizing a tribal mentality in opposition to fair representation in state and federal levels because it is as one politician put it, the politics “is a zero-sum game.” Legislation emanating from the House of Representatives, designed to foster fair representation, is not likely to get sufficient support of the Senate for passage. There is some genuine concern as to whether or not the Trumpian Republicans really want a democracy; or do they just want power so as to pursue their own political and personal interests? This reflects a serious concern as to the future of *The Great Experiment, American Democracy*.

### **Leadership and Human Behavior**

In the first year of America’s pandemic there were over 500,000 lives lost from COVID-19, the vast majority of which could have been saved by better leadership at federal and state levels, and by human behavior that dealt better with reality. One may argue that Donald Trump was not only unqualified for the responsibilities of the presidency, but that his decision-making, while president, was focused on his being reelected, rather than being focused on the welfare of the nation.

He was the first president to be impeached twice, and there were only two other presidential impeachments in our nation’s history. He does not bear the responsibility for the excessive death rate alone; he is accompanied by millions of credulous voters who believed his lies and other shortfalls in dealing with truth. His rejection of science that was not useful for his political purposes contributed to the excessive death rate. He did not invent the bullying tactics and the vengeful behavior of political leadership, but it is likely that history will characterize him as its personification in what purports to be a democratic societal structure.

Our focus here is on the damage done not only by the character of his leadership, but also by the character of some of his followers. There are three levels of followers, not all of which are necessarily

related to traditional conservative values. The first two levels relate to political power. At the national level we are dealing with elected officials who are in fear of being primaried; having alternative Republican candidates supported by the party, when they are up for reelection. Some moderates not supporting Trump, have decided not to run for reelection.

At the state and local level there is great strength of the Trumpian Republicans. Some voters, including some Republicans, characterize the Trumpian Republican Party at federal, as well as at the state and local levels, as power-seeking for control largely for political and personal interests rather than national interests. There seems to be an excessive concentration of what Edward O. Wilson has described as the Paleolithic Curse, "...genetic adaptations that work well for millions of years of hunter-gatherer existence but are increasingly a hindrance in a globally urban and technoscientific society" [*The Meaning of Human Existence*, page 176].

In its first century, the Republican Party started with its leadership seeking equality of opportunity in competition to protection of property. It didn't take long to shift towards the protection of property. The return to focusing on equality rights came with the election of Theodore Roosevelt. It took a long time for the next transition, that was marked by the presidency of Dwight David Eisenhower. During those times there was "... the profound tension between America's two fundamental beliefs, equality of opportunity and protection of property." The quote is from Heather Cox Richardson's 2014 book, *To Make Men Free: A History of the Republican Party* [page xi].

After that first century of the Republican Party, there came a half century of four revolutions within the party. Although the website contains substantial discussion of those four revolutions, here are some excerpts from the item titled *Our Democracy is Destroying Itself: Power Without Morality Is Cancerous*.

- **Reagan's Republican Revolution in the Early 1980s**

"The first Republican Revolution was the Reagan one, which promised to roll back Lyndon Johnson's Great Society." So wrote Fareed Zakaria in the *Time Magazine* November 4, 2010 article, *The Republican Revolution: Real This Time?*

- **The Gingrich Led Republican Revolution**

The Gingrich led Republican Revolution is what we are calling the second of the Republican revolutions. It is what was identified by Zakaria in the article cited. The quote is as follows: “Round 2 was the Gingrich revolution.”

- **George Walker Bush Republican Revolution**

This takes us back to the opening sentence of the Zakaria article that triggered this essay, “We are watching the third Republican revolution unfold — the third time the Republican Party has come to power promising to fundamentally alter the relationship of the U.S. Government to society.” So, what is the ideology of the Republican Party with regard to the relationship of the U.S. Government to society?

- **The Trumpian Takeover of the Republican Party**

The Trumpian takeover of the Republican Party may be viewed as the fourth Republican Revolution. We may not have needed another clue, but there was one on Friday, July 31, 2020, in the form of *The New York Times* op-ed item titled “We Created the G.O.P Demise.” It is authored by Stuart Stevens whose book, *It Was All A Lie: How the Republican Party Became Donald Trump*,...

...In some respects, the Trumpian takeover of the Republican Party through the nomination process in which Trump attacked his fellow Republicans, is simply an adoption of the playbook of Newt Gingrich as discussed in *The Gingrich Led Republican Revolution*. In other respects, in concept, it “is a continuation of winning at any cost.”

The Grand Old Party has made significant contributions to our constitutional republic, starting with preserving unification of the United States, a constitutional democracy that survived a Civil War. The pursuit of power within what was a Grand Old Party is on the road to destroying our democracy. **Perhaps a fifth Republican Revolution will take us back to the pursuit of equality of opportunity, but in the meantime, we are paying a terrible price in the loss of lives and in the diminution of quality of life because a demagogue has exploited the feelings of some credulous followers.**

The wearing of masks could probably have saved over one hundred thousand lives had Trump's leadership been truthful about the pandemic and not fostered policies contrary to containment of the spread of the virus. Even more lives could have been saved had the nation been properly prepared, and the dissemination of scientific results been better generated and disseminated.

The human behavior of the populace bears substantial responsibility, as does other segments of our societal structure. The understanding reality introduction had a brief discussion of useful delusions. What is discussed in more detail on the website is how alternative facts have been used to exploit feelings of the Trump base not accustomed to critical thinking. The sad fact is that the feelings have not led to the benefit of the exploited; the process having been designed to benefit the concentration of power of an aspiring autocrat.

Some of that Trump following, with a belief in patriotism, and Trump having their back, have committed crimes that will lead them to serving time for having done the crime. Hundreds have been arrested, some who are simply victims of the *big lie*, "a stolen election." Others are simply domestic terrorists that will require a more punitive law and order treatment.

Although isolation is a strategic approach for dealing with terrorism, foreign and domestic, changing the environment to foster relationships in which there is a genuine caring for others, including those who are clustered in a different perspective among the pluralistic views. The foundation of our free society, is certainly worthy of greater consideration from a multiplicity of perspectives. A step has been taken in that direction in the first 100 days of the new administration in the search for unity in dealing with common problems.

We now turn to understanding the choices in a changing environment in order to shed light on some potential opportunity on fostering the call for a New Age of Enlightenment. The research is looking for ways in which to increase the equality of opportunity, and the strengthening of relationships that build social capital to take us back to pursuing the ideals articulated in the Declaration of Independence.

**Restructuring for a New Age** (the second part of *Strategic Guidance Towards Improving Outcomes*) is being written in stages. The new administration's first 100 days ended on April 29, 2021. A standalone item has been, or will be posted on the website, the Declaration Era Educational Press, starting in May, 2021. The first of four sections has now been integrated into this presentation.

The four sections for **Restructuring for a New Age** are titled as follows:

**Learning from One Hundred Days**

**The Administration's First Year**

**Preparations for The Midterm Elections**

**Preparing for Our Nation's Challenge in 2024**

Each of the four sections will be posted on the web as soon as feasible, given that additions to the second part of *Strategic Guidance Towards Improving Outcomes* will have to wait until the relevant period for each of the sections ends.

Hard copy updates of the overview booklet, ***IT IS TIME TO DECIDE! DO YOU WANT TO LIVE IN A FREE SOCIETY?***, are planned for June of 2021, 2022, 2023, and 2024.

The entire **Restructuring for a New Age** is planned to be part of *Strategic Guidance Towards Improving Outcomes* and to the updated version of the trilogy's first overview booklet, ***IT IS TIME TO DECIDE! DO YOU WANT TO LIVE IN A FREE SOCIETY?***