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Editorial

USA's Proxy War and Destruction of Ukraine

by Anil Shrivastava 'Musafir'



The real winner of the Russia-Ukraine War is America's defense industry. The USA has found a nation in Ukraine for waging a proxy war against Russia and an ally in President Zelensky to facilitate the proxy war vis-à-vis destruction of Ukraine.

Last year Lockheed Martin, Raytheon, and Northrop Grumman sold the world some \$50 billion in US weapons. These four companies produce some of the most high-profile missile defense systems and anti-tank missiles that President Joe Biden has

sent to Ukraine since Russian President Vladimir Putin invaded in February. Lockheed also makes another precision missile system that has been sent to Ukraine. Last month, the US Army awarded Lockheed \$521 million in contracts to refill its own supplies, which had been sent to Ukraine. (Source: Vox, December 16, 2022).

The Ukrainian citizens are paying too high a price in this war. As of 26 June, the UN human rights office (OHCHR) has recorded 10,631 civilian casualties in the country –

4,731 dead and 5,900 injured. Most deaths and injuries were caused by explosive weapons with a wide impact area, many of which are inherently indiscriminate when used in populated areas increasing casualties and devastating humanitarian impacts. Besides that, more than a quarter of Ukrainians, or 12 million people, have been forced from their homes. And within the country, over 7.1 million remain displaced. According to the UN refugee agency estimates, over 5.2 million have taken refuge across Europe and over 3.5 million Ukrainian refugees have registered for temporary protection or similar national protection schemes on the continent. (Source: UN News June 26, 2022).

As of June 2022, Ukraine's reconstruction and recovery need toll is estimated at a minimum of \$349 billion (the World Bank, 2022) including the reconstruction of damaged housing (which constitutes about only 40 percent of the total damage).

Both Russia and the USA are responsible for the war and destruction in Ukraine. The truth is that the U.S. is not helping Ukraine due to the goodness of its heart. The fact remains that Russia is the target of one of the most ruthlessly effective proxy wars in modern history and the U.S.A. is the executor of that war.

Meanwhile, Putin's rhetoric has become bolder. He has stated that he could launch a lightning-fast response to any nation that intervened to thwart or threaten Russia. "We have all the instruments for this, such that no one can boast of," he said, in an apparent reference to Moscow's nuclear

and missile arsenal. If that happens that will mean the total destruction of Ukraine.

Commentary

Whose Objects Are These?

Anil Shrivastava 'Musafir'

Yesterday I noticed a couple of balloons floating over my house. My first instinct was to call the

FBI, but I resisted lest they'd send another

F22 buzzing over my head and would shoot down the balloons with a \$400,000 AIM-9X Sidewinder missile razing and burning my modest dwelling and

costing an arm and a leg to the citizens of the United States.

It all began with the Chinese spy balloon. After allowing it to fly for several days over US territory, the American military finally shot down over the country's territorial waters what it said was a surveillance device. After the Chinese balloon completed its surveil of the key nuclear sites of the United States, the White House decided to take a hard line. For its part, Beijing maintains that the object was a weather

balloon and that US balloons entered

Chinese airspace 10 times last year, which the US denies.

Since that incident, at least three more unidentified flying objects have been detected over



North American airspace. The first was initially seen flying along the coast of Alaska. US F-22 fighter aircraft were scrambled to pursue it and shoot it down near the Arctic. This object was said to be about the size of a small car.

A few days later, another object, smaller than but similar in shape to the Chinese spy balloon, was shot down over Canada's Yukon territory by US fighter aircraft after the approval of the Canadian prime

minister. On Sunday, another object was shot down over Lake Huron in Michigan. This object was reportedly hexagonal in shape.

It is estimated that they were experimental balloons that originated from some private lab valued at \$12 U.S. apiece. The United States spent \$400,000 on AIM-9X Sidewinder missiles to shoot them down. They had to use the missile two times over Lake Superior since the first one didn't hit its target. In many people's opinion, the United States should be more prudent in spending taxpayer money. We are already pouring billions into fan war in Ukraine and now we are targeting small unidentified objects launched by small labs.

The Americans have a very peculiar territorial psychology. Unlike the rest of the world, which has to contend with several neighbors that may be friendly or hostile, the US has oceans on its east, and west and it borders with two friendly countries, Canada and Mexico. This means that when any sort of object known to belong to a foreign country intrudes actual American airspace, the reaction of shock is greater than that which would be generated in other parts of the world. This mentality has to do with the Monroe Doctrine of 1823 which warned European powers not to interfere in the affairs of the Western Hemisphere.

It is not the first time unspecified flying objects have been observed in the United States. The Pentagon finally came out and

told everyone that such objects have been seen over American airspace or by military aircraft numerous times over the past several decades. Most have no explanation and have varying descriptions and are perhaps not unlike the ones seen recently. It does not appear that the US has chosen to shoot them down in all cases, making the recent reaction one that signifies a new zero-tolerance stance that was not seen before.

There are of course theories about what these unidentified flying objects are. America has always had groups that believe in aliens and alien spacecraft. Naturally, online forums devoted to this topic are overflowing with theories. After all, if humans can send rovers to Mars, perhaps it is not out of the question that other living creatures could send exploratory missions to Earth.

The truth of the matter, at least about the UFOs shot down over the weekend, is that no one knows. While it is possible that the US government has some idea, it appears unlikely that it would allow conjecture if it could lay the issue to rest for a very curious and transfixed American population. They, and everyone else in the world, expected 2023 to be an extraordinary year, but contact with aliens was likely not on anyone's list of predictions. It's an interesting life, after all.

Cara a Cara (Tête-à-Tête)

get some specialized medical supplies from a mail-order pharmacy. It so happened that my last consignment didn't arrive on time, so I called their toll-free number for assistance. The announcement said, "for English press one. Para el espanol la prensa dos." I simply pressed one on my phone dial. There was another announcement, "All the agents are busy serving other customers. Your call is very important to us. Please wait for the next available agent. If this is an emergency, please hang up and dial 911 or go to the nearest emergency."

After that, I was treated to the most boring English folk song, "Lady Greensleeves" in the background for 33 minutes. I was so annoyed that I feared having a heart attack. Suddenly, a voice came on the phone, "Did you know that heart attack is a leading cause of death among American males. Please check your blood pressure and cholesterol regularly."

"Lady Greensleeves" started playing again in the background. Another ten minutes passed. The voice on the other end said, "Our agents are still busy serving other customers. Your call is still very important to

us. Please stay online. someone will help you as quickly as possible. "Lady Greensleeves" started playing again in the background.

Another five minutes passed. I heard a clicking sound and my call was disconnected. I don't know about them but



the call was really very important for me. So, I pressed redial on my phone. The announcement said, "For English press one. Para el espanol la prensa dos." Thinking that el Espanol may be faster I pressed dos. Yes! El espanol was faster.

"Si tiene fiebre presione 1, de lo contrario presione dos (If you have fever press 1, else press 2.)"

I had a fever for the first two days. I did not have it on the day I called the pharmacy. I pressed 2.

The next question was "si tiene tos presione 1 de lo contrario presione dos (If you have cough press 1, else press 2)."

I had a mild and minimal cough, but there was no option for that. I pressed 1.5 by pressing 1 followed by the star (*) and then 5.

Suddenly, the phone at the other end started ringing then I heard a recording that said, "Si quieres recibir taco de res presiona, para prensa de pollo 2, para frijol prensa 3 (If you want to receive beef taco, press 1, for chicken press 2, for bean press 3.)"

I just pressed 3 in a hurry because I didn't want to be disconnected again. Later it asked me for my name address and the mode of payment. At last, I had a nice Mexican lunch which was better than waiting till eternity to get my medical supply.

Happy Birthday

by Anil Shrivastava 'Musafir'

I recently had my birthday (in December). Or to use the more apposite term, it was my 'happy birthday.' This time I didn't receive many 'happy birthdays' wishes as I removed the mention of my birth date from social media. Other than my immediate family, my sister called to convey her greetings. Yes, one of my cousins and a friend's wife also sent their greetings on the occasion. Other than a few real people I received birthday cards from department stores, American Express, my dentist, Pearle Vision, and my phone provider.

I am glad that people who cared to remember my birthday and a few who really love me sent their nods. In preceding years, I used to get hundreds of birthday wishes on social media. I do this to others including strangers every day on Facebook, LinkedIn, and Twitter without any emotion. This has become my morning chore. Some days I resent doing this unless the person is close to me.

Talking of birthdays, it's this 'happy' thing I find difficult to internalize as a 76-year-old man. Once I watched a movie (can't recall the name) where the protagonist was walking about the street in tattered clothes and manacles. When someone said good morning to him, he retorted in a thundering voice full of angst and anger: "What is so good about this morning?" Similarly, what is so happy about a birthday wish if there is no feeling of love involved.

When I was a child, it was friends and presents and balloons, hoping none of the presents were

duplicates. During boyhood, with each birthday I celebrated more independence, my own room, lessening of restrictions and strictures, playing competitive sports, and being allowed to have sleepovers.

I felt even greater enjoyment on my birthdays during my youth looking forward to getting a degree, finding a job, moving away into my own place, and being free to take all decisions of my life. Every year I was moving closer to the fun part of life: marrying and starting a family, raising kids, and thinking of happier days ahead.

Now things are a bit different. Each birthday to a 76-year-old man represents the passing of yet another milestone on the highway of life. You are manacled, like the protagonist mentioned above. You don't indulge in good food due to the progressively tightening chains of portion control, carb control, cholesterol control, and blood-glucose control. And things will grow worse as I progress in age. I will have less freedom to do what I want, my joints will limit me and so will my kidneys and my heart and my eyesight and my memory, till I will land where I started. Total dependence.

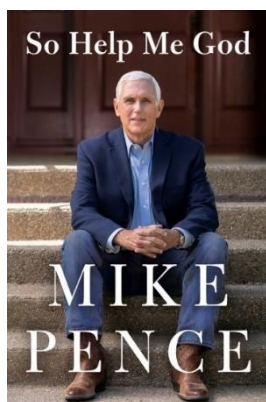
To put it another way, when one's birthdays are happy in youth, you eat as much cake as you can, and when you are old "you can't have your cake and eat it too." Having said that, 'Happy Birthday' to all of you, should today happen to be yours.



So Help Me God

Author: Mike Pence

Publisher: First published by Simon & Schuster in 2022 (560 pages)



Mike Pence's "So Help Me God" is an autobiography starting from early adulthood to the present. Initially, the 560-page book is as vapid as Mr. Pence himself when he repeats his religious belief and temperate upbringing.

The book, however,

turns interesting on page 137 when he meets Donald Trump.

There onwards "So Help Me God" is mainly about the author's relationship with Mr. Trump and his role in that president's administration. He was a confidant of Mr. Trump and helped the former president in choosing his cabinet and supreme court judges. Surprisingly, Mr. Trump always honored Mr. Pence's recommendations.

Pence tells the story of two Donald Trumps. One is funny, perceptive, charming, and has an instinctive rapport with ordinary people. This Trump loves his family and country and fiercely guards the interests of those close to him.

The other Trump is erratic, vengeful, detached from principle, deeply narcissistic, and capable of shocking acts of betrayal. Most people see one or the other, generally according to their politics, but both are the complicated reality that is Donald J. Trump. Former Vice President Mike Pence's memoir captures both iterations of the man.

If Mr. Trump inspires hatred on the political left, Mr. Pence inspires something closer to fear. He is a social conservative who speaks openly about his Christian faith, but on matters of policy and governance, he projects an unflashy competence.

He also has the propensity to be right when everybody else is wrong. In 2015, as governor of Indiana, he signed into law a measure that protected business owners from being forced to provide services against their religious beliefs. The law was passed a few months before the Supreme Court decision declaring same-sex marriage a constitutional right. The media and Democrats portrayed Mr. Pence as a villain for trying to legalize discrimination. Three years later, the Supreme Court made it clear that the Indiana law was fully justified.

In 2016, Mr. Pence terminated a second term as Indiana's governor in order to join Mr. Trump's presidential ticket. That looked like a bad decision—until election night.

Mr. Pence is capable of self-criticism and recalls how disconcerting he could be as a true Christian. "I tried to explain to friends and relatives that my faith had changed me," he writes. "Some understood; most didn't." The question, for 2024, is whether average GOP voters will find what they're seeking in his evangelical expressions.

-Reviewed by Musafir

ESSAY

Russo-Ukrainian War – Year One

by Anil Shrivastava 'Musafir'



Thanks to America's proxy war with Russia; thanks to Russian expansionism and thanks to President Zelensky's obsequiousness to the United State, Ukraine is in total ruin, its people are displaced, thousands of lives have been lost, and millions of livelihoods have been disrupted through displacement, lost homes, and lost incomes due to the war with Russia. The world is shocked by the unfolding humanitarian tragedy as a consequence of this brutal war.

Ukraine occupies a large European landmass, equal to France. But in sharp contrast to many other European nations, Ukraine's demographics are problematic and are the root cause of the present conflict. East and south of the country comprise mainly ethnic Russians whereas

the west and the central portion are mostly Ukrainians. Despite a large degree of similarities, there are major differences between the people of Ukrainian and Russian origins.

Added to this ethnic division, the Russian-dominated south with fertile soil and a high degree of industrialization, accounts for 85 percent of Ukraine's GDP. There is always a tussle between the ethnic Ukrainians and ethnic Russians. The entire country, including President Zelenskyy, speaks Russian but with this

ethnic divide the linguistic unity is broken as there is an attempt to impose the Ukrainian language on the entire nation, including those where Russians are the overwhelming majority.

On top of that, Zelensky wants to make Ukraine a part of the West whereas the NATO ships would control the North Sea causing a crippling effect on the Russian economy. Russia warned Ukraine for months not to align with the West and not consider becoming a part of NATO.

However, Ukraine, in turn, poked its finger into the Russian eyes. As a result, Russia invaded Ukraine on February 24, 2022. A good analogy will be Canada inviting Russian arms to be used against the U.S.A. on its soil. I don't think that it will create a lovefest between the two countries by any means.

The economic sanction of Russia by the United States has failed miserably as the world including Western Europe continues buying oil and gas from Russia. The Russian trade is thriving especially with India and China, the two most populous countries in the world. "Russia's current account surplus tripled in the first seven months of 2022, to a record \$166.6 billion, as revenues soared while sanctions caused imports to plunge." (Source: World Economic Forum).

As for Mr. Zelensky, the rumor has been that he owns a palace worth 35 million USD in Miami as well as assets worth billions. His wife, Olena Zelenska keeps

traveling to Paris and New York most of the time. The U.S.A.'s defense industry has emerged as the biggest benefactor of the war. U.S. weapons sales to other countries experienced a major uptick in 2022, jumping to more than \$51.9 billion largely due to Russia's war on Ukraine.



Russia's invasion of Ukraine has caused widespread destruction with direct damages of over \$97 billion as of June 2022 (Source: The World Bank). Ukraine's reconstruction needs could reach an

estimated \$349 billion or about 1.6 times the country's gross domestic product in 2022 alone. Of course, the U.S. contractors will get the major share of reconstruction contracts being the greatest partner of Ukraine in the war against Russia.

In the end, everyone will be happy except for the poor people of Ukraine. Russia would annex the Russian speaking east; Ukrainians will be relieved (not necessarily happy) to regain peace and the U.S. will be happy to get major reconstruction contracts in Ukraine after being a catalyst in its ruins. It happened in Iraq, South Korea, and Vietnam. History does repeat itself, after all.

CURRENT AFFAIRS

Wither Pakistan Anil Shrivastava 'Musafir'

Pakistan owes its existence to two factors- first deep rooted hatred for India and second to Islam. "We are invincible and pure because we are Muslims," they say, "India is our enemy because it is not an Islamic country."

These sentiments are frequently expressed by common people and commentators on Pakistani TV. I often watch these interviews on YouTube for a good laugh.

India was divided in 1947 because the Muslims wanted a separate country. India decided to exist as a secular democratic republic while Pakistan chose to be an Islamic nation. Soon after the separation they massacred the Hindus in Pakistan and destroyed many of the Hindu temples. Today the Muslim population in India is close to 200 million vs 94.5 million in 1947 while the Hindu population in Pakistan has decreased from 20.4% in 1947 to a mere 1.6% now.

The Pakistanis have been living on borrowed money. They beg and expect the Muslim nations to favor them. Ironically,



most of the Muslim nations are friends of India and are investing billions of dollars in India's growing economy while Pakistan is on the cusp of insolvency.

Mired in political, military, and feudal corruption, Pakistan has now existed as a

state that only survives due to the largesse of the Saudis, China, UAE, and the U.S. But finally, its patrons have also run out of patience due to a lack of transparency on the impact of their actual donations. Oil-rich Saudi Arabia has been a longtime ally of Pakistan, coming to its aid financially numerous times. But now even the Saudis are demanding to see serious improvements concerning governance and corruption before it loosens its purse strings.

Last week, Pakistan received another bad news from the International Monetary Fund which rejected Pakistan's plea for aid until it revised its Circular Debt Management Plan (CDMP). This, as its foreign reserves fell to \$3.2 billion - to around three weeks of imports - its rupee kept falling in January,

power outrages left millions in the dark, a food crisis intensified and debt obligation remained dangling over its head. (Source: Indian Express)

Pakistan is also deeply in debt to China. More than 30% of Pakistan's total foreign debt is owed to China, according to the IMF. That's three times what

Pakistan owes the IMF and more than its loans from the World Bank and Asian Development Bank combined (Source: CNBC).

Other than the economic crisis, Pakistan has always been ruled by corrupt military leaders directly or indirectly. Its democratically elected governments have always been short-lived due to military coups. The Pakistanis had direct military rules between 1958 to 1971, 1977 to 1988, and from 1999 to 2008). Still, according to them, Pakistan is the best country in the world. Allah has also given them the atomic bomb to deter the enemies of Islam.

Pakistan also continues to face multiple sources of internal and external conflict. Extremism and intolerance of diversity and dissent have grown, fueled by a narrow vision of Pakistan's national identity, and are threatening the country's prospects for

social cohesion and stability. Pakistan's Baluchistan province which is closer to Afghanistan in ethnicity wants independence from Pakistan. Just the other day they bombed a Pakistani mosque where



more than 100 people died. The inability of state institutions to reliably provide peaceful ways to resolve grievances

has encouraged groups to seek violence as an alternative.

Pakistan itself sponsors terrorism. It has provided shelters to gangsters who recruit and train terrorists to attack the interests of the United States and India. Osama bin Laden was hiding in Pakistan with the full knowledge of the military. It won't be an exaggeration to say that the biggest export of Pakistan is terrorism.

Today, Pakistan is a weak state; tomorrow, it could become a failed one. That would be a regional and global nightmare, given the presence of nuclear weapons and terrorists. Unfortunately, the Islamists are still blinded by their religious fervor. If they really want to belong to the world community and progress, they must come out of the veil of such notions.



What's the Fuss about ChatGPT?

by Musafir

Recently it was in the news that certain Internet Search Engines such as Microsoft Edge were planning to power their browsers with ChatGPT. So, what is ChatGPT and how does that enhance search engines?

Artificial Intelligence (AI) uses Natural language processing (NLP) giving computers the ability to understand the text and spoken words in much the same way human beings can. The browsers and search engines utilize NLP to understand and respond to user queries. Examples of NLP are English, French, Hindi, etc.

Before going any further let me introduce a new term, Chatbots which is necessary for understanding ChatGPT. At the most basic level, a chatbot is a computer program that simulates and processes human conversation (either written or spoken), allowing humans to interact with digital devices as if they were communicating with a real person. Verizon and ATT are some of the companies I know that use Chatbots for customer support where you talk to a computer in the way you would converse with a human being.

ChatGPT, which stands for chat-based Generative Pre-trained Transformer, is a potent tool that can be put to use in several different ways to boost productivity in several different areas. It analyses and comprehends written or spoken language using machine learning algorithms, and then generates responses based on that input. Because it is trained on an enormous amount of text data, ChatGPT can comprehend the context and meaning of words and phrases and generate contextual responses that are highly relevant.

ChatGPT utilizes both NLP and AI to understand and respond to user queries. It is designed specifically for conversational AI, making it more adept at handling complex conversations and understanding natural language inputs. Thus, Search engines using ChatGPT specialize in conversational AI making its browser more effective.



ChatGPT offers a seamless user experience (transparent), with a chat interface that's easy to use and navigate. It also provides a personalized experience, with responses tailored to the user's specific needs and preferences.

ChatGPT can be easily integrated with a variety of platforms and applications, including messaging apps, social media platforms, and websites. It's also customizable, so businesses can tailor it to their specific needs. Non-ChatGPT devices, on the other hand, may not be as flexible when it comes to customization and integration with third-party tools.

Both ChatGPT and NLP understand and respond to user queries. However, ChatGPT is designed specifically for conversational AI, making it more adept at handling complex conversations and understanding natural language inputs. Search engines such as Google that use only NLP as part of its broader suite of products may not be as specialized in conversational AI unless they adapt to ChatGPT.

Overall, ChatGPT is a versatile and powerful tool that can be used in a variety of ways. It's still in its early days, but technology like this, I believe, represents a paradigm shift in AI-assisted productivity. ChatGPT, or something like it, is very likely to become an invaluable tool for anyone looking to boost their output and efficiency.



Too Busy Anil Shrivastava 'Musafir'

I have many friends and acquaintances who are always busy no matter what time or season it is. Whenever I call them and ask, "How are you?" The answer always is unequivocal, "Very busy."

Since I know them, I can tell with absolute certainty that they are not as busy as they claim to be. It's considered this a kind of show off some people flaunt their car; some flaunt their unseemly huge home and others display one's celebrity status by name calling. They all develop their unique ways of brandishing their importance.

What are lesser mortals like us to do? Should we pretend to be perennially insignificant and hide in anonymity while they don the colored robe of the busy bee?

"I have no time to breathe." "My weekends are worse than my office days. There is too much to do." "Busy, busy, busy! I have no time for anything these days." How many times do we hear people say that?

Of course, you are breathing, your weekends are free for chosen things and you have time for many things. The likelier reason for their claim is that they want to project their importance. You are busier than the chairman of the country's



largest corporation and so saddled you are with giant responsibilities! By saying that, they expect perhaps to gain importance in others' eyes. What they gain is the comical image of a self-important busybody.

One of my reformed former colleagues told me, "I used to say a lot, 'I'm very busy,' mostly to ward off requests from colleagues or clients. Then I realized what a rude thing it was to tell the other person in effect, 'I don't want to hear anything from you because I don't think it's important.' Worse, I was disparaging myself."

He further added, "I was confessing that I let others set my agenda rather than setting it myself. Bosses may set goals or targets, but my agenda is my province. I determine what goes into it, what I do, and how I do it. If I am so busy that I am frantic, it means I have allowed others to set an unreasonable pace. Instead of suggesting that I am a person of importance, it suggests that I am so unimportant that I can't even determine my own life. Others dictate it."

One of my doctor friends gave me another point of view, "I am very busy is a silly thing to say, either as a motto or as an explanation. It amounts to saying I permit outside forces to decide what I do, instead of my own intentions or plans. If I am not anybody's puppet, but an

adult with my ideas and preferences, I may not always get what I want, but I must live my own life. I should set my speed and give attention to what I value. I should never be too busy to live my life my way, listen to my patients, my children, my friends.”

What does it mean to say, “I am very busy?” I asked a young entrepreneur I know who is really busy running his business while leading a full life with his wife and three children.

Busy? Of course, I am busy. I look after my projects but I would consider it presumptuous to tell others that I am very busy. I know others who are busier than me. In any case, I should never be too busy to listen to my clients or my children.

Personally, I would be ashamed to tell anybody, ‘I’m too busy to attend to you,’ because it would

be like admitting I have no control over my life. It is like saying I can’t manage my affairs. Even worse, it means I won’t manage my affairs. Last month, when a close friend died, I canceled all appointments. Not only I attended the funeral but also took the whole day off to grieve for my friend. I don’t want to be too busy for that kind of thing.”

Am I too busy? I like to do things. Honestly, I want to do many things. I manage them poorly, but the management is mine and I will not give it up. Above all, I want to be ever open to friends and neighbors, colleagues and relatives, who want to ask a question, share a thought or simply want to chat for a minute. I don’t want to gain importance by saying, “Sorry, I am very busy.”

The New Century

Twinkle Twinkle Little Star

by Anil Shrivastava 'Musafir'



I wish to see humans land on Mars in my lifetime. Of all the adventures and thrills that I've witnessed, space exploration is the dearest to my heart. It all started on October 4, 1957, when I saw the first sputnik crossing over my village in the sky. It looked like a little star that moved in its orbit at a speed of 7,000 mph. That was soon followed by manned space flights, orbit around the moon and then Neil Armstrong and Edwin "Buzz" Aldrin walking on the surface of the moon on July 21, 1969. We also landed on a comet and asteroids and purposely crashed on one of those in an attempt to change its course to

avoid any future collision with the earth by a wandering heavenly body.

In 2012 Voyager 1 left the solar system for the first time and is traveling into deep space (interstellar) after exploring Jupiter and Saturn. Voyager 2 is also in interstellar space after traveling for 45 years and 5 months as of January 20, 2023, reaching a distance of 12.275 billion miles from Earth. In its course, it flew by Uranus and Neptune.

It has been a spectacular journey starting with a Redstone Rocket that took the first American into space on May 5, 1961. That was followed by Project Mercury, the

Gemini Program, the Apollo program, the Space Shuttle to the current launch of Artemis 1 on November 16, 2022, which orbited the moon and returned to earth as planned. Artemis 2 is on track to launch with a crew to orbit the moon by the end of 2024. Humans will return to the moon by 2025. The moon will be the launching pad for going further to Mars by 2040 or sooner.

This is not only for thrills. Space exploration has led to the development of various technologies that feed back into the economy and improve our lives on Earth. Without space programs, we wouldn't have GPS, accurate weather prediction, solar cells, or ultraviolet filters in sunglasses and cameras. There's also medical research happening in space right now that could cure diseases and prolong human lives, and these experiments can't be done on Earth. Space exploration could save our life.

Many objects around the solar system are made of similar minerals and chemical compounds that exist on Earth. That means that some asteroids, moons, and planets could be rich in minerals and rare elements. Figuring out how to harvest those materials in a safe and responsible manner and bring them back to Earth represents a possible benefit of space exploration. Elements that are rare on Earth may exist elsewhere, and that could open new avenues for manufacturing, product design, and resource distribution.

We know that Mars is enveloped by carbon dioxide. But there is a plan to convert Martian carbon dioxide into oxygen called MOXIE. This can help make the Red Planet habitable for humans.

For me, the romance of space will never be over. As a boy in India, I spent summers stargazing in my village on the Indo-Nepal border. Now, I am looking forward to man landing on Mars all within a span of 80 years (1960 AD-2040 AD). It has been a privilege to live in such an exciting time.

Being old

Ashok Lal

Those years have gone
Which were laced with gold
Now gradual emptying of tooth paste
Tells me I am getting old

No one looks at me now
With eyes that twinkle
From hello dear, come near
I have moved to sir and uncle

Hairs gone, eyes weak, tooth in decay
But when I walk straight, people say
Oh sir, how young you look
But I know, my youth passed a long time away

Wrong to say that age is a number
Not when in gatherings one goes into slumber
My repeating same jokes, anecdotes again
And again
Causes near and dear ones a bit of pain

Out on walk I stay away from dogs
Don't read chick magazines, only staid blogs
Sunsets aren't beautiful, I can say with pain
Knowing well sunrise will not come again

Too Many Madmen

by Anil Shrivastava 'Musafir'

In Mark Twain's "The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn" more-than-a-century-ago, Huck is none too thrilled with his new life of cleanliness, manners, church, and school. Tired of his confinement and fearing the beatings by his father, Pap, Huck escapes from Pap by faking his own death, killing a pig and spreading its blood all over the cabin.

As crazy that may sound," it was an effective way to induce an adversary like Pap to stand down. Looking a little crazy may be an effective way to apprehend adversaries. This is called 'madman theory' first devised by Machiavelli. According to Machiavelli, "at times it is a very wise thing to simulate madness." That's what he wrote in "Prince" in 1517 AD.

In the modern world, the madman theory has been used by the world leaders many times. Richard Nixon tried to apply it diligently. During the 1968 presidential campaign, he told Haldeman (later Chief Staff to President Richard Nixon), "I call it the Madman Theory, Bob. I want the North Vietnamese to believe I've reached the point where I might do anything to stop the war."



Madman theory makes the leader look as unpredictable. In the current time Donald Trump criticized American foreign policy by stating, "We are totally predictable. We tell everything. We have to be unpredictable, and we have to be unpredictable starting now." Trump claimed credit for using a crazy approach to bring North Korea to the bargaining table, that no one else could

have done. His success story apparently ended inconclusively at the bargaining tables of Singapore and Hanoi.

Kim Jong-un himself is perceived as a madman.

Trump called him 'crazy', and 'little rocket man'. Kim is constantly playing a madman by repeatedly testing missiles to destabilize Japan and South Korea, and the United States.

In the backdrop of Russia's Ukraine invasion, a new madman has emerged in the geopolitical arena in the form of Vladimir Putin. Putin is playing madman game by keeping the use of nuclear option open by keeping the Russian nuclear forces on a high combat alert.

Machiavelli, certainly, asked to be 'wise' while 'simulating' 'madness'. What happens when too many people try to simulate craziness at the same time? The madman theory loses its effectiveness in such a situation.

Simple Quiz



1. What is the atomic sign for Helium in the periodic table?
2. What is the general name for a group of wolves?
3. Which two fairytale characters ended up in a house made of gingerbread?
4. Which famous woman in history was the lover of Mark Antony?
5. Which music genre are the Bee Gees best known for?
6. What is the longest river in the world?
7. In which sport do we hear the terms "power play" and "short-handed goal"?
8. Which planet is the 3rd closest to the sun?
9. Scurvy is the result of a deficiency in which vitamin?
10. How many lobes is the human brain divided into?

Answers: 1. He 2. Pack 3. Hansel and Gretel 4. Cleopatra 5. Disco 6. Nile 7. Hockey 8. Earth 9. Vitamin C 10. Four

