

Some Not So Random Thoughts...Continued January 16, 2023
by Charles B. Wendel

Misprojections. What causes so many predictions and expected results to turn out to be way off the mark? Is it a failure to do any basic scenario planning? Institutional arrogance? Stupidity? Fate?

Let's look at some recent examples from the government, health care and banking.

On October 7, 2023, the day of Hamas' attack on Israel, the Atlantic magazine reported the following:

Government: "What a difference a week makes. Just eight days ago, National Security Adviser Jake Sullivan, speaking at The Atlantic Festival, rattled off a long list of positive developments in the Middle East, developments that were allowing the Biden administration to focus on other regions and other problems. A truce was holding in Yemen. Iranian attacks against U.S. forces had stopped. America's presence in Iraq was "stable." The good news crescendo with this statement: "The Middle East region is quieter today than it has been in two decades."

Just weeks later, all Sullivan's assertions have disappeared, quite literally in flames.

One more snafu from the government. Last week, the New York Times reported: "More than \$1 billion worth of shoulder-fired missiles, kamikaze drones and night-vision goggles that the United States has sent to Ukraine have not been properly tracked by American officials, a new Pentagon report concluded, raising concerns that they could be stolen or smuggled at a time when Congress is debating whether to send more military aid to Kyiv."

In this case what many predicted did happen. One of the most corrupt governments acted corruptly. But why were no strong safeguards in place?

Health care. I remember it was not long ago that I walked too far forward into the invisible six-foot barrier that we were told to maintain from those around us. The person whose space I had invaded was unhappy. Now, we learn there was zero science behind this notion.

Last week, Anthony ("I am the science") Fauci, per a *National Review* report, "admitted the social distancing guideline that himself and other federal health officials heavily promoted during the Covid-19 pandemic "sort of just appeared" and was likely not based on any scientific data." Apparently, he also now admits that covid resulting from the Wuhan lab is not a conspiracy theory and has validity.

Banking. Months ago, Citibank announced planned cutbacks with losses tied to payouts to exiting employees. Management told employees they could work the last two weeks of the year from home (with 10% or so staying permanently home after that).

Last week CNBC reported a greater than expected loss. “The bank said its fourth-quarter results, scheduled to be released Friday morning, were impacted by \$880 million in currency conversion losses from the peso and \$780 million in restructuring charges tied to CEO Jane Fraser’s corporate simplification project. Those charges are significantly larger than the “couple hundred million dollars” apiece that CFO Mark Mason told investors to expect at a Dec. 6 conference hosted by Goldman Sachs.” I love the phrase “couple hundred million a piece,” as if it is a couple of bucks.

Goodbye old shiny toy. Hello, hew new shiny toy. A New York Times article about (the prestigious and/or infamous) Davos meeting provides yet another indication that AI is the new, new thing and that last year’s new, new thing is on the skids “AI seems to be the new DEI this year,” another expected attendee said. “I think this may be the first year I’m not beaten over the head with DEI.”

Consulting “helping” consultants. Multiple websites and YouTube videos exist to support the fledging writer; most involve payment. In many cases those offering help aim to earn money from other writers rather than their own writing. Recently, the same phenomenon seems to be happening with consulting. I’ve received emails offering to help me write a more powerful consultants resume and outsource my consulting needs to lower cost providers. Another offered to implement “an organic prospecting and sales strategy that does not require you to spend a penny on advertising.” Others offer to write proposals. But effective writers all seem to say one thing: “write.” Similarly, consultants need to avoid costly and time killing distractions.

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