

Which Global Prospect to Bet on: Rosy or Gloomy

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Introduction

"The prophets of doom have overlooked the all-important factor that is certain: Human potential is far from exhausted", so says the Oracle of Omaha (Buffett, 2011). A reasonable metaphor to perceive the nature of upcoming developments is the cycle of seasons. This implies that in the Halal-Marien (2011) debate the probabilities of the Rosy and Gloomy scenarios in the long run are more than 70% and less than 30% respectively. Scholars and activists should aim at the inner world of individuals in any global solutions for fast-forwarding to the Rosy scenario. In other words, people should have and encourage others to adopt an unshakable belief in the possibility of a better world.

Assessing the Trend Analysis

If you read the evidences of support in favor of distinctive upbeat or downbeat scenarios and counting the books and trends cited in the argument, you have to conclude that the joint discussion has a bias in favor of Marien, giving a 20/28 or 70% probability for Gloomy scenario and therefore against Halal, giving a 8/28 or 30% probability for Rosy scenario.

However, there are some important distinctive upbeat works missing from this debate. For instance, Max Singer in his book, *The History of the Future* (2011) argues that starting from 1800 we can observe a long term transition taking place which continue to bring more people from war, poverty, and tyranny in the traditional world into the modern world. The Arab spring is just one indication of releasing the potential of more than 300 million people. It is estimated that Asia's gross domestic product (GDP) may increase from \$17tn in 2010 to \$174tn in 2050, doubling its share of world GDP to 52% (BBC, 2011). Michio Kaku in *The Physics of the Future* (2011) anticipates truly unexpected paradigm shifts and world-changing technologies. His message is simple: You should always embrace for positive surprises in the next decades. Tom Lombardo in *Wisdom, Consciousness, and the Future* (2011) foresees a new collective enlightenment which many futurists describe as a "significant jump in the collective mental functioning of humanity".

People's judged probabilities about scenarios depend a lot on how they are presented. Kahneman and Tversky (2000) shed light on the extreme sensitivity of humans to essentially the

same problem statement, if it is presented differently. Such sensitivity greatly biases our judgment about the uncertain prospects to the extent that Kahneman points out that "the human mind is not designed to achieve coherence." Accommodating multiple languages will only enhance such sensitivity. Clearly as far as the reality is concerned, no matter how much prolific and brilliant observers and analysts are, globally they almost do not exist, unless they publish in English.

The problem statement of Halal- Marien (2011) is just one among numerous alternative metanarratives (see for instance, Bankes, Lampert, & Popper, 2003, Schwartz, 1992, Dator 2009). Dallmayr (2011) describes the world as a huge hospital whose citizens (read patients) need urgent, intensive, and critical care. There are numerous evidences about the impact of metaphors on how respondents judge about the severity of outcomes (Thibodeau & Boroditsky, 2011, Kahane, 1992).

Nonetheless, the cycle of seasons is one of the few metaphors which have weathered the tests of time, if not the test of people who have short life spans and cannot witness that after any great fall there will be a big rise. People are also "born with a restless disposition, whenever misfortune touches them, they are filled with self-pity, and whenever good fortune comes to them, they selfishly withhold it" (Quran: 70:19-21). And they cannot be patient enough to see "the early and latter rain" (Bible: James 5:7, Deuteronomy 11:14, Jeremiah 5:24, Joel 2:23).

The US and Europe powers are slowing down while other countries are struggling to catch up. Seen in this perspective one can expect a global prospect in which all countries gradually join the club of the modern world. The vision of an evenly distributed useful knowledge and good governance across the world cannot happen unless the forerunners wait for the Rest.

In the Halal-Marien (2011) framing of the Global Megacrisis we do not know the objective probabilities of the four scenarios. Therefore, we have to use uncertain prospects to obtain decision weights or nonadditive probabilities. Following Kahneman and Tversky (2000) we can focus on simple prospects of the form (100, A), which offers \$100 if an uncertain scenario A occurs and nothing if A does not occur. After reviewing the strength of the evidence for subscenarios, presented in box 1 and 2, and then constructing my own mental framing and assuming that the exponent of the power value function for gains is 0.88 over uncertain prospects, I settled on these decision weights: $W(\text{Rise to Maturity}) = 0.91$, $W(\text{Muddling Up}) = 0.73$, $W(\text{Muddling Down}) = 0.54$, $W(\text{Decline to Disaster}) = 0.13$. Based on the decision weights for the uncertain prospects involving finer partitions of Rosy and Gloomy scenarios and then by normalizing, the probabilities of Rosy and Gloomy scenarios are 71% and 29%.

Like Halal I am a futurist giving enormous weight to future science and technology advances. In particular, I have argued during the *Reconciling Babel* conference in favor of the increased level of cooperation among diverse human populations thanks to the artificial brain evolution (Motlagh, 2011). Also, I have discussed a finer partitioning of the Rosy scenario in which technologies of consciousness, especially life technology, will make it possible to add fauna and flora consciousness to the future states of the world and therefore further *unpacking* and *increased weight* or judged

probabilities of the Rosy class subscenarios (Motlagh, 2010).

Based on the insights from the prospect theory it is interesting to note that Marien has an *impossible* or *weightless* view of the Rise to Maturity scenario. The *possibility effect* suggests that an argument strategy for Halal against Marien will be to convince Marien that there is a chance, however *miniscule*, that Rise to Maturity may occur. If this impossibility turns to possibility in the mental model or framing of Marien of reality this will have a greater impact on his subsequent modified weighting function or judged probabilities than when Halal invests his time and effort in convincing Marien to make Muddle Down less likely and Muddle Up more likely.

The Global Solution

The alternative metaphors like the cycle of seasons, to be born again and again (similar to the mythical Phoenix), and vehicles with broken engines or flat tires in a car race are not the ultimate solution to *the Global Megacrisis*. Trusting the world governance in the hands of technological innovators means that their solutions will be always in the exterior domains. If there is choking traffic on the roads they will suggest building more roads. If people need happiness they will devise financial instruments to purchase more pleasure. If they ask for more knowledge they will raise the bandwidth cap. They cannot go into deeper layers to change the values that shape the worldviews. If we are too impatient to witness in our life time the next big rise, reborn, and getting the growth vehicles back on the road, then the global shortcut solution lies definitely in the education of social innovators. These innovators should aim at the "unique inner world of individuals, the hidden landscape of human identity, purpose and motivation" because "it is here that global issues are framed and understood." (Slaughter, 2010). Special consideration should be given to the character virtues we especially need to achieve the heightened future consciousness (Lombardo, 2011):

1. self-responsibility (necessary to escape perceived helplessness about the future)
2. discipline and commitment (necessary to combat chaos and relativism)
3. transcendence (necessary to care about the future of humanity and not only one's ego)
4. courage (necessary to face uncertainties and make decisions)
5. hope and optimism (necessary to avoid depression)
6. love (necessary to pull the individual out of solipsistic isolation)
7. temperance/balance (necessary to synthesize analytical skills with intuition and insight)
8. wisdom (necessary to make intelligent and informed ethical decisions about the future)

Scientists at Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute (2011) have discovered the tipping point where a minority belief becomes the majority opinion. Today people who live with the above character virtues and are inspired by a vision of a sustainable and conserver society are in minority. But if they remain committed to such a story and way of life, if they keep an unshakable belief in the possibility of a better world, the moment their numbers hit the 10% mark, the Rosy scenario will become even more likely.

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