

## **Cycles of human societies. Modern times in the light of Glubb's views.**

### **Why and how societies proceed through the same succession of transformation phases**

Yuri K. Shestopaloff

This article originated due to an insightful essay by Glubb, ("The fate of empires and search for survival", William Blackwood & Sons Ltd, © J. B. G. Ltd, 1976, 1977), which is freely available on the Internet. Glubb's observations are taken in a sequence presented in the essay, and then we explore how these considerations relate to our time, if any, as well as provide some observations and thoughts on our own.

We will start from the summary, which he placed at the end of his remarkable work, where Glubb briefly recaps the main features inherent to a life cycle of empires. Of the most interest to us are the signs of the Age of Decadence. The reason is that our goal is to find out, which of the cycle's phases our time belongs to, and, since the Age of Decadence, how it was described by Glubb, shows the most similarity to our times, it makes sense to examine this phase in more detail.

Glubb discovered a well conserved periodicity of phases, through which every empire goes until it is destroyed. He did not know the reasons underlying this (literally vital) for human societies phenomenon. That was addressed by Alexander Kyriakos in his article "The next decadence and its causes", ("Очередной декаданс и его причины"), published in the Journal "Thoughts" ("Мысли", issue 85, [www.shestopaloff.ca/indexrus.html](http://www.shestopaloff.ca/indexrus.html)). A. Kyriakos uncovers the causes of such a definitive life cycle of empires and explains why they follow each other so persistently. The answer, in his opinion, which is supported by convincing proofs, are given by etiology. This scientific discipline studies the evolution of behavior of animals and humans in different habitats. One of the most known scientists in this area is Conrad Lorentz. According to etiology, the behavior of living organisms is guided by instincts, which are the means animals react to different situations.

Alexander Kyriakos presents the hierarchical list of 18 instincts, of which we list the first ten.

1. Procurement of energetic needs.
2. Fear and aggression, which can be exposed separately and together.
3. Sexual (reproduction).
4. Dominance - submission and hierarchy (related instincts).
5. Distinction between own people and foreigners.
6. Religious (understood as the need to explain unknown and uncertainty by interference of supernatural forces).
7. Territorial (protection of the habitat).
8. Individualism (when a person is safe).
9. Collectivism (when a person is in danger).
10. The instinct of acquisition.

Once you memorize these instincts and, during the course of our presentation, become familiar with the phases of life cycle of empires, you will see how well these instincts explain the origin of phases and their transition, when satisfaction of one instinct triggers into action another instinct, then

another, and so forth. For instance, when some group of people is in danger, they tend to unite (instinct 9, collectivism). When the danger is over, people tend to be less collectivistic. Indeed, many people can confirm that individualism (instinct 8) flourishes in safety.

These instincts and their hierarchy explain why the empires' phases are so immanent. The thing is that people react in the same way in similar situations. Such a uniform reaction of all people in the group accordingly triggers similar actions, which can result only in a certain outcome. This outcome, in turn, launches the next phase, to which people (even of different nationalities and in different countries) also react in the same way. And so on, until the cycle ends.

In his studies, Glubb used empires as the subject of analysis. He does not generalize his discoveries for the states in general, but makes the following note in this regard: "At any given time, however, there are also smaller states which are more or less self-contained. Do these live the same 'lives' as the great nations, and pass through the same phases? In general, decadence is the outcome of too long a period of wealth and power. If the small country has not shared in the wealth and power, it will not share in the decadence."

The last decades of Western societies, as well as historical examples, clearly showed that the cycle, inherent to empires, is also the propeller of life cycles in smaller states. A. Kyriakos expresses a similar thought in his work as follows: "Similar transition phases experience not only empires, but all societies, which were lucky enough to have a prolonged period of stable development (possibly, the same ten generations, or 250 years)". Indeed, if we take a look at the modern world, it seems that the wealth, and, to a lesser extent, the power, are the causes of eventual decadence of states in general, and even smaller groups united on other grounds.

So, here is the Glubb's summary.

### *"Summary*

As numerous points of interest have arisen in the course of this essay, I close with a brief summary, to refresh the reader's mind.

- (a) We do not learn from history because our studies are brief and prejudiced.
- (b) In a surprising manner, 250 years emerges as the average length of national greatness.
- (c) This average has not varied for 3,000 years. Does it represent ten generations?
- (d) The stages of the rise and fall of great nations seem to be:

The Age of Pioneers (outburst)

The Age of Conquests

The Age of Commerce

The Age of Affluence

The Age of Intellect

The Age of Decadence.

- (e) Decadence is marked by:

Defensiveness

Pessimism

Materialism

Frivolity

An influx of foreigners

## The Welfare State

A weakening of religion.

(f) Decadence is due to:

Too long a period of wealth and power

Selfishness

Love of money

The loss of a sense of duty.

(g) The life histories of great states are amazingly similar, and are due to internal factors.

(h) Their falls are diverse, because they are largely the result of external causes.

(i) History should be taught as the history of the human race, though of course with emphasis on the history of the student's own country."

Overall, for me, the Glubb's essay and the article by Alexander Kyriakos helped to form a broader and clearer view of the life cycle's dynamics, inherent to human societies. (Actually, similar cycles are inherent to not only humans, as A. Kyriakos describes in his article, recalling the famous experiments with the "mice paradise" - "Universe-25", conducted by John B. Calhoun.) In this my view, the underground invisible machine, whose "cog wheels" move historical "assembly conveyor" from one phase to another, is represented by a succession of human (or, in a general case, by animals') instincts, each instinct "passing the baton" to the next one, once the previous instinct is satisfied. Of course, when we say "instinct", we mean rather a complex hierarchical combination of interrelated instincts, of which a certain group dominates in a particular period. Such, the reproduction instinct presents all the time, but when the survival is of primary importance, the reproduction instinct is subdued, but it does not disappear, and once the first chance appears, it manifests itself - even in conditions, which in normal circumstances would not be suitable for that.

Since the millions of years of evolutionary pressures programmed the human nature to act in about the same way in similar circumstances, all members of society respond very similar to inputs from the same environment they live in. Even more, this uniformity of the response is further enforced by the inherent sociality of human nature (or the animals' one). The evolution in a group of similar creatures developed an instinct to readily comply with social norms and views, which is understandable, since opposing the group's opinions would mean risking to lose community's loyalty and the place in a social niche (which in ancient times, and in many instances in ours, could be equated to a suicide). Note that leaders also comply with the general vision; they just address the desired societal needs in a different - leading - way. This is how this "underground societal machine" works - satisfaction of one instinct triggers another instinct, which in turn triggers another, and so forth, until the instincts supporting life continuation are present. Once the society reaches the phase when no such stimulating instincts are left, it decays.

However, the workings of this machine are not visible on the surface, at the level of the "assembly conveyor". Even the mere existence of this "conveyor" often is not admitted. People see their societies either as stable formations, or as the ones that change, but rather randomly and unpredictably. At best, people perceive life of societies as a sequence of cycles with predefined durations, without understanding the nature of such a cycling. People try to find explanations of societal events in economics, politics, technological progress, environmental conditions, globalization (the refined successor of colonialism), logical human reasoning, etc. This is certainly

true that these factors affect societal life and change the pace of societal transformations. However, it seems that these are rather more ripples and disturbances on the major sea waves, than the waves themselves. Technological advances can accelerate the pace of wealth accumulation, but that won't cancel the advent of the next phase.

One of the most common prejudices people have is that humans are fundamentally different from animals, because of the high developed reasoning, abilities to abstract thinking, etc. In fact, then, many animals have reasoning abilities, so to say - otherwise they won't be able to survive. Indeed, there are people who could exercise reasoning and even follow certain logical constructions - to a certain threshold though; there are also people, which by their nature are sensitive to collective needs and share collective values, and even ready to consciously sacrifice themselves for the society's needs. However, such people are in the smallest minority, for one thing, while the present environment is very much shaped by different kind of people - individualistic, insensitive to truly human values, having dictatorship mentality, and valuing above all an individual prosperity, achieved by all means, including the most brutal, ruthless and inhuman ones, while praising themselves on such barbaric destructive and parasitic attitudes on ethnical, religious and alike grounds. As a renown physiologist S. V. Saveliev said, "Inside us, a very big primate and a tiny human live in". So, although, yes, rare humans exercise high level reasoning, in many aspects, and some people - in certain areas of activities, like mathematical and other professional skills, they are in a minuscule minority, and have no impact on the mainstream flow of the humankind life, by and large defined by primordial animal instincts (especially in the present life of many Western countries, which show little common sense and reasoning - in many aspects). Even a good general reasoning has little effect on individual human's instincts and behavior in general, while the specialized knowledge and professional skills have no effect at all; examples of professionals who could make sound judgments of general nature are extremely rare, although people readily accept "wisdom" of known movie actors - another vivid evidence of humans' thinking inabilities.

Thus, gradually, the realization came to me, that the most fundamental factor underlying life of societies originates from the innermost human nature - evolutionarily developed instincts, - and that the first thing to look into is what the current historical societal phase is. Once that perspective was cleared, the previously observed facts and trends of life neatly fell into this precast form of transition phases. The understanding came that those things around me are such just because this is what they have to be like in this particular societal phase. We may complain for the lack of honesty and decency, or manliness in our time, or about deterioration of a national spirit, but if we live in time of decadence of an entire society, this is exactly how things should go.

So, this article is an attempt to convey my discovery experience, so that others, willing and able to understand the most fundamental causes of societal changes, could discover this for themselves. Then, applying "smaller waves and ripples", one could better comprehend the society he happened to live in at a particular time, its dynamics, and foresee the direction of changes; at least for the purpose to be prepared for incoming changes, and to make a better use of the given life.

In our study, first, we go through the earlier stages, in order to acquire the context. Throughout the text, we intensively use citations from the Glubb's work.

## ***The Age of Pioneers***

*Glubb*: "The new conquerors are normally poor, hardy and enterprising and above all aggressive. The decaying empires which they overthrow are wealthy but defensive-minded."

He illustrates his point giving an interesting example:

*Glubb*: "In the time of Roman greatness, the legions used to dig a ditch round their camps at night to avoid surprise. But the ditches were mere earthworks, and between them wide spaces were left through which the Romans could counter-attack. But as Rome grew older, the earthworks became high walls, through which access was given only by narrow gates. Counterattacks were no longer possible. The legions were now passive defenders."

*Author*: In my view, a combination of factors is required in order for such a conquest minded group (united on ethnical and other grounds) could originate. First of all, there should be human resources, and large numbers of young people in particular (As V. Shestopalova rightly noted), whose energy always requires realization, as well as lack of material resources, which could stimulate actions directed towards their acquisition. In case of conquests, the energy has to be channeled into appropriate actions (like military one), but in order for such actions to be effective, a military machine (or another appropriate "infrastructure", appropriate for the purpose) has to be in place too, as well as the subject of conquest. In case of Arabs, their opponents, both Persia and Byzantine, were much weakened by a twenty years war, so that it was not probably too difficult to conquer them. In case of Macedonians, winning over Greeks first, and then Persians, apparently required a better military capacity, since the opponents were strong too. However, Macedonians had decades of previous permanent wars, on the brink of their entire destruction, when they virtually lost almost entirely their territory, and their military brotherhood been the only hope and means of their survival. The need forced to do a clever adaptation of the best available military strategies and weaponry - from Greeks, and their following development (first of all the innovations introduced by general Epomomendus from Thebe, where Philipp the Second was held as a hostage for several years, and had the opportunity to learn these innovations in detail). Such a demanding environment eventually created the whole pleiad of very capable generals, without whom Alexander the Great won't be able to establish Macedonian Empire.

In our time, the initiators of Arab Spring were young people, whose population grew tremendously in the last decades in those countries. The energy was abundant. However, it ended nowhere, since there were no organized channels to funnel this energy to, but elusive "democratic" values, skillfully used by provocateurs of different origins for their own selfish purposes.

Another necessary condition of a successful "outburst" and conquest is an idea appealing to all participants, like a high divine mission, or an idea of expansion, dominance, superiority, etc. It is wrong to think that such massive movements can be done by a command of a mere government power. By no means. There has to be an enthusiastic will of a nation or an entire group in order for such long military or other campaigns to be effective. Without the leadership, such a will ends nowhere, that note from the critics, and from B. P. Tsvetkov in particular, is correct. However, without the appropriate inspiration of wide masses, no leadership can accomplish much too. Such

was a spirit of French during Napoleonic wars, and the overall enthusiasm before the First World War, or Germans' enthusiasm when they launched the Second World War.

B. P. Tsevtkov is certainly right in his critics that numerous reasons influence such developments. However, these reasons have priorities and hierarchical structure. We are trying to find the most fundamental reasons, causing such persistent cycling of empires and smaller states. It is clear that if there are no people in a certain state of mind, then there are no certain phases of their societies. These states of mind, indeed, are caused by the environment, but the thing is that these are people themselves, who very much create such environments by their previous actions. Yes, if people's land is dead poor, if the soil is futile, climate is harsh, if they always live in ultimate hardship and wars, while their population grew nonetheless by leaps and bounds, then, of course, they will be much more inclined to conquests, than when they used to live in prosperity and abundance of all kinds of resources. However, what happens next, is a very persistent succession of developmental phases, very much regardless of climate and other environmental factors. This is what we are trying to uncover - the fundamental level *societal* causes, propelling human societies through such cycles, whose persistency is convincing enough to assume that such causes, indeed, really exist.

Glubb's work is one of the evidences, but it is far from being a single one. Yes, there are more variations in the history of empires and states, as B. P. Tsvetkov pinpoints, apart from the ones exposed by Glubb. However, that by no means rejects an idea of a very definitive succession of phases inherent to them. This succession can be interrupted by external factors, like climate catastrophes (recall Maya empire), invaders (Spanish conquest interrupted the natural development of Aztec's empire), so that we will never know, what would happen if such events did not occur, but, again, that does not dismiss the idea of successive phases.

It is mentioned elsewhere in this article that people used to think of the reasons of changes in societies in terms of rather subjective factors. It is always more difficult to get to a deeper level of truly core, fundamental causes, and master *their* understanding. This is a normal thing for a human mind though, whose natural state is rather to be in extreme conditions, like either ultimate conservatism, or very much related to it an ultimate faith in a desired promised miracle. That's our human nature, what can we do? Nonetheless, there are some criteria of scientific truth, and one of them is that the more fundamental level causes we consider, the less the number of such causes is. In this regard, with ours and Glubb's approach, we significantly reduce the number of possible causes of societal changes, compared to long lists of factors B. P. Tsvetkov suggests. If we follow his advice, we would rather quickly drown in their hardly manageable multiplicity, without accomplishing anything.

So, these are conditions in order for the Age of Pioneers could happen: human energy and resources, which is much associated with large numbers of young people; the need and desire for material and other resources; means and structure to organize and channel this energy; an inspiring idea, in one way or another penetrating into everybody's mind; the suitable subject of conquest (military or otherwise). A complex of different primordial human instincts stands behind such developments, like self-preservation - survival, reproduction, territorial instinct, acquisition of resources, zest for power, etc, but they are there, they stimulate real action, and if not for them, nothing would happen.

Let us take a look at the modern Western societies from the perspective of this Age. Western societies are certainly not in the Age of Pioneers, but rather we may notice signs of defensiveness. The present desire of Americans to built walls is certainly defense-minded, while not a while ago these were armed Americans, who were crossing the same border in big numbers. Now, they just very clearly exhibit an ancient instinct to protect what they already acquired from the intruders, that's it. The preoccupancy of Europeans by their own environment and inability to make it in a way they would like to also speaks about defensiveness.

On the other hand, the active (and, in many instances, even aggressive) interference of Western countries into affairs of foreign states seemingly contradicts the above statement. In fact, there is no contradiction. This interference is done for business, serves business interests of super wealthy elites. The societal phase is defined by the prevailing mindset of an *entire* population, and it is definitely not a conquest-minded one; the public does not want to go overseas to fight for acquisition of new vassal territories with resources for their riches, whatever appealing reasons they can be presented. It did not used to be this way. As Major General Smedley D. Butler of the U.S. Marine Corps witnesses in his book "War is a Racket", there was more enthusiasm before, when the empire actively expanded. He wrote: "I spent 33 years and 4 months in active service as a member of our country's most agile military force – The Marine Corps. ... I helped make Mexico and especially Tampico safe for American oil interests in 1914. I helped make Haiti and Cuba a decent place for the National City Bank boys to collect revenues in... I helped purify Nicaragua for the International banking house of Brown Brothers in 1909-1912. I brought a light to the Dominica Republic for America sugar interests in 1916. I helped make Honduras right for American fruit companies in 1903... Looking back on it, I feel I might have given Al Capone a few hints."

Even in the United States, there is no such an expansionist general mood anymore. People are much more inclined to deal with their own problems at a homeland, not abroad. Media is trying to revive and agitate such imperialistic expansion feelings; to some extent, it succeeds, but not much really. There is always a fraction of people in any nation that could be easily provoked into a psychotic state, and that what the media effectively does for the dissemination of an idea of overseas' dominance. The rest of people, in my view, are just manipulated to switch their attention from the problems at home to something else, like blaming the next escape goat from the overseas. (There is a clear sign of moral deterioration in such actions, of which we will speak later.)

Besides, the neocolonial imperial politics started not yesterday (the "empire" in this context is not my invention; that was an American patriot Professor Rufus, who called the modern United Stated an empire). There are many institutions that support this activity; in fact, this is a huge political, military and economic machine, which cannot be stopped at once; the system has an enormous inertia, and still certain, although rather much deflated, efficiency with regard to the purpose of its creation - making fabulous profits for the riches through the military and political dominance in foreign countries. Well, this is the occupation most of the world is busy now with, following the leaders' example. On the other hand, with the right national governments, and using the weakening of imperial power and advantages given by technological developments, there is a possibility for exploited countries to get to a brighter future, as examples of some Asian countries demonstrate.

So, despite the overseas presence, the overall dominating mood of populations of Western countries is certainly a defensive one. It's just that the old myths are extremely durable things, which

are very hard to die, that people in Western countries still perceive themselves and their countries as the only indisputable leaders and possessors of all what is "good and right" in the world. I am not attempting to lower down the role and importance of the Western world for the human civilization, but rather to awake some sensible to merciless logic souls that the situation has been changed long time ago, and not for the better, and that this is not the right time for displaying hubris and arrogance in any area of life. Unfortunately, this is what happening with the Western world these days, although their internal affairs are not really in a good order. Without admitting the problem, there is no way solving it.

The true indicator of a certain Age of empire is that the overall mood is shared by population and propagates to other areas of life, which Glubb describes as follows.

*Glubb:*

"But the new nation is not only distinguished by victory in battle, but by unrelenting enterprise in every field. Men hack their way through jungles, climb mountains, or brave the Atlantic and the Pacific oceans in tiny cockle-shells."

"Other peculiarities of the period of the conquering pioneers are their readiness to improvise and experiment. Untrammelled by traditions, they will turn anything available to their purpose. If one method fails, they try something else. Uninhibited by textbooks or book learning, action is their solution to every problem.

Poor, hardy, often half-starved and ill-clad, they abound in courage, energy and initiative, overcome every obstacle and always seem to be in control of the situation."

"The first stage of the life of a great nation, therefore, after its outburst, is a period of amazing initiative, and almost incredible enterprise, courage and hardihood. These qualities, often in a very short time, produce a new and formidable nation. These early victories, however, are won chiefly by reckless bravery and daring initiative."

"The methods employed tend to be practical and experimental, both in government and in warfare, for they are not tied by centuries of tradition, as happens in ancient empires. Moreover, the leaders are free to use their own improvisations, not having studied politics or tactics in schools or in textbooks."

*Author:* If we look at Western countries from this perspective, we could see entrepreneurial activity, especially in IT sphere, computers, biotechnology, pharmaceuticals, and some other areas. Nonetheless, there is no feeling that this activity is shared by populations at a *spiritual* level, that there is a national feeling of association with these apparently remarkable developments. We could rather observe that even among employees of such prosperous corporations there is no much enthusiasm, but mostly "work for hire". Of course, there are always a certain number of people, especially younger ones, which like technology for its own sake and are thrilled to work with it. However, the overall trend is defined not by them, and the presently dominated mood can hardly be



called a nationwide enthusiasm. In the same way, the riches of known high-tech companies in California do not spill on the streets of cities they are housed in.

It is good that new technological niches are discovered, since they provide certain opportunities for people's self-realization and income. We have the only life, and, regardless which historical period we happened to live in, it makes sense to make our lives as happy and meaningful as possible. It was always like this; good times are not permanent, but rather an exception in human history, and that should not be an obstacle to live a good and happy personal life - according to circumstances. For that, one has to somewhat detach himself from the society, or leave to another more suitable place, but the thing is that having better life is possible.

The key feature we should look at is how these technological advances relate to the *whole* nation, and how much good, if any, they do for it, not only for the owners of transnational corporations, who are the major beneficiaries of technological developments. In this regard, we can see that the individual and corporate interests are at the center of economical activity. It does not contribute to nation's development, but rather the opposite occurs in many instances - these interests are much procured by depletion of nation's resources. For instance, much of the industrial production was moved to overseas with cheap labor, which definitely jeopardizes national interests. As famous Russian scientist D. I. Mendeleev, who invented the Periodic Table and made several other important discoveries, wrote, the wealth of nation comes not from farming, but from industrial production. For the present time, we can add to his words about farming also the service sector, which is obviously not the source of national wealth, but just the ongoing redistribution of available resources between different parties.

By moving industries abroad, corporations transform once industrialized countries into markets for the goods produced abroad - the feature, which was always considered as the main specifics of colonial countries. This way, formerly industrialized countries, and Canada is one of them, de facto become markets for developing countries. It does not matter that some overseas factories could be owned by Canadians; in terms of direction of flow of goods, it's all the same old colonial way. Besides, such an ownership situation is not permanent, and, with the wise domestic policies, as the example of enterprising China shows, those factories sooner or later will be duplicated by locals, or will change the ownership to a domestic one.

The situation in science, of which the author has familiarity, hardly corresponds to the spirit of Age of Pioneers. The research activity is a well defined and bureaucratically formalized process. There is no "readiness to improvise and experiment", as Glubb said, on a grandeur scale in the present science, but rather dogma and stability dominate in most disciplines. Even in new promising technological niches, the atmosphere of stability and formality is well presented, and individual and corporate interests are rather the main research guidelines. Saying this, we have to add that there are still many scientists enthusiastic about their research, which is a good thing. However, prevailing, scientific activity is mostly considered as the source of stable income and non-stressful life. Overwhelmingly subsidized by governments, scientific studies are just one of the few financial resources presently available in many Western societies, besides the government jobs (since the former major source of wealth, the industry, much gone), and so the competition for the possession of these scarce resources is fierce. And really it is. The cycle is vicious: *less resources > more competition > tougher life > less moral restrictions observed > deterioration of societal institutions > less and scarcer resources*, with amplification of the effect in each next cycle.

Would it be possible to break the circle? Unlikely; the human nature is such that it won't zoom, unless it miserably falls. Glubb says in this regard the following: "Could not the sense of duty and the initiative needed to give rise to action be retained parallel with intellectual development and the discoveries of natural science? The answer is doubtful, though we could but try. The weaknesses of human nature, however, are so obvious, that we cannot be too confident of success. Men bursting with courage, energy and self-confidence cannot easily be restrained from subduing their neighbours, and men who see the prospect of wealth open to them will not readily be prevented from pursuing it."

I could give real examples of how the general societal mood affects the teaching and scientific quality in formerly renowned departments of established universities. It's amazing, how quickly, drastically and in unison the quality of professorship fell, just within a few years.

### *Age of Commerce*

Glubb makes an interesting note, which looks a little bit standalone in our context, but it worth mentioning nevertheless.

*Glubb:* "The present infatuation for independence for ever smaller and smaller units will eventually doubtless be succeeded by new international empires."

Well, when a society deteriorates, it can be taken over easily both from the inside and by the outsiders as well. There are many possible ways of conquering other nations these days, even without armory and bombs. Examples are plentiful.

*Glubb:*

"The first half of the Age of Commerce appears to be peculiarly splendid. The ancient virtues of courage, patriotism and devotion to duty are still in evidence. The nation is proud, united and full of selfconfidence. Boys are still required, first of all, to be manly—to ride, to shoot straight and to tell the truth. (It is remarkable what emphasis is placed, at this stage, on the manly virtue of truthfulness, for lying is cowardice—the fear of facing up to the situation.)"

"Boys' schools are intentionally rough. Frugal eating, hard living, breaking the ice to have a bath and similar customs are aimed at producing a strong, hardy and fearless breed of men. Duty is the word constantly drummed into the heads of young people."

"Daring initiative is shown in the search for profitable enterprises in far corners of the earth, perpetuating to some degree the adventurous courage of the Age of Conquests."

"There does not appear to be any doubt that money is the agent which causes the decline of this strong, brave and self-confident people. The decline in courage, enterprise and a sense of duty is, however, gradual."

"The first direction in which wealth injures the nation is a moral one. Money replaces honour and adventure as the objective of the best young men."

*Author:* Mentally, the Age of Commerce is a very much the continuation of Age of Conquest; the mindset is about the same, and the complex of instincts stimulating activity too. Such, the need for material resources is still not satisfied; the Conquest just created conditions for its satisfaction, since the loot maybe provided fortunes, but for the leaders and - maybe - some close people only, like in case of Alexander the Great. The rest did not get much, as usual. Companions of Cortes received nothing at all but debts, for instance ("The Conquest of New Spain" by Bernal Diaz is a very good and honest book in this regard.)

Indeed, today, money in the Western societies acquired the importance well beyond their real value; in fact, in awful disproportion compared to other vitally important societal virtues and life necessities, like citizenry responsibilities, loyalty to society, societal activity, communal ties, generations' relationships and succession, etc. Money much became the focal point of individuals and governments alike. The real solutions of problems in many ways were substituted by money allocation, and this is what many governments see as their the main duty - to rightly allocate available public funds, with a wrong idea at the back of their minds that once the right allocation of funds is done, the problem will be solved. However, the experience shows that this is not the case. Money is an abstraction; this is the means of relating real values to each other, but not the real value in itself. Such a delusion is forgivable for individuals, but not for the state people, who should understand where and how the real national wealth and the state prosperity are created.

This conviction about supremacy of money and monetary policy goes hand in hand with another extreme delusion about the material wealth as the only thing, or at least the far more important thing than all others taken together, which people need in their lives. It is doubtless that a certain level of material prosperity is needed for a normal life. However, people need no less many other things for normal life, like good family, communal relationships, intellectual developments, feeling of association with other people through different means, etc. Chasing only material gains, people severely impoverish their lives and lives of those nearby them. Imagine a state where the everybody's goal is to become rich by all means. A deplorable society it will be, in which a normal human being would unlikely to survive, unless he joins this race of mad rats.

So, according to Glubb, Western societies are either at the very end of Age of Commerce, or already moved to the next phase - The Age of Decadence.

### *Age of Affluence*

Once the wealth is accumulating, new riches begin to use it for their own pleasure, vanity and material displays, confirming their superiority, of which they are now ultimately believe, given their achievements. The combination of instincts for dominance, power through public recognition, respect, etc flourish in a full bloom, replacing the previously dominating complex of instincts supporting survival and material gains.

*Glubb:*

"Gradually, and almost imperceptibly, the Age of Affluence silences the voice of duty. The object of the young and the ambitious is no longer fame, honour or service, but cash."

"Education undergoes the same gradual transformation. No longer do schools aim at producing brave patriots ready to serve their country. Parents and students alike seek the educational qualifications which will command the highest salaries.

Enough of the ancient virtues of courage, energy and patriotism survive to enable the state successfully to defend its frontiers. But, beneath the surface, greed for money is gradually replacing duty and public service. Indeed the change might be summarised as being from service to selfishness."

"Another outward change which invariably marks the transition from the Age of Conquests to the Age of Affluence is the spread of defensiveness. The nation, immensely rich, is no longer interested in glory or duty, but is only anxious to retain its wealth and its luxury."

"Money being in better supply than courage, subsidies instead of weapons are employed to buy off enemies. To justify this departure from ancient tradition, the human mind easily devises its own justification. Military readiness, or aggressiveness, is denounced as *primitive and immoral*. Civilised peoples are too proud to fight. The conquest of one nation by another is declared to be *immoral*."

"In fact, however, history seems to indicate that great nations do not normally disarm from motives of conscience, but owing to the weakening of a sense of duty in the citizens, and the increase in selfishness and the desire for wealth and ease."

*Author:* However, these people forgot that, as Glubb said, "The weakness of pacifism is that there are still many peoples in the world who are aggressive."

### ***The Age of Intellectualism***

*Glubb:*

"The ambition of the young, once engaged in the pursuit of adventure and military glory, and then in the desire for the accumulation of wealth, now turns to the acquisition of academic honours."

"Wonderful and beneficent as was the progress of science, it did not save the empire from chaos."

"As in the case of the Athenians, intellectualism leads to discussion, debate and argument, such as is typical of the Western nations today. Debates in elected assemblies or local committees, in articles in the Press or in interviews on television - endless and incessant talking."

"Men are interminably different, and intellectual arguments rarely lead to agreement. Thus public affairs drift from bad to worse, amid an unceasing cacophony of argument. But this constant dedication to discussion seems to destroy the power of action. Amid a Babel of talk, the ship drifts on to the rocks."

"In a wider national sphere, the survival of the nation depends basically on the loyalty and self-sacrifice of the citizens. The impression that the situation can be saved by mental cleverness, without unselfishness or human self-dedication, can only lead to collapse."

"Thus we see that the cultivation of the human intellect seems to be a magnificent ideal, but only on condition that it does not weaken unselfishness and human dedication to service. Yet this, judging by historical precedent, seems to be exactly what it does do. Perhaps it is not the intellectualism which destroys the spirit of self-sacrifice - the least we can say is that the two, intellectualism and the loss of a sense of duty, appear simultaneously in the life-story of the nation."

*Author:* So, many people got material prosperity, public recognition, own lots of properties, acquired lots of exquisites. Now what? What is going to come next? In Russia, new riches started acquiring diplomas confirming their high intellectual capacity, like Ph.D diplomas, Doctors of Sciences, Professors' certificates (and many got - or bought - several degrees in quite different disciplines!), published books (written, guess, by whom?), so that the prestige of these degrees and quality just plummeted, since everybody understood that that were money, which "earned" these degrees, but not the intellect. So, what we see at work here, is the same instinct for power and dominance, but in another, not yet developed area; this is it. If the fashion of the day would be expensive cosmic trips (safe, of course), then riches would be flying around the Earth in masses, have no doubt about that. This is just the means of realization of the same instinct, and those who can satisfy it (by their own brains or through money), would do.

In our days, the intellectualism is not really flourishing. It seems that it passed its heights two-three decades ago. What we are really witnessing now, is rather a demagogy and endless takings, without any consequences. On the other hand, we can observe a widespread credentialism as a mass phenomenon. Indeed, it flourishes today. Even to do the simplest thing, like a lawn care, one need a diploma or some certificate, and new regulations are coming faster than one is capable to read them. That is the sign of our time. You have to have a sort of permission to do anything, and getting these permissions, often without real need for that, becomes a self-sufficient job, not to mention the procedures, when one must hire a lawyer. Daily increasing bureaucracy prospers; for them, life is good at such times. For the rest, not so.

Here is an example. We needed to get permission from the city to cut a tree in the backyard of our house, standing two meters away, and whose roots were obviously threatening to damage the foundation. Once we paid the hefty fees, a separate payment to arborist, who had to write a report for the city official, obliged to plant two replacement trees of a certain kind, each of no less than so many centimeters in a diameter at a certain height, we received a message that our application will be considered (attention!) in *ten business weeks!* Seventy days! Indeed, we got the permission at the end of ten's week. They promised, they did. No complains. Just to mention. Eleven years ago, in order to do the same thing, we have to call the city, pay hundred dollars, a city worker would come in three days, and would write a permission on spot on a piece of paper. That was it. See what "improvement" is done by now! Sure enough, we paid several times more now, which is of course fair, since the process was so much improved.

Such a ridiculous, from the common sense, way of conducting public services, as well as many other affairs, is a normal thing for the Age and Place I happened to live in. I inclined to think, that, as

far as concerns the country of residence, presently it is in the Age of Decadence for sure. Otherwise, I have no rational explanation for the things that can be readily observed around every day, being this a health care system, or taxes' increases, or deteriorating economy, or education, or infrastructure; the country is just living on its past achievements and material base. The country's blessing, and both the curse, is its mineral resources, which support the way of living and governance, which would destroy most of other countries otherwise. No complains though - the things go as they have to go in the Age of Decadence.

Regarding credentialism and its origin, here is the comment made by a son. He explained the causes of credentialism, and I think he is right in this regard. He thinks that young people are just "guided by what is popular and feasible". Young people do not have many alternatives to education, if they want to somehow succeed in this society. There are no jobs for them in the industry, because much industry was moved abroad. Industrial engineers at the local University, which used to develop diagnostic equipment for the engines in heavy equipment, are doing cancer research now, and that is not a joke, but a fact of life. Resources are scarce, and so the education is rather not an option, but a necessity for young people, one of the few roads left to job offers. (Which come with amazingly modest salaries these days, even for Ph.Ds, whose expertise is in a high demand; but that's how it works: excess in workforce leads to low salaries, low social status and lesser rights and freedoms, if any - how can one exercise his rights and freedoms in this society if he is poor? The answer is - in no way.) There is no wealth for these people in this society anymore; they are late newcomers, and so they have no choice but to fiercely compete with peers for the "limited wealth for new individuals", as my son said.

Regarding the Glubb's note about selfishness. It is certainly applicable to majority of modern Western societies, whose populations, indeed, have little sense of duty. This is particularly true for younger generations. There are several reasons for that, but it is hard to tell, which cause contributed more. The educational system centered on liberal values certainly contributed to this. However, the disorientation of the society, subpar economic situation also added their share. When unemployment among young people is over fifty percent, like in Spain, one would not be too patriotic or excited about nation's prospects, this is understandable.

Intellectualism in itself, or, more precisely, manipulation by abstract concepts, is an apriori self-defeating attitude towards real life. The thing is that the basis of our knowledge and everyday experience is *practice*, which is interaction with objective reality. Whenever we interact with the real world, our actions are always tested by the reality, which gives us feedback, in different ways. Using this feedback, we correct our action, apply it again, receive a feedback, and so on. All real things are done this way - iteratively and incrementally. Normally, we never detach ourselves from the reality, and this is the only way to find a workable solution of a real problem. This is why pure speculations will never work in a real world. (More on that can be found in my articles, in particular in [http://www.shestopaloff.ca/yuri\\_eng/natural\\_philosophy/003InquiryHypothesesValidation4.pdf](http://www.shestopaloff.ca/yuri_eng/natural_philosophy/003InquiryHypothesesValidation4.pdf)).

When we manipulate abstract notions - engage into intellectualism - the only connection with the reality is the previous real experience, somehow incorporated into the abstract notions, if any. Once these notions obtain further development without being tested by objective reality, by practice, they very quickly diverge from reality, thus losing even those bits of it, which could be contained in the initial abstract ideas. There were outstanding people capable to foresee how the future events would evolve. However, they were few, for one thing, and they did not lose the touch with the

objective reality; in fact, their minds were better embodiments of objective reality than that in other people, and *that* was the reason of their success.

So, although the Age of Intellectualism, in principle, can produce some standalone interesting results, like in arts and science, in essence, this is already the beginning of the societal decadence, since such studies are already much detached from the objective reality, from *practice*. At this point, the society lost the grip of the surrounding environment, replacing interaction with the objective reality (which is the only way to get an adequate perception about the surroundings and to perform efficient actions!) by abstract intellectual notions, which is a sure way to disasters.

### ***The Age of Decadence***

Here, we come to the last phase described by Glubb. Whatever areas could satisfy the instincts for power and dominance, all of them are developed now; all those hectic days of competition among vanity are over. Now what? The skills to acquire resources gave the place to skills to spend resources long time ago. And, there is no great need to get new resources at first, while the need arises, no skills to acquire them is left. "With nothing left to seek, possession become dreary", - said the personage in Sinbad the Sailor. Well, such is a human nature, what can we do? Left in vacuum of urgent needs, people can only degenerate, like mice in the "Universe-25" experiment. Use it or lose it, that's the law of nervous activity in any living creature. So, the incoming of pessimism and purposelessness is inevitable. And so it comes. Is it some unstudied instinct of self-destruction? We don't know, but it seems that this is rather a normal reaction of a living organism, when no stimulus is left. Since it not used, it has to collapse, deteriorate. And this exactly what it does.

#### ***Glubb:***

"Another remarkable and unexpected symptom of national decline is the intensification of internal political hatreds. One would have expected that, when the survival of the nation became precarious, political factions would drop their rivalry and stand shoulder-to-shoulder to save their country."

"... sometimes such hatreds are carried into the streets, or into industry in the form of strikes, demonstrations, boycotts and similar activities."

*Author:* When personality degenerates, first thing to lose are social instincts, broader societal creative views, which require special conditions to be developed, intelligence and / or well developed social, collective mentality. Because of their complexity and specialty, such societal instincts are vulnerable; they are doomed to be the first thing to deteriorate. On the other hand, such primitive instincts like hatred, duplicity, cruelty are much more primitive ancient instincts, many residing in lower brains, even in reptilian one. Of course, such instincts would be the first things to survive when the personality decomposes. So, no wonder that hatred becomes one of the most dominant features of deteriorating societies, since it consists of deteriorating personalities. Of course, people whose origins and genotypes are such that such negative qualities are more natural for them, definitely have advantage in such situations.

Interestingly enough, increasing hatred to opposing camps is what we presently observe in the Unites States, as well as in major European powers, although in the former that would not happen on

such a scale, if another presidential candidate won. Nonetheless, the general trend, indeed, is the intensification of internal dirty struggles between the rival parties.

*Glubb: "The influx of foreigners.* One of the oft-repeated phenomena of great empires is the influx of foreigners to the capital city. Roman historians often complain of the number of Asians and Africans in Rome. Same with ancient Baghdad."

*Author:* Indeed, the process takes place. Although there are different reasons for foreigners to come, the higher standard of living (real or imaginable) is the most compelling one - same as in ancient Rome and Baghdad.

The same, Glubb writes, applies to modern (to his time) London and New York.

*Glubb:*

"This problem does not consist in any inferiority of one race as compared with another, but simply in the differences between them."

"the cosmopolitan crowd at the seat of empire exercises a political influence greatly in excess of its relative numbers."

*Author:* In my earlier writings, the same thought is present - these are big cities, which define rules of the game in the whole country.

*Glubb:* "In Baghdad, in the golden days of Harun al-Rashid, Arabs were a minority in the imperial capital. Istanbul, in the great days of Ottoman rule, was peopled by inhabitants remarkably few of whom were descendants of Turkish conquerors. In New York, descendants of the Pilgrim Fathers are few and far between."

*Author:* True, indeed. The same thing happened and is happening in this country.

*Glubb:* "As, with the growth of industry, cities nowadays achieve an ever greater preponderance over the countryside, so will the influence of foreigners increasingly dominate old empires."

*Author:* Even if the industry is not thriving, the process is still the same, since newcomers occupy government offices, and then channel their influence through them.

*Glubb: "Frivolity*

As the nation declines in power and wealth, a universal pessimism gradually pervades the people, and itself hastens the decline."

*Author:* There is some pessimism presently; and it is a dominant mood, indeed. However, the level of pessimism, its intensity, is not such that it deactivates people entirely. The population becomes poorer, and so people by virtue of circumstances have to be busy making their living, which, as any



creative activity, saves them from too pessimistic mood, when their entire capacity is affected. In this case, by not sharing national wealth, actually helps people to stay active and "be in shape".

*Glubb:*

"in the later stages of Roman decline, the whole empire was deeply pessimistic, thereby sapping its own resolution."

"Frivolity is the frequent companion of pessimism. Let us eat, drink and be merry, for tomorrow we die. The resemblance between various declining nations in this respect is truly surprising."

"The heroes of declining nations are always the same - the athlete, the singer or the actor. The word 'celebrity' today is used to designate a comedian or a football player, not a statesman, a general, or a literary genius."

*Author:* Very much true for the modern times!

*Glubb:* "Judging by the time and space allotted to them in the Press and television, football and baseball are the activities which today chiefly interest the public in Britain and the United States respectively."

*Author:* This phenomenon is very similar to what was happening in Rome and Baghdad, as well as in other decaying empires, like Russian empire before the coup of 1917.

*Glubb:* "The works of the contemporary historians of Baghdad in the early tenth century are still available. They deeply deplored the degeneracy of the times in which they lived, emphasising particularly the indifference to religion, the increasing materialism and the laxity of sexual morals. They lamented also the corruption of the officials of the government and the fact that politicians always seemed to amass large fortunes while they were in office."

*Author:* It is hard to say on the scale of corruption, since such information is hidden from the public, but it certainly is present, given the misbalance between the amounts of public funds spent, and the results, like substantial spending on improvement of highways, and the actual state of highway networks. When the city spends 3-5 times more on a kilometer of a subway, than in European cities having much more complicated geological conditions, that tells something, doesn't it? Crumbling infrastructure is another evidence, although it seems that the amount of money spent on it should be sufficient to keep it in a good shape, and even develop new ones, if the funds would be spent properly.

*Glubb:* "An increase in the influence of women in public life has often been associated with national decline. The later Romans complained that, although Rome ruled the world, women ruled Rome. In the tenth century, a similar tendency was observable in the Arab Empire, the women demanding admission to the professions hitherto monopolised by men."

"Many women practised law, while others obtained posts as university professors. There was an agitation for the appointment of female judges, which, however, does not appear to have succeeded.

Soon after this period, government and public order collapsed, and foreign invaders overran the country."

*Author:* Very interesting! The same trend of our time is obvious, very strong, and the policy is strongly supported by officials at all levels.

*Glubb:*

"When I first read these contemporary descriptions of tenth-century Baghdad, I could scarcely believe my eyes. I told myself that this must be a joke! The descriptions might have been taken out of *The Timestoday*. The resemblance of all the details was especially breathtaking—the break-up of the empire, the abandonment of sexual morality, the ‘pop’ singers with their guitars, the entry of women into the professions, the five-day week."

"The people of the great nations of the past seem normally to have imagined that their pre-eminence would last for ever. Rome appeared to its citizens to be destined to be for all time the mistress of the world."

"Seventy years ago, many people in Britain believed that the empire would endure for ever."

"The belief that their nation would rule the world forever, naturally encouraged the citizens of the leading nation of any period to attribute their pre-eminence to hereditary virtues. They carried in their blood, they believed, qualities which constituted them a race of supermen, an illusion which inclined them to the employment of cheap foreign labour (or slaves) to perform menial tasks and to engage foreign mercenaries to fight their battles or to sail their ships."

*Author:* My observations, indeed, confirm this phenomena too.

*Glubb:*

"We have not drawn from history the obvious conclusion that material success is the result of courage, endurance and hard work—a conclusion nevertheless obvious from the history of the meteoric rise of our own ancestors."

"This self-assurance of its own superiority seems to go hand-in-hand with the luxury resulting from wealth, in undermining the character of the dominant race."

*Author:* In our time, in my view, this feeling of superiority is even further amplified by the mass media and the state propaganda. This is understandable - such a feeling would allow uniting the population and make it more manageable for the governments. It also serves as a compensation for the hardships of life and lowering living standards. Technological advances made propaganda and brain-washing very effective means of misinforming, controlling and disorienting populations in the desired for governments ways.

*Glubb:*

"History, however, seems to suggest that the age of decline of a great nation is often a period which shows a tendency to philanthropy and to sympathy for other races."

"As long as it retains its status of leadership, the imperial people are glad to be generous, even if slightly condescending. The rights of citizenship are generously bestowed on every race, even those formerly subject, and the equality of mankind is proclaimed."

*Author:* Oh, yes! Could give lots of examples, but they are well known and abundant around anyway.

*Glubb:* "Thus the Age of Conquests often had some kind of religious atmosphere, which implied heroic self-sacrifice for the cause. But this spirit of dedication was slowly eroded in the Age of Commerce by the action of money. People make money for themselves, not for their country. Thus periods of affluence gradually dissolved the spirit of service, which had caused the rise of the imperial races."

*Author:* The resemblance with our times, indeed, is remarkable. This is not a coincidence, and it cannot be, since so many features are mirrored one-to-one, for one thing. However, there is also another reason. If one thinks for a moment, and recalls the succession of instincts to be satisfied from the A. Kyriakos's list, he would immediately feel an inescapable logic underneath these developments, and a very natural one. This is like with the growth of wealth the channels to which the human energy can be directed are becoming smaller, many are closed, and so the energy, incapable of finding its application, is directed to satisfaction of instincts still left unaddressed, and so the whole society (recall, people are political animals, as Aristotle said) engages into dubious activities. If that is not a Decadence, then, what is that? The famous experiments done by John B. Calhoun with mice (Universe-25 in particular, mentioned in the article by A. Kyriakos) showed the same results, which confirms the explanation given by A. Kyriakos about the primary role of instincts and its succession in the life cycle of human societies.

*Glubb:* "In earlier times, warlike nomadic nations invaded the territories of decadent peoples and settled there. In due course, they intermarried with the local population and a new race resulted, though it sometimes retained an old name."

*Author:* That is an interesting observation indeed, which has some grounds in the modern Western societies, with regard to newcomers and race mixing. Still, there are ethnical groups, whose religion and other considerations prevent such groups from mixing, although many aim to the opposite. In fact, Russia presents an example of a country with such intensive intermixing, especially of its most active and influential population's part, done almost for a century and continuing, and even intensifying, now. The results are interesting, revealing, but probably not very encouraging for the former native population.

*Glubb:* "In our times, there are few nomadic conquerors left in the world, who could invade more settled countries bringing their tents and flocks with them. But ease of travel has resulted in an equal, or probably an even greater, intermixture of populations. The extreme bitterness of modern internal political struggles produces a constant flow of migrants from their native countries to others, where the social institutions suit them better."

*Glubb:*

*"Decadence of a system*

It is of interest to note that decadence is the disintegration of a system, not of its individual members. The habits of the members of the community have been corrupted by the enjoyment of too much money and too much power for too long a period. The result has been, in the framework of their national life, to make them selfish and idle. A community of selfish and idle people declines, internal quarrels develop in the division of its dwindling wealth, and pessimism follows, which some of them endeavour to drown in sensuality or frivolity. In their own surroundings, they are unable to redirect their thoughts and their energies into new channels. But when individual members of such a society emigrate into entirely new surroundings, they do not remain conspicuously decadent, pessimistic or immoral among the inhabitants of their new homeland. Once enabled to break away from their old channels of thought, and after a short period of readjustment, they become normal citizens of their adopted countries. Some of them, in the second and third generations, may attain pre-eminence and leadership in their new communities."

"Decadence is both mental and moral deterioration, produced by the slow decline of the community from which its members cannot escape, as long as they remain in their old surroundings."

*"Decadence is not physical*

Neither is decadence physical. Citizens of great nations in decadence are normally physically larger and stronger than those of their barbarian invaders."

"Decadence is a moral and spiritual disease, resulting from too long a period of wealth and power, producing cynicism, decline of religion, pessimism and frivolity. The citizens of such a nation will no longer make an effort to save themselves, because they are not convinced that anything in life is worth saving."

"Human beings are all different. The variety in human life is endless. If this be the case with individuals, it is much more so with nations and cultures. No two societies, no two peoples, no two cultures are exactly the same."

*Author:* So, what would be the result if people from all over the world are shuffled together? If people are noticeably different in their culture, mentality, or consider themselves different (like Anglo-Saxon and Scottish, for instance), first, in the same way as insoluble liquids do not mix, they apparently have to separate into ethnical communities. Then, once united on ethnical or some other grounds, like a religious one, they begin their fight for available resources, penetrating into the "enemies' camps" and disguising themselves accordingly. Even if such ethnical or religious unions

are not visible and formally do not exist, it all the same - too different mentalities do not merge, and especially when it comes to more individualistic and more primitive mentality, it won't accept more civilized virtues, since it just that the required physiological structures to accept such notions do not exist; since the whole history shaped bodies and brains of such individuals in different ways. This is an utter idealism to think that such fundamental not only cultural, but *physiological* differences can be quickly overcome. So, answering the question, would it be possible to create a uniform population from people with different origins, we should say that this depends on how big and of what kind the differences are. Some differences are compatible, some are not.

To us, this question is important with regard to the issue, do the intermixing of different people influences the transitions from one Age to another or not? According to Glubb, the answer is 'yes' (recall the flood of foreigners to capital cities). Apparently, it depends who the newcomers are, how numerous, and what qualities they bring. If they come to consume the previously accumulated wealth, their coming will quicker destroy the system. If these are hard working and socially minded people, they, in theory, could improve the deteriorating society and prolong its life. However, such people are unlikely to come to such a foreign country to save it from demise. What for? So, we are left with the only answer.

*Glubb:*

"It has been shown that, normally, the rise and fall of great nations are due to internal reasons alone. Ten generations of human beings suffice to transform the hardy and enterprising pioneer into the captious citizen of the welfare state. But whereas the life histories of great nations show an unexpected uniformity, the nature of their falls depends largely on outside circumstances and thus shows a high degree of diversity."

"Any regime which attains great wealth and power seems with remarkable regularity to decay and fall apart in some ten generations. The ultimate fate of its component parts, however, does not depend on its internal nature, but on the other organisations which appear at the time of its collapse and succeed in devouring its heritage."

"The life-expectation of a great nation, it appears, commences with a violent, and usually unforeseen, outburst of energy, and ends in a lowering of moral standards, cynicism, pessimism and frivolity."

***Our Age***

Now back to our goal - to find out, in which Age do *we* live? We observed striking similarities between our time and the Age of Decadence. On the surface, there are also some similar features with the end of the Age of Commerce, expressed as a strong overseas presence - political, military, economic. However, this is rather predominantly the presence of big transnational well established corporations, which is very different from the essence of the spirit of Age of Commerce, when entrepreneurial spirit leads people abroad *in mass*. So, we should rather discard this similarity. It is interesting to note that the Age of Affluence does not show significant presence in the modern Western world, but clearly exhibits itself in rising economies, like construction of the tallest

buildings, etc. Some newer big corporations might build fancy and pretentious headquarters, like a huge sphere, or a torus, but that just mean that *these* particular companies reached their Age of Affluence, while the society as a whole could be decaying.

Let us go briefly through the characteristics of the Age of Decadence observed by Glubb in relation to our time. Indeed, we observed *defensiveness*; the overall *pessimism*, although subdued by increasingly difficult life, which stimulates activity, even if a reluctant one, and, as every meaningful creative undertaking, gives hope; *materialism*, indeed, is a dominant paradigm, but without the desire and probably ability to put lots of efforts to get material gains; *frivolity*, which is expressed in many perverted forms in modern societies; an *influx of foreigners*.

We did not consider this sign before, but the *welfare state* is also a characteristic of modern societies, exhibited in different forms. However, its zenith is over. With current deficits of public funds and growth of corruption, which consumes more and more of public money, the welfare programs are not so generous as before, but still numerous. The bad thing is that the welfare politics is supported by impoverishing the middle class (or, more rightly, what is presently left of it) by imposing more and more taxes and other direct and indirect levies and hardships on it.

A *weakening of religion*, indeed, was taking place until the last decade, when life was more or less comfortable. With the advent of more difficult times, especially after the financial crisis of 2008, the trend turned back, which is a very natural development - in times of hardships, when people feel hopeless and unprotected, many turn to religion and other occult teachings. During good times in previous decades, people somewhat detrained to work productively and proactively; life was easier than it should be to keep human beings in a good shape. In the same way, as mice lost their natural instincts in the experimental study "Universe-25" by John B. Calhoun, people lose many of their survival instincts during prosperity periods.

Regarding the reasons of decadence, as Glubb saw them, we also see an agreement, although with the following specifics. A period of wealth and power did not last for too long in many countries, about three decades in Canada, for instance, but that was sufficient to bring the society to the state of decadence. Selfishness, the next reason, which was much launched by sense of social security and prosperity, indeed, is a trademark of our society, as well as almost irrational love of money, compared with other human virtues.

So, summarizing our analysis, I would conclude that the current Age is the *Age of Decadence* with some secondary order specific features, mostly due to globalization, which spreads certain processes and their germs across many countries at the same time, like spreading of liberal ideas in its extreme and rather stillborn form. There are plenty of features and actions in modern Western societies confirming this inference. To my character and natural aptitude to act rather than to talk, this is obviously not the right place to be at, and actually this is the worst possible place. Still, there are niches people can exploit even in such unfavorable situations. See no reasons for pessimism.

There are other specific features of the decadence of our time. The capitalistic nature of Western societies, decline of industry, and the following shrinking of national wealth, and accordingly weakening of societal institutions, protecting citizens, led to decline of living standards. In such a situation, the society as a whole has to do something to earn their living, conduct some business activities, even though many are of dubious nature. Resources are scarce, and so the competition is tough, ruthless and less and less moral, and like this it is becoming.

Raised in a time of a short lived "Pax Canadian", baby boomers are selling their country in exchange for comfort and security they used to, hoping to get this way to the happy end. They occupied available niches and protect them from intruders, who happened to be young people, the next generation, for whom very little resources are left. So, many, who have energy, knowledge and desire to work, leave the country in search for a better life abroad. Instead of them, newcomers arrive, with different ideas about life arrangement and its purposes.

The country has mineral resources; this is what keeps it on the float. If not for that, life would be much tougher here. This way, the decadence can be prolonged for a longer time, unless the other possible threat (or blessing, depends on how one looks at it), which is overtaking the country by foreigners. In fact, the United States already has a very strong and increasing economic presence in this country, as well as exercising a political power. Other countries very actively increase their economic, political and cultural presence by leaps and bounds, through very different means.

It is very unlikely (actually, impossible) that these trends will change. If so, the country is destined to be taken over by different foreign parties, which will rival in this pursuit. Such struggles (of course, supported by locals loyal to one or another party) could lead to eventual country's disintegration (centrifugal forces always have had strong presence in this country). Depending on how drastic such transformations could be, some newer parts may start fresh from the beginning of the cycle. You never know, what could happen in such situations. Sounds like a nightmare, but I was through this one time, and know how quickly such things could happen - in a matter of several years. For now, the main stabilizer is revenue from mineral resources. Remove them from the picture, and see, where you are? Once the federal government lacks revenue, it immediately loses its grip on the country through subsidies; centrifugal forces are launched, and there are places in this country, where they could start at a full throat right away.

Of course, I do not want such developments, but, as we found out, there is a logic of historical processes and underlying biological and societal mechanisms, which work regardless of our wishes. The Age of Decadence, according to Glubb and my own experience, is never a happy end. What can I do?

### ***Duration of life cycle and modern trends***

What about the definitive duration of the entire life cycle of empires and states? It occurs to me that this is not a so definitive thing, and, especially for smaller states and other entities, it can significantly vary. People can be reprogrammed fast; many can adjust to new conditions even within one generation. See what a radical transformation happened to the mentality of "baby boomers" compared to their fathers! In fact, it took only three generations to go through most of the state's life cycle phases. Look at oil rich Arab states, which pass these phases (in the very same succession!) with jet speed. Technological advances allowed to accumulate wealth much quicker than before. Canada forty years ago doubtlessly was the first rate country. It got to this level much faster than the Glubb's Age hypothesis predicts, but it also went through successive phases much faster too.

It seems that Glubb is right considering the accumulated wealth accessible to most of the population as the main cause of eventual country's deterioration. If this wealth would belong to a small elite, the situation would be very different indeed. Population would remain relatively poor, would have to work hard, and would have neither time nor resources to indulge in luxury and

leisure, which, in a long run, could do good for them and for the country (provided that the rich elite won't decay, but it rather would). On the other hand, if not for the feeling of unity within the young nation and the egalitarian atmosphere, such fast progress of the entire nation in the past would not be possible. Apparently, that was a wonderful time of its sort, when the country was building up itself, aiming at the very top in all its bold endeavors. However, the candle burned fast.

A similarly faster progression through the life cycle occurred in the Soviet Union, although its phases were much more specific compared to the cycle of empires. In fact, it never even approached the wealth accumulation phase. Nonetheless, however specific its phases were, they were clearly present. The main specific was that the transitions from phase to phase did not affect much of the population, but that were the phases of ruling elite's transformation. However, since the elite unquestionably ruled the country, each transformation of elite transformed the country.

Then, we should answer the question, why in the Glubb's analysis the age of empires was so definitive? I think the answer in short is this - this is productivity, which closely relates to technology, creates wealth, for one thing, and how the wealth is distributed among the population, for another. In all empires, which Glubb considered, the common denominator was a manual labor. This means that the productivity was the same throughout the world and through different epochs for a long time. Even if the trade by foreign goods constituted a noticeable share of the country's revenue, the rate of goods' production still was the same throughout the world. Even with machineries of 19-th and beginning of 20-th centuries the basis of wealth creation was a manual labor; even more so was the case for the earlier empires.

The distribution of wealth is another factor affecting the duration of the life cycle of empires (and other entities too, for that sake). Today, transnational corporations make fabulous profits, probably as never before. However, that wealth is not shared with citizenry; even the opposite is true - the growing corporations' power allows them to even more efficiently deplete population's financial and other reserves and resources through monopolistic practices. As a result, people in Western countries are actually becoming poorer than they were before. Inequality increases fast, social mobility standstills, and so on.

### ***New rulers***

So, yes, we live in the Age of Decadence, but the new riches, big corporations, have no intention to show any signs of generosity, as Caliphs did, but rather do the opposite. They amassed fortunes and spread their influence far around the globe. They are not going to sit idle with their enormous financial and material resources; they already intensively use them to buy governments, making coups, change national leaders, making wars (recall the movie "War Inc."), etc. - all for the sake of power, control and more profits. They also pour money to undermine and destroy social institutions, for now protecting ordinary people, like labor laws, minimal wages, education fees, insurance, etc. Furthermore, they apply very effective efforts to make already green light for corporations ever more greener, or even to remove the streetlights from their way, altogether with the posts and restricting signs, in order to completely clear the road ahead. Effectively, they already very much run affairs of many states, and where not, they are working on it, and working hard.

In such situations, when somebody wants to change the course of events and grab the power, an image of an external enemy is an extremely handy thing to have. Threats from the outside, real or



imaginable, allow to easier take control over populations and societal institutions. Frightened people readily give up many of their assets, like freedom, civil rights, material prosperity, in exchange for the promise of security. Only for the promise. (Recall Great Inquisitor by F. M. Dostoevsky; only with that difference that Great Inquisitor gave people *real* promises and hopes.) This human feature was always exploited, in all epochs. Our days are not exception, and this old trick is deployed on a wide scale. In today's mass media, the frightening and terrifying people constitutes one of the main topics, and is a mandatorily hefty chunk of any "news", which these days became highly emotional brain-washing and brainless shows. The very aggressive deployment of this strategy is a sure sign that those behind such campaigns are on its way of taking power. Recently, I came across saying that "History is rewrote in order to rewrite the property ownership later", and this saying is true for other actions perverting the truth.

It seems that these are the most likely rulers of the post-decadence Western world. To a large extent, riches are already its rulers in many countries, but not entirely yet. For now, they are rather in their Age of Conquest or Age of Commerce, and the struggle for new territories and possessions is fierce between them, while the ordinary people, and many governments too, still do not understand what is really happening in this world, and continue to play by old rules, although the game has been changed ever since.

The evidences of such trend are many; corruption of many governments is one of them; falling standards of living in many Western countries, growth of inequality, huge national debts, military aggression, increasing interference into affairs of foreign states, increase of all kinds of taxes for ordinary people, fast increasing prices on food and everyday merchandise, lowering technological standards, deteriorating quality of goods, incessant propaganda, etc. Signs are abundant. Each considered separately maybe is not so revealing, but taken together, they are presenting the whole picture, in which society, and first of all it's the most numerous part, the ordinary people, is definitely a looser, surrendering its rights, property and territories every day. This is done through the intricate system of interconnections between corporations and governments of different countries, numerous alliances, all sorts of institutions and private and public organizations. This is a highly international affair with its own leaders and outsiders, and fortunately with its own disagreements and rivalries. Yet, now, they have lots of resources and a common uniting goal; this is what makes them really dangerous.

So, here is the situation. An interesting one, isn't it? It is definitely not the right time to relax, but to do something to protect your rights and freedoms, whatever is left from them. Governments at all levels, by all means, will not protect you, have no doubt about that. Many are already *not on your side*, and in this country in particular. It is difficult for normal people to live in such times of drastic transformations. But who said, that life has to be easy? People have to stress their brains and bodies - this is how and why we evolutionarily survived and developed, and this is also the only way to live to the fullest. Life is a struggle, and it always was, and so let it be.

## **Acknowledgement**

The author thanks A. G. Kyriakos for his article, B. P. Tsvetkov for valuable comments and critics, which much contributed to the article's improvement, and K. Shestopaloff and V. Shestopaloff for their interesting and insightful thoughts.

## **Appendix**

### *Life cycle of individuals*

It is interesting to note that many personal lives also follow the same route as empires do, if individuals were able to acquire wealth. Almost without exception, they show strong signs of Age of Affluence, Age of Intellectualism (those who are capable of), and indeed, there are lots of examples when such people were reaching the Age of Decadence of their own personalities.

Below are few citations from the Glubb's essay, which do not have direct relevance to our subject, but might be of interest to curious minds.

#### *Glubb:*

"In fact, the modern nations of the West have derived only limited value from their historical studies, because they have never made them big enough. For history to have meaning, as we have already stated, it must be the history of the human race."

"Men can scarcely be blamed for not learning from the history they are taught. There is nothing to learn from it, because it is not true."

"However varied, confusing and contradictory the religious history of the world may appear, the noblest and most spiritual of the devotees of all religions seem to reach the conclusion that love is the key to human life.

Any expansion of our knowledge which may lead to a reduction in our unjustified hates is therefore surely well worth while."