

HISTORY OF THE BRITS

CHAPTER 21 THE SUPERPOWERS ARE NOT

“ The real opposition is the media. And the way to deal with them is to flood the zone with shit.” Steve Bannon, Trump’s right hand man.

INTRODUCTION

Britain is narrowly clinging on to its second rank status, completely dwarfed in particular by the two ‘Superpowers’ America and Russia (and what about China?) – or so we are constantly reminded by commentators in the media. If they are right it would be ridiculous for Britain, or indeed any other lesser nation, to try and lead us all back, away from the environmental abyss towards which the world is now helplessly sliding. Only the Superpowers could take that initiative.

But are those commentators right? In my partial table of Progressive nations (pp 36-7) Russia and China are in the last-but-bottom rank (5) while America is well down in the second rank with only 720 marks, below for instance Britain (10,000), Denmark (5,000), Switzerland (1215) and France (1080).

What’s going on? Here I will argue that the ‘Superpowers’ are paper-tigers whose self proclaimed status is based on a mixture of misunderstanding, nuclear weaponry, dishonesty and self-delusional propaganda, all amplified by broadcasting technology.

But my purpose here is not to ridicule the hollow ‘Superpowers’ but to encourage smaller but much more Progressive powers like Britain to try and take the lead in halting the world’s slide towards the abyss. If they don’t, what hope have we got?

2 RUSSIA

Before WW2 the USSR was a largely hidden empire being tortured into Communism by two Georgian monsters, Stalin and Beria. But it emerged as the principle military victor having, against all odds, destroyed the invincible German Wehrmacht in one heroic battle after another. It had crushed all of Eastern Europe while its mighty tank army was poised within scent of the Channel to take the rest.

Then in 1949, years before its adversaries expected, it detonated an Atom Bomb.

In 1957, the West suffered an even greater shock when Sputnik was launched, proclaiming Russia's emphatic victory over mighty America in the Race for Space. It seemed that nothing was now beyond the mammoth Eastern Superpower.

But if we look more deeply behind the stage management we find a structure scarcely more progressive or effective than its Tsarist predecessor.

Take its "Great Patriotic War". Despite Stalin's massive incompetence (in 1938 he'd murdered most of his army-officers, while he was incommunicado with shock for 6 whole weeks after the Nazi assault began) Hitler hardly had a chance. Why not? Because of logistics. The Wehrmacht would have to march thousands of miles East to the Caucasus to find a significant supply of oil for its tanks, trucks and aircraft while a simple accounting of likely casualties, supply-lines and exhaustion, show an upper limit well below a thousand miles a year. The German forces, like Napoleon's before, would simply be swallowed up by the vastness of the steppes, as a straightforward sum will demonstrate (NOTE 1). Only if Stalin himself cracked would Hitler prevail – but he daren't crack because a horde of revengeful enemies would have murdered him, as they were later to murder Beria.

Additionally Russia had the gold in its Kola goldfields to buy huge amounts of munitions from America including 5,000 tanks and 7,000 aircraft while British cryptanalysts had broken into the *Geheimschreiber* used by Hitler and his generals to run their Eastern Front campaign. Forewarned, the Red Army could build vast tank traps to encircle and destroy the panzers, as they did at the decisive Battle of Kursk in the summer of 1943.

As for the myth that Atomic bombs are difficult to build, it has been exploded by morons like Kim Il Jong of N Korea. Separating fissile material can be tiresome and expensive, but means to do so were worked out in Britain as early as 1941. Thereafter it's largely a question of motivation. The Russians certainly had the brains to build their own bomb, as they were to demonstrate later by exploding the first *practical* Hydrogen bomb before the Americans, but they were aided as early as 1945 by idealistic Western scientists like Theodore Hall and Klaus Fuchs who fed details of the Manhattan Project to Moscow, fearful perhaps that America couldn't be trusted to possess the bomb on its own – not surprising perhaps when US Strategic Air Command was to be headed by a bloodthirsty cowboy like Curtis Le May.

Finally Sputnik was the inevitable by-product of the Intercontinental Ballistic Missile. As the Russian rocketry pioneer Konstantin Tsiolkovsky had shown back in 1903, if one just adds extra stages to a rocket, each one lighter than the stage below, one could put a very light object into orbit even with V2 era technology. Sputnik was a spectacular propaganda success which the Communist Party milked for all it was worth but Russia was far too backward in computing to make much of substance out of it.

So the three great triumphs of Communist Russia deconstruct. It could hardly avoid winning the Great Patriotic War – even with Stalin in charge – while the atom bomb and Sputnik were, in the end, no big deals.

And sure enough the Soviet wheels soon began to come off:

1962 Cuban Missile crisis fizzles out – Thank Goodness! You can't use nuclear weapons, not if you're sane!

1988 USSR retreats from Afghanistan.

1989 Soviet Union breaks up for reasons we discuss later (NOTE 2).

3 THE USA

Like the USSR, the USA claimed its Superpower status immediately after WW2, not so much by fighting, as by making vast sums of money out of it, which it invested in technology, principally nuclear missiles and computing. In the popular mind its' six main claims to Superpower status stem from:

- 1 The Manhattan Project.
- 2 The Moon Landing.
- 3 The Almighty Dollar.
- 4 Silicon Valley.
- 5 Its stewardship of Western Liberal Democracy.
- 6 Victory in the Cold War.

If sound, those claims are almost miraculous considering that before Pearl Harbour the US was definitely 2nd or 3rd rate, remarkable only for mass producing items of intermediate technology such as cars and trucks, and for controlling vast areas of fertile, oil-rich territory brutally stolen from its indigenous peoples. It had been ravaged by the Great Depression – largely a consequence of its hick government. It had never fought in a foreign war of any consequence, nor did it possess the cadre of trained officers needed to do so.

So let us look to see how all these 'miracles' came about:

1 The Manhattan Project: If we can rely on Richard Rhodes' wonderful "*The Building of the Atomic Bomb*" the US was only convinced of its feasibility by Mark Oliphant of Birmingham University and his colleagues in Britain's Maud Committee. They were going to build the bomb in Canada because it wasn't wise to erect the vast gaseous diffusion plant needed to

separate out the active Uranium 235 isotope in a region as vulnerable to bombing as Britain. Also it required huge amounts of Electricity. The motive behind the British bomb was fear that the Nazi's might get one first but, when codebreaking revealed that German nuclear scientists had fallen hopelessly behind, Britain handed over all its secrets and urged America to go ahead and build one as a joint undertaking, 'just in case.'

For reasons not understood to this day Roosevelt leapt in with both boots and ordered General Groves to construct two vast bomb production-lines, one based on Uranium the other on Plutonium, one of each being eventually dropped on Japan in August 1945, ending the war in the Pacific.

The motive for dropping those bombs then and there, for ejecting Britain from the project in 1946 and for thereafter stockpiling a vast arsenal of 20,000 nuclear weapons has never been satisfactorily explained. At one extreme one could argue that it was to save allied (and Japanese) casualties. At the other to build a US nuclear hegemon. In between that it was to prevent Japan surrendering to Russia after US forces in the Pacific had failed to defeat the Japanese either on the ground, in the air, or at sea. Only three things are clear :

- The decision to drop the bombs was taken by the **Joint** Chiefs of Staff, British and American, at Potsdam in July 1945.
- Roosevelt's extremely foolish insistence on "Unconditional Surrender" more or less ensured that Japan would never surrender to America, and was an invitation to Russia to step in instead.
- Withholding the bomb from Britain, in the treacherous 1946 McMahon Act, put the whole of Western Europe in peril of Stalin's colossal tank army in Germany, and at America's whim: to intervene, or not. That's why Britain, already on its economic knees, had to quickly cobble together a bomb of its own.

Thrilled humankind, and rightly so, but was it a triumph of American or German technology? All the faultless Saturn rockets which took the astronauts there were designed by Werner von Braun and his German team based at Huntsville Alabama. That might sound carping – until one learns of “Operation Paperclip” which I only did recently.

V2 rockets rained down on Britain killing 4,000 before the RAF in 1944 wiped out Peenemunde where they were built and tested. The Nazis then moved von Braun and his rocket team South to Nordhausen where 19,000 slaves were forced to manufacture more of the terror weapons in abandoned mine tunnels, 6 dying for each one completed.

After Germany’s surrender Nordhausen happened to be in the British Zone of Occupation but America was determined to get its hands on those weapons, and the men behind them. Eisenhower, who was *supposed to be the supreme allied commander* , instead sent a telegram to the US where ‘Operation Paperclip’ was quickly mounted. Led by a Major Hamill a US team sneaked into the British Zone, and took out 400 freight cars of material from Nordhausen, including more than 100 complete V2s.

Meanwhile von Braun had fled to Bavaria where he and his team parlayed with the US for amnesty in America (they might have been prosecuted as war criminals), using as a bargaining chip 17 tons of documents still hidden in a mine back at Nordhausen. The Americans sneaked back and ‘liberated’ the documents which, along with 1500 Nazi scientists were whisked to New Mexico, no questions asked. But, combined with that growing stockpile of 20,000 nuclear weapons, it sets some very troubling questions indeed . For instance did the Americans really get to the Moon, or did the Germans just put them there? (NOTE 3)

SILICON VALLEY

Has unquestionably changed the world. But to what extent it is American enterprise or American monopoly is another very good question. The electronic computer originated in Britain in 1943 when Tommy Flowers from the GPO built the first one (Colossus) for the code-breakers at Bletchley Park and computers found their first commercial application when Ferranti in Manchester built LEO (Lyon's Electronic Office). However it was the MOSFET transistor (not the original one), developed at the famous Bell Labs in New Jersey which permitted microminiaturisation and hence cheap and powerful integrated circuitry to take off ('Moore's Law'). When William Shockley from Bell Labs migrated to California. (1956) to live nearer his mother Silicon Valley grew up around him.

There's nothing magic about computing; its just that complex tasks can be subdivided again and again until one is left with mindless routines (algorithms) which can be carried out by assemblies of gormless switches. But cheapness and speed are then paramount, and in that respect MOSFET technology, which has reigned ever since, is supreme.(The Taiwanese are now its masters).

To show that most computing "revolutions" are either obvious or accidental consider "The invention of the Internet", unquestionably a game changer. It's often claimed to be a stroke of genius at DARPA (the US Department of Defence Research Projects Agency). But computers are all about bits of digital information flying about their subsystems – from say a memory store to the CPU (Central Processing Unit) and out again elsewhere. That being so it's obvious that messages should also be able to pass rapidly from one computer to another, provided there are agreed-upon addressing and language conventions. Key to success was "Packet Switching" which was devised separately in the UK and US. Thus packages of digital information could be sprayed out by a computer, individually addressed so that they could find their

separate ways through any network and yet finish up in the right order in the addressee's computer. This is robust against jams in the network. After that the Internet became inevitable, first between machines from the same manufacturer, then between manufacturers sharing the same conventions.

As it happened, back in the late 1970s I was chairman of a committee set up to devise a computer system which would allow British astronomers to share and analyse their data. Once it was working the bloody astronomers started sending personal messages to one another all over the globe in a way which we designers of the system had never envisaged. So far as we knew at the time that was the start of the civilian internet; an accident just waiting to happen.

As far as I can see ours was the common experience – summed up in the words of an earlier US engineer: “We invented all kinds of things [at the Rad.Lab. for wartime radar], not because we were so smart, but because we were the first people who had the problem.”[NOTE 4]

But why did SV become so successful, leaving behind everyone else, including the British who had developed computing first? I would suggest principally because of the need for “conventions” which would allow for interoperability between digital systems of many kinds (e.g. the Internet above). Groups in one location (a ‘cluster’) can perceive the need for them first, agree on some, and reap the enormous benefits which may then ensue.

Such ‘Network effects’ can be immensely valuable, but are equally a prey to parasitical monopolies, viz ‘Microsoft’, ‘Facebook’, ‘Google’ and all the usual suspects. For instance how could Bill Gates, who contributed nothing innovative, trouser 70 Billion Dollars?

So we are left with the question of whether Silicon Valley has become more of a bloodsucking parasite than a benefit to mankind. (The US government's current attempt to stifle Hauwei's entry into the 5G arena is suspicious.)

AMERICA — ‘THE STEWARD OF WESTERN LIBERAL DEMOCRACY’

Simply doesn't stack up, not on close inspection. The US didn't enter WW2 to save anyone, it was duped into Pearl Harbour by the KGB and it was the Nazis who declared war on America, not vice versa (Chapt.11). Yes its troops landed on D-Day but that was an operation planned, largely organised and dominated by British and Canadian forces [NOTE 5] . Yes it mass-produced munitions but they were handsomely paid for largely by the British and Russians – (which explains why the US became so rapidly and extravagantly rich – its GDP tripled) while the British became raggedly poor by the end.

And what about the fighting itself? The key encounter was The Battle of the Atlantic, into which I have done a great deal of research. Although the US Navy was supposed to be on the Allied side its totally incompetent Commander-in Chief, Admiral Ernest J King, hated the Royal Navy and did all he could to frustrate an allied victory, first by withholding the vital long range aircraft he'd been ordered to supply, and second by then withdrawing the US Navy altogether from the North Atlantic, without warning, explanation or excuse, immediately before the crux battles which were to be fought there in April/May 1943 . His same incompetent navy ran away off Omaha Beach on D-Day (leading to the tragic US army casualties there) and lost its vital Mulberry Harbour through incompetence. Afterwards its pet historian Elliot Morrison, appointed to be an Admiral by King, tried to cover it up in an outrageous and fraudulent book which he rushed out in 1947 . If its hard to believe see NOTE 6.

By throwing the British out of the Manhattan project in 1946 (MacMahon Act) America exposed the whole of Western Europe to invasion by Stalin's enormous tank army on the plains of Germany. In doing so it placed Europe entirely under its own thrall. Would the US come to our rescue or not?

But what about Marshall Aid? In truth it didn't amount to much. Britain's share (26%) amounted to little more than one per cent of its war losses. The truth is America made itself disgracefully rich out of WW2 and used the Bretton Wood conference to impose the dollar on the world as its only convertible currency.

America didn't even win the Cold War, as so many Capitalist commentators love to claim. When I was in the USSR in 1986 a highly influential Russian told me the Soviet Union would collapse within the next 2 to 3 years "Because the majority of soldiers in the Red Army are now Muslim, which means we can no longer fight our most likely adversaries. We will have to withdraw back to our European roots". All followed as he foretold. It's an absolutely fascinating, almost incredible story [NOTE 7].

_____ In summary America didn't win WW2, or the Cold War which followed, but it won the Peace instead, largely by picking the pockets of the main combatants, principally Britain and Russia.

The US's Superpower status hasn't been exposed as hollow quite so rapidly as Russia's. But the signs were there for those who cared to look beneath all the hype and propaganda: the Cuban Missile Crisis (1962), which was wholly unnecessary given that there were already Soviet nuclear missiles poised within sight of Manhattan, signalled American hysteria; the humiliating defeat in Vietnam; serial mismanagement in the Middle East and Afghanistan, not to mention a series of clown-presidents including Nixon, Reagan, George W Bush and Donald Trump, all undermined its Superpower myth.

4 SO WHAT?

The purpose of this chapter is not to castigate the so called 'Superpowers' but to point to their hollow status. On no account should the more Progressive nations of the world, notably Britain, hesitate to take a lead in trying to halt the world's slide towards the environmental abyss. Waiting for hollow 'Superpowers' to do so could prove fatal. Weak characters do not have the self confidence to lead. Britain has to realize it isn't weak or impotent, even if its Feebrals want to believe so. For them Paralysis is Policy.

5 POSTSCRIPT

History and progress have become so much entangled with Science over the last 80 years that I doubt that anyone lacking a background in cutting edge, international Physics, would seriously attempt the history relayed in this chapter. I have been emboldened to do so only because I happen to have that background. I was a physics undergraduate in Manchester during the Cuban Missile Crisis, a PhD astrophysicist in Arizona during the Moon Landing, a professor of Astronomy in Britain when the Internet was being invented, and a key member of the NASA/ESA Hubble Space Telescope project from 1977 to 2011. In particular this last enabled me to make many key contacts, including behind the Iron Curtain, which otherwise would have been quite impossible. For instance in 1986, weeks after Chernobyl, I found myself at an extraordinary conference deep in the Soviet Union, where I spent a week talking with top Soviet physicists, including especially Jakov Borisovitch Zeldovich ‘The father of the Hydrogen Bomb’. He was eager to discuss many sensitive matters including nuclear deterrence, ‘Star-Wars’, the responsibility of physicists for stopping their governments from starting nuclear wars, the imminent breakup of the Soviet Union – for reasons I have never heard discussed elsewhere, and so on and so on. I could hardly believe some of what he was telling me, but history was so often to prove him right – for instance the break-up of the Soviet Union 3 years later. Without being specific he encouraged me to believe that the physicists on both sides of the Cold War had prevented Armageddon only by treacherously sharing their nuclear secrets with one another. Thereafter I kept going back to the Soviet Union and its aftermath because I realized that the Iron Curtain had been far more opaque than any of us had realized. Neither side had any reliable knowledge of the other; we were all, on both sides, dupes of paranoid propaganda. In particular Russia and America had entangled themselves, and everyone else, in false, and still dangerous myths about their Superpower status. You can still hear it today from Putin and Trump. At the very least we *all* need to see through this, even if

they cannot. [Don't Forget the SWW was started by just such a plausible lie – Ludendorff's Lie about his brave German Army never having been defeated in the First.]

Today there is a third such 'Superpower', China. I haven't included it here because I have neither the specialised knowledge nor the personal experience to do so. Even so it is very low down in the scale of Progressiveness (in the 5th rank out of 6) while Chi has turned it back into a one-man tyranny, partly based on trying "To make China Great again". With its reliance on coal power, and its institutional dishonesty it's hardly going to lead us out of the environmental mess either – on the contrary.

NOTES

1 See "Napoleon's Equation", p 24.

2 Zeldovich told me the USSR would break up soon because "The majority of soldiers in the Red Army are now of Muslim origin. Therefore we will no longer be able to fight our most likely adversaries. Russia will have to recoil back to its European origins."

3 After Apollo 11 NASA really picked itself up and launched dozens of spectacular and revolutionary Space Missions, to Mars, to all the outer planets and their moons, to sample previously unexplored regions of the spectrum such as the Infra-red and the X-ray, as well as the Hubble Space Telescope and the International Space Station. It developed technologies that went far far beyond von Braun's; for instance the Space Shuttle used engines running on the ultimate cryogenic fuels, Hydrogen and Oxygen. I particularly admired its openness, admitting mistakes and putting them right in the full public gaze, as for instance correcting the flawed mirror on the Hubble. If the Moon Landing wasn't quite the All American triumph it was portrayed, what came afterwards can be a huge source of American pride!

4 In discussing America I have relied almost exclusively on American sources, including the list at the end of Chapter 11 [“The Baleful Shadow of America”] on p 124 while the references to Chapter 17 on “Innovation”, see p 200, should also be useful here, especially Buder. I learned about OPERATION PAPERCLIP from a US documentary of that title aired on the Smithsonian TV Channel Apr. 17, 2019 and had a shock. You can download from Amazon Prime.

5 For D-Day see note 8 , p79.

6 I grew up on the coast of Pembrokeshire where the detritus from the Battle of the Atlantic washed ashore on every tide. Since then I have been obsessively interested in a battle which lasted over 5 years, and was unquestionably the most momentous in history but is not at all well known or understood, perhaps because both sides kept it highly secret at the time while there were no journalists or film crews out there ; it was just too tough for them. There isn't even a memorial to the 100, 000 souls who died in the campaign. So I have just published a novel called *Strangle* set in it [Amazon Kindle, 2021, 708 p.] which is based on my lifetime obsession and years and years of research. See also my website mjdisney.org.

7 A much longer account of my magic encounter with Jakov Zeldovich in Abkhazia is given in Chapter 6 of *Crouching Giant* entitled ‘A Riddle Wrapped in a Mystery’. *Crouching Giant* itself is the third volume of my quartet of novels written around the Hubble Space Telescope and entitled “*Written in the Stars*”. You can find them all in paperback on Amazon Kindle (2020). Or look in my website mjdisney.org under ‘My Books’.