

Arisen from the Ruins

Decline and Fall

There would not be a nuclear event, no horrible act of terror, no sudden drastic change in climate. Simply everything would worsen. This would be similar to the collapse of the Roman Empire.

This collapse would not be so noisy, violent, or immediately catastrophic. It would be more a loss of confidence, which would grow and spread, damaging all the levees and dams of the world's economic, social, and political institutions.

This near future scenario would specifically focus on the collapse of the global economic system, and the decline of the international influence of the USA. The only superpower in the world would become increasingly self-isolated, after it had bankrupted itself in wars of choice, the outsourcing of its manufacturing, and constantly living beyond its means.

The attempts by the US to control oil resources beyond its borders could lead to conflicts abroad, especially with China. In the end, the US would lose significant supplies of oil and gas. This would lead to an economic depression, as every aspect of daily life was dependent on a huge supply of cheap oil. In addition, the enormous amount of imports from China would become much more expensive and unaffordable for the American consumer.

The misguided era of globalization would end, resulting in many fewer economic links and a much greater level of political tensions.

Similar problems would occur in other parts of the world too, particularly in Europe. The European Union could be severely damaged or destroyed by the collapse of the euro. Instead, the hundreds of local cultures that have historically been Europe's greatest strength (and its greatest weakness) could cultivate their own gardens once more.

In the least developed parts of the world, life would go on much as it always did. Local elites would plunder and oppress as usual. The Collapse would mean though, that what was once the First World would become more and more like the Third World always has been.

Borders could be redrawn in countries and regions far too large to be able to continue to sustain themselves economically and politically. Canada might devolve into three or more new political entities: Quebec, Ontario, and British Columbia, for example. Native Americans could claim some of the leftover territory as well, while the populations of other provinces could be cast adrift politically.

What had been known as “The American Way of Life” might end not with a bang, but with a whimper. An economy based on supply lines from distant China is obviously unsustainable and would cause immense damage to American consumers when it collapses. Domestic lifestyles, dependent on cars to obtain every necessity of daily life, would become unaffordable and unobtainable except for the wealthiest part of the population.

Unresponsive governments at the national and state level would become more and more irrelevant. Demagogues would exploit the newly poor and former middle classes with the easy spread of lies through a compliant media, made even easier by misusing the web.

Like the decline and fall of the Roman Empire, most Americans would not be aware that their society was coming apart at the seams. Even for those aware of it, they would try to hold on to what they have: consumption of commodities. Some would even think that system would be worth fighting for to preserve.

Others would take refuge in the bread and circuses of the day, such as “reality tv”, the mass talent shows of amateurs where the audiences believe naively they are selecting the winners, gambling, or at the other extreme, faith in

apocalyptic fundamentalist Christianity, spirituality cults, or circus barkers masquerading as gurus and prophets.

Would there be any alternative to this decay and collapse?

The simple answer is “yes”.

A New Society

Project Alphistia would be a group of like-minded people who would leave behind the chaos and insecurity all around them, and move somewhere new to build a society according to their own ideals. They would call this homeland “Lesenum” and they would call the country they want to create “Alphistia”.

The end of the Roman Empire was followed by what we nowadays call the “Dark Ages”. It was not the end of civilization, although many examples of barbarism could be cited from this period. The main feature of the centuries following the collapse of the Roman Empire was that there was no longer a central authority and the stability that it provided.

The Dark Ages had glimmers of light. One was the monastery. The monastic communities preserved (some) of the learning of the past, and provided stability and subsistence to many who otherwise had little chance of survival. The state was very weak or non-existent, and it was centuries before Charlemagne’s Empire came into existence in just one part of the former Roman Empire, and it did not last for very long. Eventually the feudal system evolved, but that would hardly be a model for future societies.

Out of these ruins of former powerful countries, new and smaller societies could develop. Alphistia would not be a monastery or order of monks, but a small nation-state that would seek to preserve the knowledge of the past, build upon it, and provide a secure and stable life for those who could make their way to its territory. Alphistia would be secular and its “gods” would be knowledge and learning.

Whatever land Alphistia could obtain for itself in the vacuum of the Collapse would be much smaller than the nation states of today. Defending a small amount of land would be easier and more likely successful than for a country with an area larger than a thousand square kilometers. A post-Collapse world would likely be just as dangerous as the era that came before it. There would surely be Vandals and Huns of a new type. Alphistia would have to be able to defend itself, unlike the unarmed monks of old. The smaller the land area, the easier it would be to protect.

No Superpowers

What would become of the dominance of the United States in world affairs? Probably the USA would still exist in some form, much as the Holy Roman Empire existed to a greater or lesser degree in the centuries after the fall of the Roman Empire. But no empire lasts forever, and the ossified political institutions of the US and the inability to control such a vast territory politically or economically would be more obvious with each passing decade. With a gigantic arsenal, including nuclear weapons, it would be hoped that the effects of the empire's collapse would make these weapons obsolete, since the fuel to operate them, and the spare parts to maintain them, would no longer be available. That hardly means that the many millions of small arms would disappear however, and the threats they might cause would be real and dangerous.

China's intention was never to dominate the world politically, although it could be argued it intended to be the world's dominant economic power. But there would be little fear of an invasion of non-Asian territories by the Chinese. China has had its periods of isolationism, and the communist elites may return to such policies for self-preservation. More than anything else, they lust for power in their own country. Russia is only interested in imperialism over the territory of the former USSR. They would be too involved in their own domestic problems to attempt foreign adventures.

Self-sufficiency and Reuse

Alphistia would need to be as economically self-sufficient as possible, although some trade links might develop with neighbors if they were also stable. But the days where manufactured goods made by low wage labor thousands of miles away were then shipped to their markets using scarce fuel would be over and done with. Alphistia would not have a petroleum-based economy, but would instead rely on electrical power from renewable resources. And it would not measure the quality of life based on perpetual economic growth. In many ways it would be a steady-state society. Politically, Alphistia would be democratic and self-governing, although it might need to align itself with more powerful states for its own protection. This would reflect the idea that Alphistia's focus would be local, not global, with vigilance for its self-preservation. However, it would be an independent, sovereign nation.

Even in the Dark Ages there was trade between people living far from each other who could provide products that could not be obtained locally. Alphistia would have such trade too with those who had something desired. Not every product could be made inside Alphistia, due to geographical and climate conditions or technological know-how. But Alphistia would not be a victim of "globalization". Foreign trade would be a small but necessary part of the economy, not the main part of it, and not an Achille's heel.

The history of the twentieth century is full of the misuse of technology. Nuclear energy was probably the most frightening of all, with the USA unleashing the development of nuclear weapons. The use of nuclear energy for peaceful purposes has been an illusion. It created enormous waste which could not be stored securely. Nuclear power plants were prone to accidents and were always targets for sabotage.

The internet was a more useful technology, which could be used inappropriately by individuals and states, but increased connections for people in their everyday lives with others

near and far away. It also provided an exponential growth in information available to ordinary people. Any technological collapse would harm the worldwide connectivity of the web, but local internets could be recreated and much information could be saved and put to use.

The oil-based economies of the twentieth century would be a thing of the past. Like coal, oil and gas are finite sources, and cause enormous pollution.

Alphistia would have a non-petroleum based economy, not only because of necessity, but out of choice. Instead, it would develop hydroelectric sources of power, making use of natural waterfalls and building many dams, large and small. Solar and wind power would supplement hydro power.

These renewable sources are limitless and non-polluting. Together they would provide adequate amounts of electricity to power the Alphistian economy.

Alphistia however, would not be structured for energy wastage. Alphistia would have electric trains and electric cars and trucks, but most households would not have their own private vehicles. A dense rail network and good city planning would make it easy to get around for the average person, along with walking and using bicycles. Houses would be small, and most people would live in apartments with electric heating and lighting from small generators on site, with energy provided primarily from the sun.

The key to any use of technology in Alphistia would be whether or not it would be of benefit to society, not tech for tech's sake, or to provide profits for slick marketers creating obsolescent technology endlessly.

Wherever Alphistia might be located, the leftovers from the previous dispensation would not be far away. Society before the Collapse wasted enormous amounts of its resources and disposed of colossal amounts of what they considered garbage: plastics, machines that were replaced, cars that

were junked, clothing that was no longer the fashion etc. Alphistia would reclaim some of these materials for reuse or reprocess them for new uses. Not everything could be recycled, simply because a good portion of what was left over from earlier days was dangerous or unsafe even when it was new. But Alphistia would not only reprocess what it could from the past, it would do the same with its own resources and its own waste.

A Land of Our Own

Project Alphistia would seek a territory that would be least likely to be harassed by neighbors near or far away. Parts of Canada that are thinly populated might be a possible location, especially areas with a relatively mild climate. Project pioneers would also need to be able to reach the territory in a period when travel would be much more difficult than in recent years.

It would not be easy for people to get to Alphistia if international air routes were disrupted. Since Project Alphistia would welcome people from all over the world, there would likely be people from distant places who would try to reach Alphistia to live. Project Alphistia would exist after the creation of the Lesenum to assist these immigrants.

Alphistia's population would undoubtedly be small. It would be difficult for immigrants to get there, and the territory would not be able to support a large population. Also, all immigrants would have to be committed to Alphistia's core values and be willing to learn the Alphistian language before they immigrated, or soon after. For this and other reasons, all the project's forecasts work with an estimate of about 275,000 people on a territory of about 850 square kilometers.

Alphistia would not be for everybody. People would choose to come to live there, decide to stay, or choose to leave. A small minority would not find that a secular, autarkic, welfare state with its own language would not be how they want to live. They would be free to emigrate. Of course, Alphistia

would be a refuge of stability and civilization in a harsh and dangerous world. It would be debatable whether those who might leave would find the situation better outside Alphistia.

Young people would be encouraged to spend time outside Alphistia, but would always be welcomed back. This would be similar to the culture of the Amish, who gave their young people a year off from their traditional way of life to see what the outside world was like. They called this “rumspringa”. Some of the Amish young people left for good, but the majority came home. That would be the purpose of “rondlokse” as well. Once a young Alphistian could see for himself or herself the chaos and cruelty of the outside world, most would be happy to return to the Lesenum.

The world of the past and the world of the near future share common traits: uncertainty, instability, fear, cruelty, and want. Alphistia would be a refuge from such a stormy world. It would do its utmost to create a secure life within its borders, and to preserve that. The people who would live there would want such security, and would choose that over the “freedom” of the chaos and inhumanity of the recent past and current outside world.

Alphistia would not make the mistake of past ideologies which promised to save humanity (like communism) or which pretended to already be “the last hope of mankind” (the USA). Alphistia instead would try to be a beacon in the darkness for those seeking a safe haven. It would not promise to be all things to all people, but instead would be a place for like-minded individuals to be part of a decent and civilized society. Certain fundamentals would be shared in this society: representative democracy, economic democracy focused on co-operatives and small family-owned firms and farms, stewardship of the earth and its natural resources, self-sufficiency, a social policy with state-funded programs to nurture and enhance the individual’s course through life, and the creation of a rich new culture based on the everyday use of the Alphistian language. Within this framework the traditional political discourse could

thrive (and rage). Alphistia would have a multi-party political system, a lively media free of state control, and plenty of individual opportunity for self-expression and dissent. But the core of Alphistia's being would be the self-preservation of the Lesenum, and in that all Alphistians would be united.

Alphistia would have strong borders and a well-trained border guard. It would surround itself with an electric fence to deter intruders with unfriendly intentions. Every kilometer, there would be more than one guard post and the soldiers there would be armed. Soldiers would patrol the entire border all day, every day. Along the land border, this would be more than 100 watchtowers. Along Alphistia's lake shores, there would be navy guard posts every few kilometers, with boats constantly patrolling Alphistia's waters. There would only be a few entryways into the country. It would be extremely difficult for outsiders to get inside Alphistia.

Why would this be necessary? The answer is related to why Alphistia would exist in the first place. It would be a refuge from what the world had become: unstable, unsafe, with people and groups with unpeaceful intentions. Whether or not they were organized into armies, Alphistia would secure its borders to protect itself from intruders.

Conclusion

Current events create feelings of uncertainty and insecurity for most people. Most long for a safe existence for themselves and their families, but as individuals many worry there is little they can do. Some take refuge in religion, others throw caution to the wind and live only for today. Others think that their only chance of survival is to go off the grid and live alone in the wilderness. For some - perhaps only a few - the ideas and proposals for a new society like Alphistia will appeal. For that reason, Project Alphistia has been established, and those interested are invited to participate in creating the Lesenum.

