**Three Modest Ideas for Changing the World**

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London, England: Because of Covid, this was my first trip out of the country since the pandemic ended. Seeing many old friends and colleagues as well as associates again, is an elixir for expanding one’s horizons.

The good news follows below. The not so good news was the diminished and even sour views sadly held by many of these highly experienced and intelligent people here I have known, in some cases for many decades, about the state of America today. Beyond the obvious repeat of the 2020 presidential race next year and the legitimate fears about both candidates, the overall opinion was that America has not only lost its credibility and influence. It has lost its punch as the primus inter pares of the international constellation of powers.

More cheering news were three big ideas provoked by these discussions. If instituted and that is an “if” on super steroids, these could reverse this pessimism. The first concerns the UK. Aside from a few hard liners, BREXIT -the decision to leave the Common Market made by Boris Johnson’s administration-has become a disaster.

GDP has shrunk. British standards of living have declined. What influence Britain once had on the continent and within NATO has been greatly degraded and even lost. One tiny piece of evidence will be NATO’s selection of a new Secretary General. UK Prime Minister Rishi Sunak has made an impassioned plea to choose his Defense Minister Ben Wallace. In part because of BREXIT, despite Britain”s three prior Secretary Generals who were among the alliance’s best, Wallace has little chance.

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The first tectonic change will be for Britain to re-enter the Common Market/EU provided the EU agrees. However, with Russian aggression in Ukraine; the need for a strong, economically and more closely aligned Europe; and regaining economic prosperity, it is in the interest of all for Britain to rejoin.

Both PM Sunak and Labor Leader Sir Keir Starmer could make the same case. Sunak would argue that BREXIT was tried and failed. One political reason forcing his case is that despite the blowback from the Boris wing, Labor will use re-entering BREXIT against the Conservatives. To win and retain power after the next general election, Sunak must preempt Labor and embrace this idea.

Next, President Joe Biden has declared the struggle of our time is “democracy versus autocracy.” But despite being superficial and lacking substance, that assertion is readily believable. Compared with China, Russia and other autocracies (Saudi Arabia possibly) democracies look weak. Ergo, the conclusion is self-evident. Autocracy is on the move.

Nonsense! The issue has nothing to do with autocracies. Each has its own weaknesses and vulnerabilities. Ignoring those is highly inadvisable.

The fundamental problem democracies face is governing and the question of whether they can. The US, UK, France, Germany, Japan and other democracies are struggling. None is providing the government that publics want or need.

In response Democracies must focus on the top priority of providing good governance. That of course is far from easy. Yet that is essential. And diluting focus on waging an entirely unnecessary ideological fight with autocracies is akin to demanding the tides stop or the earth reverses its rotation.

The last dramatic change is for the US to demilitarize its attitudes, policy and strategy towards China in what it says. Teddy Roosevelt was correct. Speak softly but carry a big stick. That the US and PRC defense secretaries could be on the same platform and still refuse to meet privately is the theater of the absurd. Shame on both countries.

From the US side, Taiwan and the fear of a Chinese invasion is real and possible. This column has challenged that proposition. And in any case, by adopting a Porcupine Defense, Taiwan would make an invasion too expensive to mount. China has other less forceful means for assimilation. In this regard, the US declares it is providing a Porcupine Defense to Taiwan that will make any invasion suicidal. Then drop the subject. Whether Taiwan fully follows up or not, any objective analysis will show for the foreseeable future China will lack what is needed for an amphibious invasion to control and occupy Taiwan.

Further, if the US believes it has the most powerful military in the world, the recent Chinese provocative actions against a US reconnaissance aircraft and Navy destroyer should be put in the context of incompetence similar to the dreadful performance of the Russian military in Ukraine. Demean. Do not protest But will we consider these ideas? You know the answer.

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