

Re: Yet Another Roswell Thread

Source: <http://sci.tech--archive.net/Archive/sci.space.policy/2007-07/msg00425.html>

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 - *Date:* Mon, 16 Jul 2007 04:26:52 -0700
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On 16 Jul, 01:23, eina...@xxxxxxxxxx wrote:

I think I fundamentally agree with you. Except for one area Natural Language where memes fit very well and where memetic markers (such as "dormir" and "tojo el mundo") tell us how a language evolved and what trading contacts were made in pre history.

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Upper_Paleolithic

One thing is clear, some kind of a transformation occurred among modern humans a bit over 50.000 years ago, when the so called upper paleolithic or late stone age began. It sounds likely that some breakthrough on language might have been part of the reason. However, nobody really knows. What appears clear is that around that time homo sapiens burst outwards onto the world and cleared the field in a few thousand years. This transformation may have been in being for some time before that period in Africa. But modern humans appear to have been around for a surprisingly long time before that period or for something in the range of around 200.000 years.

Mind you, one has to remember that all data is based on what has been found so far, that creates a limitation. It's possible that the data is actually skewed, or in other words that known data has a built-in bias that we can't know about. Modern humans might have in that period like today preferred to live close to the ocean, in the lowland areas, and ocean levels were far lower during the ice age, so it's possible that modern humans had already spread along the coastal areas at an earlier date, all remains of which lie underneath the ocean waves. So the 50.000 years date may have to be taken with some caution, meaning that the transformation might be a bit older.

Nobody really knows how language evolved. I really doubt that will ever be known. But I find it plausible that it was a gradual evolution, i.e. that varieties of extinct humans had more communication capabilities than modern animals.

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The thing is language must really be driven by the needs of the kind of society humans live in IMO. Hunting/gathering tribes don't really have an absolute need for a very complex language, after all they are living in fashion not really that far removed from say gorillas, that at least is the case with primitive jungle tribes. When humans expanded into different habitats, they found fresh challenges. However so, humans appear still to have persisted long with very primitive stone tools.

Personally, I have long been interested in the invention of primitive fishing tools. It appears that many of the primitive versions of those, i.e. the fishing spear, the most simple type of netting belong to that period. You see, prior to the invention of agriculture it appears to me that the best chances for humans to create a considerable population in any single phase, were close to rich coastal areas. I suspect that the invention of primitive fishing gear enabled the first population explosion which drove perhaps the need for a better language. A hypothesis.

Language certainly evolved gradually. Chimpanzees have a language of sorts, but nothing like our language. Language is needed for a complex society. You cannot organize hunts without language. There is one Darwinian test that could, at least in principle, be done and that is to look at vector space separations of words that sound or are the same. Like spring – printemps ressort, source vb sauter. BTW – I previously posted using Spanish I sometimes wonder why I bothered. Does Natural Selection (in NL there are certainly memes) favour large separations in terms of Vector Space?

Good point. Orthodox sociology tells us how opinions are formed and what the influence of individual thought and group thought is. Orthodox psychology tells us what sort of people are likely to be influenced by what influences. In fact psychology is the "micro" world and sociology the macro world. One concept that orthodox sociology has not taken on board, so far at any rate, is the concept of a "temperature" in a society, that is to say the extent to which individuals correspond to group influences, and to what extent they think for themselves. If people think for themselves this results in a noise level in a sociological level.

You can tell BTW that I am a physicist and not a sociologist. I think perhaps a little bit of thinking from Physics might be helpful.

One word about "democracy". Democracy is not simply giving people a vote, they must have the information available to them to make an

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informed decision. Blair made great play of being democratically elected – false! The CIA and MI6 created a false picture. They were not elected. If the British people had had true information they would never have agreed to the war.

Also you need a degree of freedom of thought both legally and in practice. It is no use voting for a government if the voters vote on ethnic and religious lines. I have a particular country in mind here.

Sociology, the Web and AI. Conjoint Analysis, finding relationships between widely varying parameters is now mainstream sociology (and marketing). Latent Semantic Analysis is closely related to Conjoint Analysis and will place a web page in the form of a set of vectors. Google is now gathering quite a lot of personal information on us. I just wonder whether it could be used for some form of sociological analysis. We have our vectors, how do the vectors for individuals relate.

If combating terrorism is, in the main, the understanding of human behaviour then AI must surely have a major role.

It appears that throughout most of history societies were indeed extremely conservative. Think about it, you may be familiar with the movie "300." But when the Greeks fought the Persians they found out that their traditional shields were stronger, their traditional spears were longer. That gave Greek foot soldiers a clear edge over the standard Persian foot soldier of the time. Decades later, that gave Alexander the Great the confidence that a much smaller Greek army could defeat the Persian empire. In the meantime there had been no change whatsoever in the Persian armoury. Just a little example.

It appears to me that humanity would indeed have stagnated again for long periods, like during the stoneage, if there hadn't been for the periodic influx/invasions of new people's who replaced the previous ones. Innovation what happened appears to have often been driven by such events.

In ancient times it appears people were really reluctant, far more than can really be understood by the modern man, to change. They did stay with what they knew, what their forefathers had used, and in most cases it took the influx of a fresh group of people to make a change.

That doesn't mean there was no communication, after all trading relations were widespread and regular going right back to the late

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stone age. Sometimes people did actually innovate but such events usually were hundreds of years apart.

Something genuine has happened in Modern Times. A change as fundamental as the change which occurred between 50 and 60th. years ago. Nowadays people are far, far more responsive to change, to the adaptation of something new, that before and it's such a huge change that it needs to be called a transformation. It didn't happen all at once, one can trace the first seeds perhaps back to the 15th. century Italy. But since the industrial revolution began in 18th. century Britain the pace of change has been gathering steam and gathering some more steam right since then and there appears to be no going back.

I think this is to an extent due to increased communication.

If we take this temperature analogy of yours, things have been gradually heating up since the 15th. century in Europe, but by the beginning of the industrial revolution and its voracious appetite for innovation temperature has really, really picked up. After all, the industrial revolution does not just drive competition between individual firms, but it puts demand on the people as well, who must compete for the jobs and hence need to stay competitive on the jobs market. In order to do that they must develop their skills.

Indeed they must. In the Middle east as well. The ME, Iran and Saudi Arabia in particular face a crisis because their young people have not been trained for the jobs in the modern world. They could, in theory, take courses from US universities like MIT that have all their courses online. That may be theoretical but the Internet is giving real communication.

When people vote on ethnic or religious lines, that can create a most unfortunate situation. Africa has seen many such cases, often ending in tears. It's a reason behind much of the instability there, i.e. different ethnic or religious groups compete for the control of the state organs, any way they can. When they gain control, they often use that influence to enrich or benefit their own group, usually to the detriment of the other groups. Typical in Africa is that an election results in the rule of the largest single ethnic/religious group, if there is another ethnic/religious group or groups with a sizeable population(s), then what has number of times happened is that members of that group engineer a hostile takeover of the government, i.e. a coup. What then may follow is a series of coups and counter coups, leading to either of the two: a) highly repressive despotic police state under the control of a single ethnic/religious group or b) civil war. Africa has seen a great number of coups, many repressive despots and many civil wars.

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Interesting is how blind the Bush' regime was to the fact that Iraq had a similar history and hence was likely to follow a similar pattern over again. The regime of Saddam was one of the two logical outcomes, now that Bush has ousted him the second logical outcome has occurred instead. Mind you, African history does also show that such civil wars are not without end, but usually it takes years for them to be resolved in some manner.

There is an adage that a country gets the government it deserves. Only a strongman can rule a united Iraq. What was in fact needed was another Baathist who was more susceptible to international pressure than SH.

According to known civil wars outcomes most end with some sort of a victory by one of the groups involved. If the civil war is directed against a government, the government more often than not does win. If the civil war is a communal one like that in Iraq right now, then more often than not the largest groups wins. Sometimes though they end with a settlement, maybe in 1/4 of the instances.

This is the Shiites backed by Iran. The US despite of its dislike for Iran has in fact been its best friend. In fact in many ways a better friend to Iran than to Britain. Iran was balanced by Afghanistan and Iraq, both of which have now disappeared.

I think people are inherently conservative. How change happens is an area for sociological investigation.

That appears indeed most often to have been the case.

One theory is that what did drive Europe, was the constant competition between different states. Many contrast Europe with China, which did admittedly achieve many impressive achievements, but interesting is how old most of them are. It's like that the most productive period was a long period of troubles which began during the latter era of the Zhou dynasty. It lasted till China was reunified under emperor Qin in the year 221 BC. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_china

When unified Chinese authorities appear to have sought stability at all costs which appears to have discouraged innovation. When China was divided the needs of survival of the competing states appears to have driven innovation, like when the Song dynasty was able to survive among others due to some interesting technological innovations, leading to battle victories. That period was ended by the Mongol

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inviation which unified the country for the final time. Perhaps not surprisingly China stagnated under the unified rule of the succeeding Ming and Qing dynasties. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_china

So, I have always liked the idea that Europe was driven towards greater things by the constant wars, internal and external with the various muslim empires. Europe's rise coincided with the falling into stagnation of the other great civilizations. I don't think Europe actually triggered the that stagnation, but it made it's successes easier.

This could be true. China sent a fleet out to explore but did not follow it up. There is also the capitalist system which had first established itself in Italy. There was a real commercial incentive to build better ships and bring back spices from the East.

To what extent do people follow these norms?

It appears that in older times they really were adhered to pretty much in general. In older times people lived the way their grandfathers had done. People didn't expect anything else.

The generational difference in ideas and life experiences that has existed in the modern period is generally unique to that period.

Modern times are really, really very different...more like a transformation of the human experience at quite a fundamental level.

Brought about by communications.

yes but what influence does the herd have? What is the effect of reason? Does a particular sort of person follow the herd? What sort of person think for themselves? Everyone does not.

I think there is a paradox here. People in charge of the military and such things as homeland security on the whole like people to be conformist. In fact society is safer, at least from terrorism, if it is non conformist.

Nothing is for free. All these changes, all this pace, naturally is a strain on society. That strain does understandably come to the surface in some fashion, like anti globalization activism...well the al-Qaeda can be seen in some ways as the most extreme form of that yet.

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Still, would we really wish to return back to the simpler days?

Remember one thing, most people tend to focus their activities. They develop their skills towards a greater depth in a single type of endeavour, typically nowadays. That means they think at less depth on other issues. It's not necessarily stupid or irrational to follow the herd on some issues when it can save your mental energies for other things of greater personal interest.

Often nowadays it's a challenge to achieve people's attention, that may be due to them being distracted by their own interests. That could just as well be an explanation for appearance of herd behavior and people's inattention as alternate explanations like intellectual laziness or stupidity.

This is another of my hobbyhorses. The fact that people do not get a rounded education. Of course people go on courses. The military train regularly and to get to a high command position you have to go on umpteen courses. You would think on the basis of the amount of "time out" the military have they would be the most intelligent and best informed of all members of society, but this is not the case. It is what you learn. It should also be pointed out that in reaching modern times people have also unlearned a lot.

Societies in the past had one view of groupthink. In modern societies some people think for themselves, but they form sub groups which are conformist.

I think that 'conformist' group forming can be a way of saving mental energy. It need not be thus an irrational strategy. Still, there does lie a potential danger in latching onto someone else and to let that someone else think for you. In a way it may be thought of as a kind of outsourcing, i.e. "I don't have time to think about this."

Ian Parker wrote:

Let us look at right/left. I find it odd that the right in America is against immigration and globalization. I think there should be cheaper rates of health insurance for Spanish speakers who are more able to engage in "health tourism". The right is against that. Now it used to be the case that the left was for the state control of industry – wholesale nationalization.

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I personally believe in free enterprise and globalization as the means of raising living standards. I am quite a way to the left in terms of foreign policy. If you look at both questions rationally you will find that they are simply not related. Yet they are obviously related sociologically.

Both the right end of the spectrum and the left have got plenty of internal divisions. Traditionally the left has been divided between democratic and non-democratic forces. The right between conservative and progressive or in other words liberal forces [liberal in the classical sense], the latter being primarily business interest connected. The conservative aspect has long had a strong reactionary tendency. That may now be surfacing temporarily.

Communism was a system of state control which the right opposed. It seems ironic though that this is what they now appear to be advocating.

About suicidal bombers, people who are yet undecided about what direction to take in life appear to be more vulnerable to brainwashing. Have you ever heard about a suicidal bomber who was not young? These people prey on young people who, like I said, are still undecided about what direction to take in their life. In addition, additional factors may play a part. Are they unemployed? Are there great many unemployed like them around, making their prospects to get a job small? Is it widespread the feeling around them that their ethnic or religious is being treated in some unfair way? Have they experienced personal loss, like say a family member being killed by the perceived oppressors? Factors like these appear to increase the chances of a person becoming a suicide bomber.

An example of sociological viewpoint.

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True we need to try and find out more.

Something has to be done about the poisonous propaganda of the jihat sites that are leading to the creation of new terrorists all of the time. The latest ones in Britain are a fresh worrying sign because they were medical students who were working in local hospitals while their studies were still ongoing. They don't fit any of the usual stereotypes over potential troublemakers. However, during the Cold War universities often were a breeding ground for extremism on the left side of the political spectrum. It's though new I think that they can be a breeding ground for religious extremists of such a highly poisonous brand.

It looks like that it has become necessary to orchestrate an organized internet campaign to take down those poisonous sites.

If you are on the Internet you need AI. Google uses it in its search routines. Modern conventional forces, and the fact that insurgents avoid set piece battles has led commentators to suggest that in the new type of war we are fighting conventional forces are as relevant as cavalry in WW1. If you take the analogy further you will find that the more conservative members of the military scoffed at tanks and aircraft.

How do you find a "poisonous site"? I think you need something like Latent Semantic Analysis. You also need to know who is clicking onto it. You need to install a log. You also need to be able to go back and look at who these people have E-mailed, what their circle of friends is. What is the profile of these friends? Can you insert anything into a website which would give a contrary view? I am asking all these questions.

BTW – I find the rise of Hitler fascinating. How did he rise from beer hall putsch to major threat to world peace? What backed him? Ludendorff was a great backer of Hitler yet he was merely comfortably off. He could not have provided the vast sums required by the Nazi party.

A strange combination of forces. To begin with Germans like Russians today didn't have as much believe in the inherent benefits of democracy as say Modern Germans do. They were thus less alarmed by the idea of being controlled by an authoritarian regime unlike how Germans are likely to feel today, but somewhat like what Russians of today appear to feel. Notice the similarity, even though Putin is nowhere

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near as bad as Hitler.

Well, well, well! This underlines the stupidity of people in power. Wasn't the Soviet Union attacked?

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Soviet_war_in_Afghanistan
<http://www.globalresearch.ca/articles/CHO109C.html>

What about the Central Stupidity Agency?

http://www.geocities.com/cpa_blacktown/20000314ciakltimuk.htm

9/11 and the attack on the Soviet Union. Doesn't that tell you something?

The Weimar republic was pretty ineffective on the whole, somewhat like the regime of Yeltzin was in its own time, if perhaps not so badly so in case of Germany. It went through crisis after crisis, not nearly all which were of its making. But Germans experienced it as being weak, somewhat like Russians today experience the years of Yeltzin as having been years of weakness. Remember, early on Hitler was genuinely popular somewhat like Putin today is popular, as the perception was in Germany early on somewhat like the perception is today in Russia that he had brought back the strength of the country, but most importantly he brought them back their jobs...remember Putin's Russia is experiencing an economic boom while human rights are being cut back. Now Russians look back at the Yeltzin years as having been years of failure, somewhat in the same way as I think Germans saw the Weimar years during the early years of the Hitle regime.

The parallel is interesting don't you think? I wonder what will happen with Putin's Russia? He appears to be set to step aside, yet I don't think that is certain to mean he'll actually be going away. Those who will take the presidency may maybe only become frontmen for his actual continued power.

I must admit in light of certain intersting similarities with Germany of the 30s I'm a bit worried about Russia. It does at the present still look pretty weak, but so did Germany in 1933 and for some time after. However, Putin is no Hitler, or rather there is no evidence yet that he has any dreams of military conquest. But, Russia is still a potentially dangerous country. It has a large military potential, a large industrial base even though in number of ways bit obsolete still.

Russia appears to have dreams of power. They want to regain their lost position. At the present they have been seeking power through the use of energy reources. But that hasen't really been working very well.

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Putin is running on empty. Defense spending is 2.7% of a rather small GDP.

Ian Parker wrote:

As far as I know the idea was to strike several flies in one stroke. The presence of American forces in Saudi Arabia had long been very unpopular among Muslims. The intention was to move them to Iraq, permanently. A democratic Iraq would be US's primary ally within the Middle East. The expected economic success under US help would draw in the others, show them that democracy and economic freedom can drive dividends even in the Middle East. Iraq in other words would become a positive example, acting as an ideal for others. In addition to all of that, it was expected that there would be a dividend regarding the crisis in Israel with the Palestinians. Palestinians no longer would get money from Saddam, which was expected to weaken them considerably. And last but not least, it would be shown to all that USA was a force to reckon with.

Last but not least. That to my way of thinking is an extremely cynical argument.

There was a lot of cynicism to all appearances in neoconservative thinking. They apparently dreamt of the time when European powers had the power to dictate terms to the rest of the world. Their favourite precedent is apparently Theodore Roosevelt, who took the Philippines and Cuba away from Spain. Who was the first US president to participate in the infamous periodic great power meetings of the pre WWI years during which literally the world was divided into zones of interest. However, the neoconservatives wished to make the entire world the American zone of interest. Iraq kind of was intended as a demonstration of the American so called 'Hyperpower,' the intention being that USA would from hence forth follow its own interests, that others would just have to go on with that. I wonder if you remember all

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the strange talk which came from the neoconservative crowd just after Bush came into power about all these strings that had been tied to the American Gulliver by all the others lilliputians. They were speaking about the varied international agreements to which USA is a party to and really do to a degree limit US freedom of action. They wanted all these strings away, they wanted USA to redeem its freedom of action. In other words, after the demonstration of power of USA, i.e. its demonstration of its hyperpower status, USA would not be dependent on any rules except for those it would set itself.

So there was a plan. But not like the extreme leftwing say about the energy. It was not either a conquest of the world precisely. Rather an idea for the establishment of some sort of a hegemonic status between USA and the rest of the world. Naturally, USA is and was nowhere near being capable of actually establishing that against the wishes of the world, so that plan wasn't really ever realistic. But as far as I can see, that was what the neoconservatives had in mind. Mind you, as they belong to the brand of US people who think USA is a good power, that USA is a country which is a force for good in the world, they apparently did not see that US hegemony would be a force for bad. It would make it possible for USA to do more good not less. In their own way neoconservatives appear to be idealists.

Probably true.

Agreed. BTW in Iran the youth unemployment rate is 50%. To solve these problems though societies will have to change. Force will in fact put change back.

Hmm, in this light it's perhaps not surprising how difficult it has been to decrease Palestinian extremism. After all, Israelis have clearly been going at it the wrong way. Think about it, they have since the so called second Palestinian 'Intifada' began punished Palestinian in ways which has been detrimental to Palestinian economy, which has made the jobs situation ever more hopeless seeming.

As a result, it's really not at all strange that instability and extremism has been growing among Palestinians. As far as I can see Israelis have been shooting themselves in the foot. The more they punish the Palestinians, the more they destroy their livelihood, the more extremist factions gain power. Yet, Israelis appear completely blind to that quite obvious thing, despite the parallel with Germany of the 30s they ought not have forgotten.

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This I think also illustrates something else. Israel is behaving in the way she is because there is no answer to insurgency other than the imposition of a lock down on society. Society cannot be prtected in any other way. This illustrates the analogy of cavalry in WW1. What is needed is urgent work on an answer. If no answer is found it calls into question the utility of conventional forces.

An insurgency can only be defeated by a hearts and minds approach and economic progress. How do you reconcile this with the security of Israel. I feel though it is also true to say that a lot of security is imposed punitively, is really for show and in the end is counter productive. The Israelis for example could perfectly well take down their Arab–Arab checkpoints in the West Bank. They seem to me to be purely punitive.

– Ian Parker

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