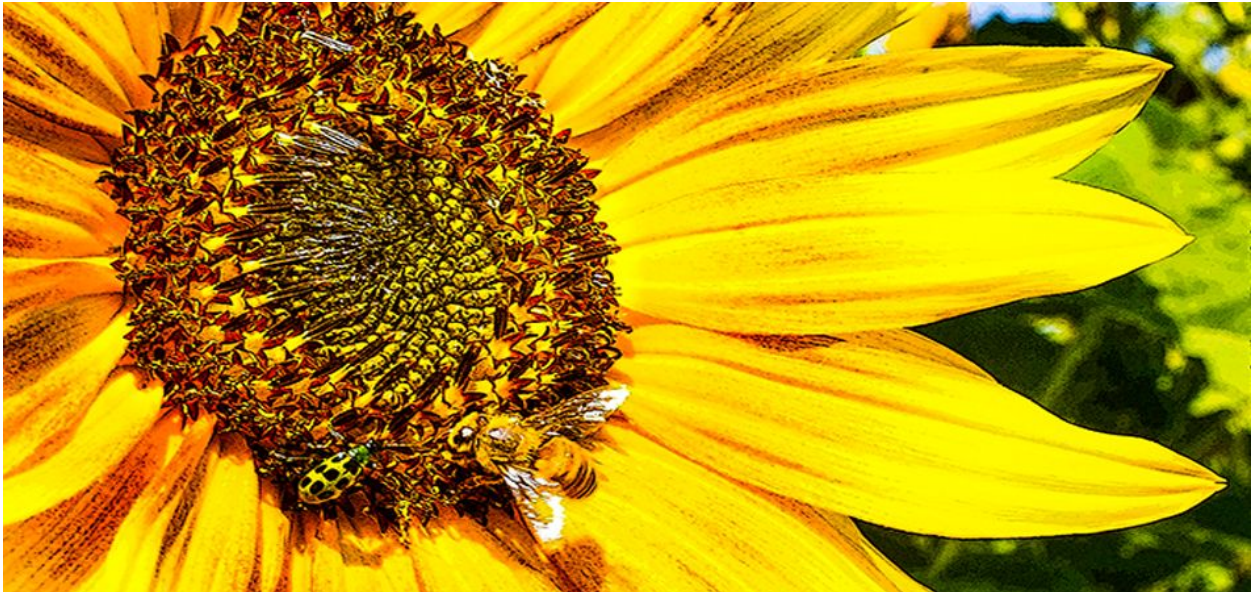


Remembering September 11th A MAHB Dialogue

Geoffrey Holland & the MAHB Dialogue participants



Today, we look back at the infamous terror attack that took place on 9/11/01. The motivation for that attack appears to be rooted in the American military presence in Saudi Arabia. Osama Bin Laden hated the US occupation of his country. He inspired the 9/11 attacks as a way of inducing a withdrawal of the U.S. military presence from the Middle East. In fact, the US military remains fully entrenched in Iraq, and Afghanistan. We are still actively engaged in a confrontation with ISIS in Syria. We continue to funnel billions of dollars to Israel and its military forces. If anything, that region of the world is even more of a political and military quagmire now than ever before. Moreover, many other parts of the world are now being destabilized, often violently, by internal strife, driven by climate change, food insecurity, and increasingly stressed water supplies. Adversaries like Russian, China, and North Korea are using the social media and other means of political destabilization to undermine the US as a major player on the world stage. Given this reality, we posed the following question to several of our distinguished [MAHB Dialogue participants](#).

***In 2020, what is the major terrorist threat to the US?
And what is the most valuable deterrent?***

Thomas Hanna

The primary terrorist threat in the United States comes from white supremacists; and it always has. Sometimes acting alone, sometimes in groups, and sometimes with sanction from the state, these organizations and individuals have perpetrated death and violence on an unimaginable scale to preserve white political and economic control and dominance. And it has been unrelenting. The recent terrorist attacks in El Paso, Pittsburgh, and Charleston are the latest in a long line of white supremacist atrocities. The Wiyot massacre and countless other genocidal acts committed against American Indians; the thousands of lynchings, shootings, and bombings directed against Black people across the country for generations; the “Red Summer” of 1919 when hundreds of Black people were killed by white mobs; the assassination of Civil Rights activists and leaders; the Greensboro Massacre; the Oklahoma City bombing; the list goes on and on. While it may result in more terrorism in the short-term, ultimately the only solution is to confront and destroy white supremacy in politics, the economy, culture, and society. This includes a thorough public reckoning with the nation’s sordid history of racism and violence, both at home and around the world, and recompense and reparations for the victims and their descendants.

[MAHB Dialogue – 4/10/19](#) *Thomas Hanna is Research Director for The Next System Project, and the author of Our Common Wealth – The Return of Public Ownership in the United States, Manchester University Press, 11/1/2018*

Michael Tobias and Jane Gray Morrison

The horrors of human violence towards other humans and countless members of other species are synonymous factors in a cumulative epitaph that reads of holocausts and every version of terrorism, foreign or domestic. Whilst legal experts are wont to argue over semantics (e.g., mala in se versus mala prohibita, etc.), the fall-out and suffering from grotesque tragedies like 9/11 should remind us that human nature, and its radically fluctuating moral codes are vulnerable, exposed, ever unpredictable. No beings want to suffer, nor can we separate or easily compare degrees of torment between individuals. The unimaginable of that fateful September morning is ecologically quantified every other day in a manner that most people prefer to ignore. The terrorism of slaughterhouses; of climate change; of the all-out human assault on nearly every facet of the earth's precious biodiversity; on ourselves.

Conclusions regarding the human propensity for violence are not surefooted, in that most people are virtuous, aspiring to be gentle, nurturing, tolerant and kindhearted. Yet, collectively, our species continues almost unabated to inflict a blurred miasma of 9/11-like assaults upon

every biome, a fact that lends little comfort, and fewer insights into what it will take to engender a human truce with nature.

All of the social contracts, world courts, legal systems and community standards; faith, philanthropy, human goodness and historic moral injunctions - none have yet enabled any global ethical panaceas. But there is no question that humanity has the courage, tenacity and penchant for selfless service. We will forever hold out hope for a renaissance of unstinting, unconditional love and generosity. We'd like to believe that there is ample evidence for a universal biophilia; an evolutionary set of cohorts favoring compassion and kin altruism at both the species and interspecies levels.

*[MAHB Dialogue - 7/22/19](#) – Michael Charles Tobias and Jane Gray Morrison lead the Dancing Star Foundation – www.dancingstarfoundation.org . They are also co-author of *The Hypothetical Species*, Springer, 2019*

Alexandra Paul

The biggest threat to the United States in 2020 is the election of Donald Trump. We need the largest number of eligible voters to get out there and vote, because most Americans are NOT his supporters. We must choose a progressive but balanced candidate with the guts to incorporate the Green New Deal as our next president.

*[MAHB Dialogue – 6/18/19](#) Alexandra Paul is an **actress**. She is most known for her 5 year stint on the TV show *Baywatch*. She won the International Green Cross award for environmental leadership in Hollywood, and the United Nations has honored her for her work on human overpopulation. Alexandra was the ACLU of Southern California's 2005 Activist of the Year for her history of environmentalism, voter registration and peace advocacy. Last Chance For Animals named her 2014 Vegan of the Year. She currently hosts the **Switch4Good** podcast, about the benefits of a plant based lifestyle.*

Gar Alperovitz

Osama bin Laden's strategy was to get the United States to come to war in the Middle East and get trapped there and waste resources and turn the country into an insane politics. He was quite successful. I mean, he got us trapped in many, many, many wars. We overreacted, we've been involved in Afghanistan and Iraq, and not yet in Iran, in Syria, losing in all these cases, and

costing many, many thousands of lives, and if you include the other side, millions of lives and polarizing our society.

From Bin Laden's point of view, it was a brilliant move. From our point of view, it was a tragic, tragic error of judgment and overreaction. But that I think also bespeaks what the underlying culture and what the underlying systemic design are vulnerable to...

We haven't spoken yet about the military as an institution, as a power player in the political-economy, and how that as well as the ideologies that were created to surround it 'permitted' us to overreact. So, part of what this about is the relationship between systemic design and culture—and what we can do to change what we do in foreign policy. My short version of this is, we're not going to change our foreign policy and until we change who 'we' are and how we see things. That would be the short version. So, after that, it gets to be a long discussion about developing practical ways to 'change the system' over time.

By the way, the other issue I'm very concerned about involves nuclear weapons and in particular is the bombing of Japan. I've written two books on the bombing. And next year is the 75th anniversary. So that's a very important theme, the nuclear issues and Hiroshima, it's an important time to talk about the challenge we still face.

[MAHB Dialogue – to be published 9/24/19](#) *Gar Alperovitz, a former Fellow of King's College, Cambridge is Co-Founder of the Democracy Collaborative and Co-Chair of its Next System Project. Among his recent books are America Beyond Capitalism, What Then Must We Do?, and Principles of a Pluralist Commonwealth.*

Geoffrey Holland

Resentment...Resentment is the motivation for people, who want to do us harm. They resent our long history of exceptionalism, our self-absorption, and our callous exploitation of the environment we share with all the nations of the world. We need to stay vigilant and on guard against threats, but more important, we must join the rest of the world, recognizing that we are all planetary citizens; that we all have an obligation to pull our seriously stressed planet back from the brink. The most powerful deterrence to a terrorist attack would be to put our own house in order, and become a beacon of cooperation on a global scale, with dignity for all and a shared responsibility for the Earth as our common ideals. One of our greatest scholars, the humanist Riane Eisler, puts it this way..."The struggle for our future...is the struggle between those who cling to patterns of domination and those working for a more equitable partnership

world.” Dominance breeds inequality and resentment; Partnership encourages cooperation and contentment. A world built on partnership is the only worthy way forward.

Geoffrey Holland is Coordinator of the [Stanford MAHB Dialogues](#).

Conclusion

Without question the cultural and political forces that led to the 9/11 attacks have not gone away. The US, far from disengaging, is even more bogged down in conflicts with forces based in the Middle East. Given the existential threats that are destabilizing the Middle East and other regions of the world, it would be unwise to believe the events of 9/11/01 cannot happen again.