

# Structural criminality within the “collective shadow”: disaster capitalism and the globalization of ruling power

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## Abstract

**Purpose** – *The purpose of this paper is to expand upon one theme in Richard Slaughter's The Biggest Wake-up Call in History (BWCH) – that of the “collective shadow”.*

**Design/methodology/approach** – *Along with Slaughter, the author contends that the denialism indicative of strong negative reactions to the publication of Limits to Growth since 1972 is part of a larger problem within the collective psyche that must be understood and confronted.*

**Findings** – *For the first time in history, largely due to the emergence of global consciousness and, more recently, the advent of the internet, it is conceivable that authentic global democracy could emerge as an alternate network power, which challenges the structural criminality within the collective shadow, as well as the secret rule of the Empire Power Elite.*

**Originality/value** – *This paper exposes structural criminality within the collective shadow, its relationship to the advent of disaster capitalism, and its role in the emergence of a global ruling class.*

**Keywords** *Globalization, Futures, Democracy, Capitalism, Sustainability*

**Paper type** *Viewpoint*

Just as global consciousness and global civilization are beginning to emerge within humankind in ways that could represent a transformation of Being or “rebirth” globally – that birth has become complicated – threatened by a crisis starting to spiral out of control. This crisis (referred to as the global “problematique”/“emergency”/“mega-crisis”) is not easy to understand, for it is multifaceted, running deep beneath the veneer of civilization and within the soul of man; however, “understanding” isn’t the only obstacle to meeting this challenge of the future: denial, collective shortsightedness/forgetfulness, entrenched ideology, corporate crime, greed, government corruption, and paralysis of political will, further complicate an already difficult situation. As a matter of fact, the prospect concerning humanity’s future is more than just “difficult” – it represents the gravest crisis ever – just at the time of its birth as a global entity; it does represent, indeed, as Richard Slaughter (2010) has so aptly termed it in the title of his book, *The Biggest Wake-up Call in History*[1].

This “wake up call” will either result in birth or miscarriage for humanity, depending on our response; thus, it is imperative that “we,” as the people of this planet, not only understand the nature of the crisis but collectively confront it before time runs out – a critical factor that Slaughter poignantly brings to our attention; we are in a race against time, a race that we are currently losing – so “time” is a vanishing luxury we can no longer afford as we continue haphazardly on a business-as-usual path to a future that is becoming ever more questionable, that is, “as time goes by.”

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This article expands upon one theme in *BWCH* – that of the “collective shadow.” Along with Slaughter, I contend that the denialism indicative of strong negative reactions to the publication of *Limits to Growth* since 1972 is part of a larger problem within the collective psyche that must be understood and confronted. These reactions are more than what meets the surface – not always what they appear to be; in other words, they are directly related to Slaughter’s “shadow,” which not only underlies and undermines the economic system but also paralyzes the political will to respond to foresight initiatives. This paper goes one step further to expose structural criminality within the collective shadow, its relationship to the advent of disaster capitalism, and its role in the emergence of a global ruling class.

### The value of social foresight: confronting the culture of denial

One of the most important lessons Slaughter (2010) draws from the *Limits to Growth* series (1972, 1992, 2005) is how vital social foresight is to the survival of civilization; indeed, he writes that it has become “a structural necessity” (p. 36). A limited time to respond to danger signals and a limited capacity of the Earth to withstand ever-increasing pressures are factors that an unlimited, growth-obsessed civilization ignores at its own peril. Delayed responses only serve to decrease the time frame and limit the choices needed to change direction and momentum, for systemic, structural changes take *decades* to implement; even when social foresight is recognized, its long-term policy recommendations heeded, and major decisions made to change direction of the economic system towards sustainability, these major systemic changes still need decades to shift the momentum of a course that has been rapidly accelerating since the advent of the industrial revolution. (Slaughter 2010, p. 36)

However, if social foresight and long-term perspectives have not yet even been made a player at the table of decision-makers, given the urgency of this crisis of civilization, “What is to be done?” In response to this critical question, Slaughter recommends that we address the institutionalized culture of denial first through the recognition that “overshoot and collapse” is no longer a “distant hypothesis” but is *now* a “*structural reality*” of the world we live in (p. 46). This recognition does not necessarily lead to a “gloom and doom” conclusion but can instead represent new, alternative prospects for humanity’s future; since the notion of “collapse” is by no means “monolithic” or “settled,” it represents an area for further inquiry and exploration during the transitional period towards sustainability. (p. 46)

### Structural criminality as the “shadow” within the global system

Before considering pathways to global sustainability, though, the reality of the “collective shadow,”<sup>[2]</sup> which greatly influences and manipulates the global system, must be confronted<sup>[3]</sup>. Unless we understand the global reality of criminal manipulation in international affairs, we can never understand the resistance to *LtG* and why pathways to sustainability are not taken seriously. The first step then is to recognize and expose the chief impediment – financial and political corruption, along with the mostly hidden criminal activity linking powerful global players. Slaughter (2010) writes, it’s “no simple matter to deal with these dark realities”; nevertheless, despite the difficulties involved, it *is* “. . . vital to make the effort if we are to collectively mobilize sufficient resources to tackle the bottleneck that lies ahead” (p. 61). In other words, without first understanding this critical obstacle within the global system, we will be groping in the dark for long-term, sustainable solutions that have little or no chance of serious implementation.

When Slaughter (2010) writes about “the business of organized crime,” he mentions the “sad story of the Enron Corporation,” as an illustration of “just how far some companies will go in their single-minded pursuit of private profit” (p. 63). However, the “Enron story” is not so unique; in fact, it’s just the tip of the shadow – the “iceberg” that the great financial Titanic later ran up against during the global financial meltdown of 2008/9. Despite claims to the contrary, the crisis remains entrenched, with little sign of relief or resolution, indicative of what Slaughter (2010) refers to as a “vast range of illegal and unethical behaviors” (p. 63).

Actually, he may be understating it when Slaughter (2010) mentions how neoconservative free market ideology remains dominant and the regulatory environment so lax that “deception, profiteering and spin remain core business principles” (p. 63). As Naomi Klein (2007) demonstrates brilliantly in her expose of “disaster capitalism,” though much whitewashing effort has been made to disassociate the implementation of Milton Friedman’s radical version of free market ideology from the crimes that attended it, the infiltration of Friedman’s “Chicago Boys” and the CIA into Chile and other South American countries during the 70s and 80s, and the orgy of torture and “disappearances” at genocidal proportions at the same time *was not just “coincidental”* just as the rise of fascist ideology and the Jewish holocaust that accompanied it was also not just “coincidental.” When such heinous crimes and human rights violations become viral and systemic, tearing at the fabric of society, it is all-too-often because an undemocratic, all-pervasive system or ideology is being imposed on a people against their will. Torture and murder are mere means, tools used to shock and terrorize the general populace into accepting the system or ideology forced upon them, for there is no humane way for people to accept an occupation and/or be ruled against their will. As Klein (2007) illustrates, the blood on the hands of Friedman and his Chicago Boys was “incidental” blood, “collateral damage,” in that it was *means to an end* rather than an end in itself, and that *end* was the sheer rape and plunder of those who would not accept the radical free market ideology used to justify economic policies that only benefitted multi-national corporations (MNCs) and the countries’ elite, who were either seduced or coerced into collaboration. As a result of the terror and murder that accompanied the imposition of unpopular economic policies in several South American countries during the 70s and 80s, Klein (2007) raises the vital, underlying question: “Is neoliberalism an inherently violent ideology, and is there something about its goals that demands this cycle of brutal political cleansing, followed by human rights cleanup operations?” (p. 157). Klein’s deeper question is important to ask, especially as we consider that this same radical ideology of free-market “disaster capitalism” linked itself to globalization, which spread throughout the world during the 90s and the first decade of the new millennium, while allying itself with criminal networks globally. Are such alliances merely coincidental, or are they indicative of an inherent ideological flaw within neoliberalism?

In *Crossing the Rubicon* (2004), M. Ruppert reveals just how insidious and yet ubiquitous such alliances are. Concerning Enron’s criminal activities, Ruppert provides an even darker picture, beyond “accounting” crimes or manipulating energy prices (widely reported in the mainstream press), of the connection to the laundering of drug money by global, mega-corporations (such as Enron was), often facilitated by the CIA and/or US policies. Interestingly, some 700 of Enron’s 2,000 subsidiary companies were located in the Cayman Islands, where no oil or gas has been discovered; however, as Ruppert (2004) points out, where there *is* “an awful lot of drug money” (p. 61). According to Ruppert, drug money is the “steroids of the financial world” because instant cash is so liquid, giving a corporation the flexibility to do a lot of things that otherwise couldn’t be done; for example, if you were a corporate executive needing to

... borrow money from an LBO or to finance a pipeline, you could go borrow the money legally at 9 percent, or you could borrow drug money laundered once, looking to become legal, at 6 percent. The drug lord is only too happy to own the bonds of, for example, Halliburton or General Electric. But if you really wanted to make a killing, you would launder some drug money onto your bottom line and increase your net profits. You might do it by selling your products “off the books” and accepting cash for them. Then you would just inflate your net profits without any increased costs. Philip Morris has been charged with doing just that[4]. Or if you make vehicles, you could sell large quantities for a check from an offshore bank, no questions asked, to a guy in South America who wanted to open a Chevy dealership. GM ... has reportedly done that (Ruppert, 2004, p. 60).

Apparently, Enron was quite aware of the pure financial power of drug money; it’s no wonder that 700 of Enron’s subsidiary companies were located in the Cayman Islands, the drug

money laundering capital of the world, and it also “just so happens” that Enron's trading company, Enron Online, was one of:

... the largest money-moving operations in the world. It was just computers and wires in cities and to banks all over the globe. It was [my emphasis] a bank. And it was there that the greatest criminal activity occurred. When Enron went bankrupt, the US government allowed Enron to sell Enron Online to the Union Bank of Switzerland[5]. That meant that all the evidence of money laundering by Enron is now owned by a Swiss bank and out of reach of federal prosecutors. Neither the US Congress nor any US enforcement agency did a thing to stop the sale or the transfer of records. The evidence walked (Ruppert, 2004, p. 61).

The production and laundering of drug money is linked to all other illegal activities, according to Ruppert, for “it establishes channels for the flow of other criminal profits” (Ruppert, 2004, p. 58). In fact, the IMF has reported that approximately \$1.5 trillion was processed through money laundering in 2001, a figure that exceeds “the gross domestic product of all but the world's five largest economies”[6] (Ruppert, 2004, p. 58). Moreover, in 1997, the UN estimated that the drug trade, as of 1996, “represented 8 percent of all world trading activity as measured in dollars” (p. 58)[7].

Only the very naïve or the most fervent free-market ideologue could believe that all that money could be laundered *without* the facilitation and cooperation of major banks and governments. Drug money is such an integral part of the global economy that major banks and financial networks would likely fail without it, especially when, with the aid of online banking, the money often passes through unnoticed. As Slaughter (2010) notes, the evidence of government facilitation of money laundering as a “nearly universal practice” can be found in the legislation that enables it[8]. The evidence is overwhelming, from a number of sources, writes Slaughter (2010); clearly, the “drive to reduce regulation and ‘free up’ markets to perform their ‘magic’ also encouraged the spread of organized crime everywhere, opening up unlimited opportunities for the unscrupulous” (p. 63).

### The “smoking guns” CIA connection to illegal drug activities

Another example of the “legitimization” of criminal activity can be found in major drug smuggling activities organized and facilitated by the CIA. Ruppert (2004) investigated this connection for more than 25 years, and based on the documentary evidence he compiled over that time period, he gave 28 lectures in 2002. During these lectures, Ruppert (2004) found that the audiences universally acknowledged the fact that the CIA “deals drugs”; however, he concludes, most do not realize the *significance* of this fact. (p. 62)

Rather than presenting a comprehensive case, Ruppert (2004) chooses four pieces of evidence, the “smoking guns” to demonstrate “outright culpability on the Agency's part,” with the rationale that “if three or four pieces of evidence don't convince people, the other 300 or 400 pieces will not make a difference” (p. 62). The first “smoking gun” presented by Ruppert (2004) is a 1981 letter from then US Attorney General, W.F. Smith, to the Director of Central Intelligence, Bill Casey. In this letter, Smith summarizes the results of a negotiation that changed “the CIA's obligations under the law when people who worked for it were caught dealing drugs” (p. 63). Officials within the executive branch are required by law to notify the US Department of Justice when an employee is caught breaking the law. As a result of the “covert operations” involved in the Contra War, however, the CIA foresaw a huge influx of cocaine flooding into the States, so it had to not only cover itself but also find a legal way to circumvent “... the deluge of reports (which did occur) about US government personnel or contractors who were moving drugs.” In the negotiations, the CIA and Department of Justice decided that those who did not hold an “officer” rank within the agency would simply *not* be deemed an “employee”; moreover, “‘no formal requirement’ for the reporting of violations of drug laws was going to be required under the newly reached memorandum of understanding” ... “With the stroke of a pen,” comments Ruppert (2004), was the CIA thus “absolved from turning in its employees, its contractors, and the

employees of its proprietary companies who were soon to be found smuggling cocaine, hand over fist, and airplane over cargo ship” (p. 63).

Ruppert (2004) then presents “smoking airplanes” as the next key evidence of CIA involvement in the transport of illegal drugs. Large C-130 Hercules transports are military aircraft banned from export without State Department certifications; however, in the 1980s and 90s, the CIA schemed how to transfer them into the hands of private contractors who were connected with CIA covert operations in Central America. According to the CIA plan, “. . . some 28 were moved from the Department of Defense into the hands of the US Forest Service,” ostensibly to fight forest fires, but then transferred into the hands of private contractors, later revealed to have had CIA connections. (p. 63) Many of these same vehicles later turned up in such remote places as Panama, Mexico, Colombia, and even as far away as Angola and the Middle East. When they were examined, rarely was “fire retardant” found on board, though one of them was seized “with a billion dollars worth of cocaine on board” and another impounded at a Mexico City airport, where it was discovered that it had been purchased by the Mexican banker, Carlos Cabal, who was “assured repayment of the loans by the US Import-Export Bank” (p. 64-5).

The third, perhaps most damning, piece of evidence Ruppert (2004) presents is the CIA’s own “smoking” Inspector General Report, written by Fredrich P. Hitz[9]. This report is a virtual confession by the CIA of its connection to Contra drug smuggling; however, the timing of its release “just happened” to coincide with the beginning of Clinton’s impeachment trial, so it was completely ignored by mainstream media (MSM). Besides that, MSM, which by that point had already abandoned all efforts at serious investigative journalism, would have to issue a “mea culpa” for having pummeled Gary Webb for his courageous revelations in the 90s connecting the CIA to Contra drug smuggling[10]. Yet buried within the Inspector General report lies the vindication of Webb’s historic reporting – the truth about CIA culpability. The IG report, which contained the CIA’s own confession, should have been followed up by investigations that would have paralleled those that followed the publication of The Pentagon Papers; instead, it was buried in Monica Lewinsky’s dress, ignored by an MSM so obsessed with whether or not Clinton lied about his affair.

### Connecting drugs to oil and to major financial players

As Ruppert (2004) notes, the history of using illegal drugs as a part of geopolitical strategy is at least “as old as the British East India Company’s first smuggling of opium from India to China in the late 1600s . . .” (p. 67), so it should come as no surprise that governments and multinational corporations continue to use such lucrative and effective geopolitical means in the globalization era. Ruppert (2004) asks, “Aside from the fact that from Afghanistan, to Pakistan, to Kazakhstan, to Columbia, oil and drugs always turn up in the same place, has there has ever been any evidence connecting the oil industry to drugs directly?” (p. 68) Ruppert (2004) then provides such “connecting” evidence by demonstrating how the Bush Administration and its allies used the mega-construction company Halliburton and its affiliate, Brown & Root, as the “operational interface, to control the drug trade all the way from Medellin to Moscow” (p. 70); he points out that “everywhere there is oil, there is Brown & Root,” yet increasingly:

. . . everywhere there is war or insurrection there is Brown & Root also. From Bosnia and Kosovo, to Chechnya, to Rwanda, to Burma, to Pakistan, to Laos, to Vietnam, to Indonesia, to Iran, to Libya, to Mexico, to Colombia, Brown & Root’s traditional operations have expanded from heavy construction to include the provision of logistical support for the US military (p. 70).

Is it a mere coincidence that everywhere there is oil, there is drug money and war, with the footprints of Brown & Root all over it? As Ruppert (2004) reports, where the Kosovo Liberation Army “controls 70% of the heroin entering Western Europe, Cheney’s Brown & Root made billions of dollars supplying US troops from vast facilities in the region” (p. 71). This is also true for Afghanistan, where one of the first things the USA and CIA did in late

2001 was “to liberate a number of known opium warlords” (p. 68). Then, when the 2002 harvest came, Afghanistan, once again became one of the world’s largest producers of opium and chief supplier of its derivative heroin. By March of 2003, “World Bank President James Wolfensohn was reporting record levels of opium production and that drugs were a bigger earner for Afghanistan than foreign aid” (Ruppert, 2004, p. 68)[11]. The 2003 crop “. . . set new records, coming in at almost 4000 tons[12]. And experts warned that the June, 2004 harvest might be 50 percent larger than that of 2003[13]. In November of 2003, Reuters reported that current Afghan opium cultivation was 36 times higher than under the last year of Taliban rule”[14] (Ruppert, 2004, p. 68). In the closing section, “Iraqi invasion validates the map,” Ruppert (2004) writes that he could “only laugh” when a story broke on May 11 in Pakistan’s *Balochistan Post* that Baghdad, “which had never had a drug problem and had never even seen heroin, had been suddenly ‘flooded with narcotics – including heroin’”[15] (p. 75). Oil pipelines, evidently, make excellent “. . . vehicles for smuggling drugs. Oil equipment, sometimes arriving or departing by corporate jet, is rarely inspected for other priceless commodities” (Ruppert, 2004, p. 75).

As Ruppert (2004) reveals, this network of oil-drugs-Brown&Root-US Military/CIA criminal connections involve major financial players as well. A 2001 US Senate investigation of money laundering by foreign banks through the US banking system specifically named the offending banks, “all too willing to do business with shell banks or banks known to launder illegal money”: JP Morgan Chase, Citigroup, Bank of America, and First Union Bank (pp. 76-7). This report and testimony during the hearings, states Ruppert (2004), “acknowledged that approximately \$500 billion to \$1 trillion in criminal money was laundered annually through the US banking system” . . . “half of all laundered money, anywhere” (p. 77). As so aptly put by a spring 2000 article in *Le Monde Diplomatique*[16], indeed, we can conclude that the engine of capitalism “is now oiled by the profits of serious crime”; yes, governments pretend to be concerned about these major financial crimes, and though there are calls for zero:

. . . tolerance of petty crime and unemployment, *nothing is being done about the big money crimes* [my emphasis] . . . This flood of illicit transactions . . . has come to be portrayed just as accidental malfunctions of free market economics and democracy that can be put right by something called “good governance.” But the reality is quite different. It is a coherent system closely linked to the expansion of modern capitalism and based on an association of three partners: governments, transnational corporations, and mafias. Business is business: financial crime is first and foremost a market, thriving and structured, ruled by supply and demand . . . The collusion of interests is an essential part of the world economy, the oil that keeps the wheels of capitalism turning (as quoted by Ruppert, 2004, pp. 77-8).

### The collusion of interests in “disaster capitalism” and globalized “shock therapy”

This mighty “collusion of interests,” often depicted as “accidental malfunctions” or sloughed off as mere “coincidences,” are at the core of Slaughter’s “collective shadow.” As Klein (2007) demonstrates quite convincingly, there is nothing “accidental” or “coincidental” to the explosion of free market ideology during the age of neoliberal globalization and the shock therapy systematically applied to so many countries worldwide, accompanied by murder, war, theft, torture, poverty, and environmental rape. Hundreds of millions of lives have been destroyed by “disaster capitalism” while the ideological architects shrug it off, and the rich get just so much wealthier. As the Nobel-prize winning economist, Joseph Stiglitz (2007) notes, the cat is out of the bag. There is absolutely no ideological defense these days for free market neoliberalism (any more than there is over climate change) because the liberalization of markets has been “tried” (more often “coerced”) and found to have performed miserably – time and again with remarkable consistency – to bring about disastrous consequences for hundreds of millions of lives around the globe. Similar to the issue of climate change, a “debate” might have been understandable 30 years ago, but not now; now, we have the historical experience and record, and the verdict is in: it’s an ideological sham – a mere excuse for lawlessness and

the collusion of multi-national corporations, banks, governments, militaries, and criminal enterprises to enrich themselves at the expense of the growing poor and the planet's natural resources and environment. And "even when the economy does not grow," as Stiglitz (2007) remarks about the Washington Consensus, "there are some that may do well from those policies" (p. 30).

Indeed, *some* do *quite* well, as was illustrated in the corruption of the Russian oligarchs who rose to power during the 90s free-for-all Russian bonanza – the overnight, rushed transition to Western-style capitalism through rapid privatization and liberalization, reports Stiglitz (2007), urged on by Western advisers, "... giving away hundreds of billions of the countries' most valuable assets, creating a new class of oligarchs who took money out of the country far faster than the inflow of billions that the IMF was pouring in as assistance" (pp. 37-8). Nevertheless, the mainstream press took the "usual suspects" approach by separating the corruption of the oligarchs from the free-market "shock therapy" applied to Russia, as Klein (2007) explains, as if they were an "alien force that infected otherwise worthy free-market reforms"; quite the contrary, the corruption was an *integral* part of the process, as quick and dirty deals were "actively encouraged by Western powers at every stage as the fastest way to kick-start the economy" (p. 304).

Rather than being "unique to Russia," as Klein (2007) details, the process of corruption, accompanied by "catastrophic results," follows the very pattern of shock therapy repeated in neoliberal initiatives globally throughout the 80s, 90s, and after the turn of the millennium. With remarkable consistency, the entire 30 year history of the:

... Chicago School experiment has been one of mass corruption and corporatist collusion between security states and large corporations, from Chile's piranhas, to Argentina's crony privatizations, to Russia's oligarchs, to Enron's energy shell game, to Iraq's "free fraud zone." The point of shock therapy is to open up a window for enormous profits to be made very quickly – not despite the lawlessness but precisely *because of it* [my emphasis] (p. 304).

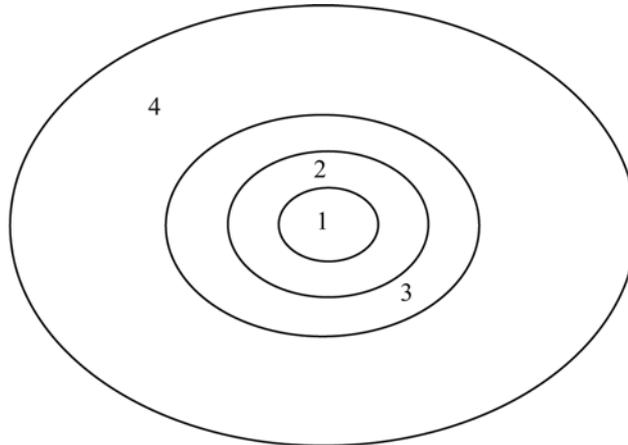
An insight from John Perkins (2004) is apropos: "The subtlety of this modern empire building puts the Roman centurions, the Spanish conquistadors, and the eighteenth- and nineteenth-century European colonial powers to shame" – the "economic hit men" (EHM – Perkin's term that could very well apply to the Chicago Boys) are crafty because they have learned from history: they do not "carry swords," nor do they wear clothes that set them apart; instead, they "dress like schoolteachers and shop owners," and they "look like government bureaucrats and bankers," appearing "humble" and "normal" as they "visit project sites" and "stroll through impoverished villages," professing "altruism" while talking with local papers about "the wonderful humanitarian things" they are doing, covering "conference tables of government committees" with their "spreadsheets and financial projections," lecturing at the Harvard Business School on "the miracles of macroeconomics" – "on the record" and "in the open," they seldom resort to "... anything illegal because *the system itself is built on subterfuge* [my emphasis], and the system is by definition legitimate" (pp. xx-xxi of the "Prologue").

However, as Perkins (2004) emphasizes, if the EHM fail, there are others waiting in the wings, "lurking in the shadows," a "more sinister breed" – the "jackals" – who can be "traced directly to those earlier empires," always prepared to step in and accomplish the same goal through more violent methods if necessary: "When they emerge, heads of state are overthrown or die in violent 'accidents.' And if by chance the jackals fail, as they failed in Afghanistan and Iraq, then the old models resurface. When the jackals fail, young Americans are sent in to kill and to die" (p. xxi of the "Prologue").

### Globalization of the ruling class

Perkins (2004) refers to the current form of American government as a "corporatocracy" rather than a democracy. Especially since the 2010 Supreme Court ruling that lobbyists can give unlimited funding to political campaigns, this description is even more accurate than

**Figure 1** Krysmanski's four concentric circles of global ruling power



1. **Inner Circle:** “the global money trust” of the “untouchables,” the wealthiest of the wealthy, who are rarely visible and only rarely get involved in politics (except indirectly via members of 2nd circle)
2. **2nd Circle:** CEOs of transnational corporations, key international financial players, “mostly concerned with increasing wealth of inner circle, and with it their own” (Hamm 2010, p. 1008)
3. **3rd Circle:** Top international politicians, advisors, military leaders – who distribute social product into pockets of 1st and 2nd circles (who, in turn, fund them generously), inform the public of “the necessities of the day,” secure legitimacy of government by management of “political circus” (hence providing illusion of pluralistic structure and democracy), decide on major policy directions
4. **4th Ring:** Top academics, media moguls, lawyers, authors, celebrities, etc. who magnify and reassure the charade of democracy and pluralism while enjoying privilege of access to those in power (and are well paid for it, so will make sure not to lose such privileges and benefits)

**Source:** Hamm (2010)

when Perkins first used it. Thus, more important than academic quibbling over definitions of sustainability, a serious researcher of global futures and the prospects for global sustainable development would do well to begin by understanding the structure of power in the “real world” – how it has been initiated, applied, distributed, and enforced globally; otherwise, such endeavors are foolhardy exercises in intellectualism. In this regard, the seminal sociological class studies of C. Wright Mills (1957) and G. William Domhoff (1978) concerning the structure of “power” and the “ruling elite” are indispensable. More recently, though, the sociologist B. Hamm (2010) has provided an insightful “analysis of power” that describes how the processes of ruling class power have “gone global” through the neoliberal/neoconservative revolution that began in the 1980s, largely responsible for exporting (or “globalizing”) the processes of ruling class domination. Whereas Mills and Domhoff’s studies are mostly confined to American society, Hamm (2010) draws upon those same sources’ analysis of power (especially C.W. Mills’ *Power Elite*, 1957), as “four concentric circles” (summarized by H.-J. Krysmanski, 2009 – see Figure 1), to illustrate how the “global ruling class” (GRC) emerged and is consolidating its power (rule) during this era of neoliberal/neoconservative globalization and American Empire.

Hamm (2010) describes the “inner circle” of the wealthiest of the wealthy as structurally “beyond all law or moral obligations,” rarely involving themselves in politics except through their surrogates in the “second circle,” who along with the “third circle” compose the “Superclass,” which is approximately 6,000 individuals[17]. (p. 1008) Moreover, Hamm (2010) states that the annual increase of wealth of the richest 0.01 percent of the population is at a whopping 112 percent and that the top 1 percent have held a “larger share of income in 2007 than at any time since 1928” (p. 1008)[18]. Even during the worst economic crisis since the Great Depression, “the wealth of the 400 richest Americans, according to *Forbes*, actually increased by \$30 billion” (Hamm 2010, p. 1008)[19].

Of course, the GRC would have you believe that this unprecedented increase of wealth and power among the richest one percent is mere coincidence, unrelated to the catastrophic events accompanying the advent of this era of globalization, with its neoliberal “shock doctrine” and consequential “disaster capitalism” wreaking havoc around the globe during the past 30 years; any “connection of the dots” is shrugged off as mere “conspiracy theory.” Yet, as Chalmers Johnson (2004) writes (concurring with Stiglitz, 2002)[20], there is “no known case” to prove that globalization has led to prosperity in any developing country, and “none” of the world’s “twenty-four reasonably developed capitalist nations, regardless of their ideological explanations, got where they are by following any of the prescriptions contained in globalization doctrine” (p. 262); instead, as Chalmers (2004) suggests, the evidence indicates that “disaster capitalism” is very likely “precisely what the authors of globalization intended” (p. 262), an observation confirmed by the tremendous increase of wealth among the rich during this same time period. In fact, this conclusion fits in quite well with the insight of the political economist Friedrich List in 1841, who wrote that it is “. . . a very common clever device that when anyone has attained the summit of greatness, he kicks away the ladder by which he has climbed up, in order to deprive others of the means of climbing up after him” (as quoted by Johnson, 2004, p. 262)[21]. The evidence accumulated by Klein (2007) also confirms as much about globalization and the *modus operandi* of the GRC. However, this is something that the GRC would rather that the despised masses be kept in the dark about; thus, the label “conspiracy theory” is a major charge embedded in MSM when it comes to reporting anything that involves the *modus operandi* and/or doings of the GRC. As Hamm (2010) writes, for the GRC, it is:

. . . of utmost importance to make sure that the general public remains as ignorant as supportive to its goals[22]. The real machinations must be hidden, the real culprits unknown while in their place anonymous forces – globalization, the financial crisis, etc. – come out of thin air to cause misery, the foreclosure of homes, the loss of jobs. Globalization, the financial crises affect everyone, so their impacts seem to be relatively equally distributed and an image of an essentially just society remains intact[23] (p. 1011).

So, the cloak of invisibility of ruling power and the stealth emergence of the GRC is the chief means to insure that the establishment of such power is a *fait accompli* without the consent of the people who are ruled by it. In fact, the whole rabbit-from-a-hat trick is to rule people without them even realizing that they’re being ruled, to let them (and even encourage it) “talk” of democracy (within carefully crafted confines, of course), as if they had been liberated from the shackles of former ages, though it be merely a matter of choosing between “Product A” (with ketchup) and “Product B” (with mustard) in so-called “free” elections. Meanwhile, the frenzied, obsessive media produces circus after circus show with its wizardry to distract the masses from ever realizing who the puppeteers really are – it’s ruling intellectual force[24] expressing the “free market” and “democratic” ideology of the GRC, whose only concern is how the world capitalist system can be maintained in a way that perpetuates their power and rule in the future.

Hamm (2010) suggests that the GRC perceives the greatest threat to its power to be from population growth; however, I would add that along with “growth,” another “threat” from world population is the growing consciousness of the way that power is actually distributed globally – the growing sense of inequality, the surreptitious manner by which the GRC

emerged, and as the “shock therapy” wears off, the criminal elements within disaster capitalism responsible for the economic and ecological catastrophes thus far, and more important, those that loom on the horizon.

Hamm’s prospect for the future is quite pessimistic, about as bleak as it could possibly be. The “new global order” is a sophisticated network of totalitarian global power that is far more subtle and extensive than the world has ever known. Its chief characteristic is its cloak of invisibility through which it is able to exercise absolute power without legal interference or the democratic pretensions of the masses; in fact, the illusion of “democracy” is simply a matter of mind control, of mass perception, which can be managed through extensive media manipulation to the benefit of the GRC, as long as the real mechanisms of rule are kept secret. Its chief concern is the survival of capitalism, and the Malthusian, social Darwinist conclusion of the GRC is that the gravest threat to capitalism is “the growth of the human population” – the rationale being that sustainable development is “easier to achieve with one billion people on the planet instead of nine billion”; assuredly, as Hamm (2010) relates, the GRC see themselves “. . . very much like feudal kings, as being of divine superiority placing them far above all other human beings. Fascism is very likely to be a basic pillar of their ideology, and war will be just one of the tools to increase their power and profits” (Hamm 2010, pp. 1010, 1016). Hamm’s conclusion is that only the GRC is “in a position to change course – and does not”; thus, through the rise of global fascism, the “short dream of democracy, human rights, social justice and ecological sustainability would find an abrupt and bloody end,” (Hamm, 2010, p. 1016) decimating the global population, hence, removing the threat to the survival of capitalism – the chief goal of the GRC.

### Conclusion: “Empire” and the rising “multitude”

Similar to Hamm (though in more detail), Hardt and Negri (2000, 2004), depict the rise of the new form of global sovereignty, as a “network power,” simply referred to as “Empire,” which includes the “dominant nation-states along with supranational institutions, major capitalist corporations, and other powers,” – “imperial” rather than “imperialist.” (Hardt and Negri, 2004, p. xii) Nevertheless, for Hardt and Negri, the prospects for the future are not as hopeless as they are for Hamm, for Hardt and Negri also believe that another kind of “network power,” in the form of a global democratic consciousness among the “multitude,” is emerging to confront and challenge the ruling network power of Empire. As Hardt and Negri write, never has democracy “. . . been more necessary. No other path will provide a way out of the fear, insecurity, and domination that permeates our world at war; no other path will lead us to a peaceful life in common” (p. xii). It is the “second face” of globalization; on one face, say Hardt and Negri (2004), Empire spreads:

. . . globally its network of hierarchies and divisions that maintain order through new mechanisms of control and constant conflict. Globalization, however, is also the creation of new circuits of cooperation and collaboration that stretch across nations and continents and allow an unlimited number of encounters. This second face of globalization is not a matter of everyone in the world becoming the same; rather it provides the possibility that, while remaining different, we discover the commonality that enables us to communicate and act together. The multitude too might thus be conceived as a network: an open and expansive network in which all differences can be expressed freely and equally, a network that provides the means of encounter so that we can work and live in common (p. xiii-xiv).

One could very well say that the emergence of a global democratic consciousness, as the organic network power of the multitude, which recognizes the value of the common and, at the same time, confronts and challenges the new global order of Empire, represents the hope for – and is crucial to – a sustainable future. Never before has authentic democracy been achievable, for the grander the scale of its attempt at implementation, the more it has been usurped by hierarchal powers. Yet now, for the first time in history, largely due to the emergence of global consciousness and, more recently, the advent of the internet, *it is conceivable* that authentic global democracy could emerge as an alternate network power,

which challenges the structural criminality within the collective shadow, as well as the secret rule of the Empire Power Elite. Could this emergence of a global democratic “network” consciousness be part of a mass awakening of the multitude – in response to the “biggest wakeup call in history?” Let’s hope so; otherwise, without the rise of authentic global democracy as the foundation for global justice, peace, and equitable relations concerning the global common good – then prospects for a sustainable future (the “other” face of globalization), as globalized sustainable development, remain bleak indeed.

## Notes

1. Hereafter referred to as “*BWCH*”
2. “Chapter 5” of *BWCH*
3. Though Slaughter employs “shadow” as a metaphor, the existence of structural criminality is quite real, as will be illustrated.
4. “Tobacco companies linked to criminal organizations in cigarette smuggling trade, Says CPI Investigation,” Center for Public Integrity report, March 5, 2001: [www.commondreams.org/news20010/0305-03.htm](http://www.commondreams.org/news20010/0305-03.htm)
5. Karen Masterson, “Gramm to work for Swiss bank: UBS Warburg took over much of Enron operation,” *HoustonChronicle.com*, October 7, 2002, [www.chron.com/cs/CDA/story.htm/business/1607686](http://www.chron.com/cs/CDA/story.htm/business/1607686)
6. “New mafias go global,” *San Francisco Chronicle*, January 7, 2001
7. “UN Estimates Drug Business Equal to 8 Percent of World Trade, Associated Press, June 26, 1997. Cf. Mike Gray, *Drug Crazy*, Random House, New York, NY, 1998.
8. See *BWCH* (2010), p. 63
9. Who, “coincidentally,” retired immediately after overseeing the production of the report
10. In reward for his courageous investigative journalism, MSM thoroughly destroyed Webb’s life; consequently, he lost his career (and marriage). In a fit of despair, Webb later (reportedly) took his own life, though it does seem suspicious that the “suicide” was confirmed with two shots to the head. In *Lost History*, Robert Parry (1999) gives a riveting account of Gary Webb’s role to bring to light the CIA’s connection to Contra drug smuggling, then the retaliation Webb suffered as a result – in the form of vicious attacks by MSM. (Also, see: [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gary\\_Webb](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gary_Webb))
11. “World chief issues opium alert,” by Faisal Islam, *Observer*, March 16, 2003
12. “Afghan poppy production rises again,” Associated Press, April 28, 2003
13. Michael Chossudovsky, “The Spoils of War, Afghanistan’s Multibillion Dollar heroin Trade,” April 5, 2004, [www.globalresearch.ca](http://www.globalresearch.ca), citing Congressional testimony of Assistant Secretary of State Robert Charles on April 1, 2004.
14. “US: Afghan Poppy Crop Leaping,” Reuters, November 28, 2003
15. “Where the CIA is in control, narcotics flourish – after Afghanistan, Baghdad is flooded with heroin,” *Balochistan Post*, May 11, 2003 (Ruppert, 2004, p. 624).
16. Ruppert (2004) regards this article as “the best summation of how the global economy actually functioned just prior to the World Trade Center attacks.” (p. 77)
17. See Rothkopf (2008), whom Hamm (2010) cites.
18. Hamm (2010) cites [http://news.yahoo.com/s/ap/20090206/ap\\_on\\_go\\_ca\\_st\\_pe/bailout\\_oversight](http://news.yahoo.com/s/ap/20090206/ap_on_go_ca_st_pe/bailout_oversight)
19. See Leopold (2009), whom Hamm (2010) cites.
20. Johnson (2004) cites Stiglitz (2002), who writes that the problem with globalists is their “fundamentalist market ideology,” which is their “faith in free, unfettered markets,” yet supported “neither by modern theory nor historical experience” (p. 24).
21. As Johnson (2004) duly notes, the quote was derived from Chang (2002), who quotes List.

22. As cited by Hamm (2010), see <http://snipurl.com/vjg10>
23. Quigley (2010), as cited by Hamm (2010)
24. In *The German Ideology*, K. Marx states that the ideas "... of the ruling class are in every epoch the ruling ideas, i.e. the class which is the ruling material force of society, is at the same time its ruling intellectual force." See: [www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1845/german-ideology/ch01b.htm](http://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1845/german-ideology/ch01b.htm)

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