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Not Normal Times: Post-Collapse Apocalyptic Novels (Part One)

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ABSTRACT

The years since the September 9, 2001 terror attacks in America have been a time of heightened anxiety for many Americans. The increased sense of vulnerability, the slow progress of two overseas wars, and very serious economic instability have combined to make this period a challenging one. As a result, novels that conceive of a catastrophic collapse of society have gained traction. This essay is the first part in a series that will examine such novels. The two works addressed here come from author James Wesley, Rawles. They are *Patriots: A Novel of Survival in the Coming Collapse* (1990-2009) and its sequel, *Survivors: A Novel of the Coming Collapse* (2011).

“That winter they ate the dogs.”¹

Introduction

Viewed from the perspective of its two hundred and thirty-six year history, the United States today faces economic, military, social, and political problems that collectively rival any other challenging period in her history. To be sure, the Civil War era was a convulsive shock to the relatively young nation and The Great Depression brought misery and doubts to tens of millions of people about the American experiment, shaking the political and economic foundations to the core. Further, the upheavals of the Sixties ushered in great social changes, the merits and demerits of which are vigorously debated to this day. The war in Vietnam seriously tarnished the reputation of the military and the “malaise” and high interest rates of the Seventies eroded American self-confidence significantly. Two decades of relative prosperity then bolstered conditions, leading America into the new millennium with a hope that the expanded multicultural experiment (which had mostly replaced the earlier melting pot model) would ultimately be a success. When the presidential election of 2000

was contested, people took note but there was no larger crisis in evidence. Politics, perhaps, were not going to be much more important under Bush than they were under the personally misbehaving Clinton.

This sense of hope and normalcy changed dramatically on a beautiful late-summer morning in September. Over the northeastern United States, skies were clear, the wind muted, and hints of more comfortable fall air were in evidence. Nothing foreshadowed what was about to happen. Literally from out of the blue, commercial airliners hijacked by terrorists were about to rain down devastation on New York City, America's financial capital, and the Pentagon, the focal point of America's vast military establishment. "Nearly 3,000 victims and the 19 hijackers died in the attacks. Among the 2,753 victims who died in the attacks on the World Trade Center were 343 firefighters and 60 police officers from New York City and the Port Authority . . . Another 184 people were killed in the attack on the Pentagon. The overwhelming majority of casualties were civilians, including nationals of over 70 countries." A Muslim terrorist group known as al-Qaeda and led by Osama bin Laden was blamed for the attack. In direct response, America initiated a war against Afghanistan the month after 9/11, followed in March 2003 by an invasion of Iraq. This was all part of a larger movement known as "the Global War on Terror."²

For ten years now, this anti-terrorist campaign has affected life in America, reducing personal freedoms while, according to some, offering little enhanced safety. At the same time, economic and financial problems (some the result of massive off-shoring of U.S. jobs, particularly to China) have bedeviled the American nation. In addition, renewed immigration, which has broken with America's past laws and traditions of encouraging only immigration of European-derived peoples, has quickly changed the demographics of America, leading to further anxiety about America's future. The breakdown of the traditional family, represented by perennially high divorce rates, out-of-wedlock childbirth, and government sanction of "alternative lifestyles" has added to the stresses of keeping America safe, prosperous and functional. The election of the first non-white president in 2008 was a sign to many that the old America was a thing of the past.

Three years ago, I addressed some of these problems in my essay "Whither Japan Should the United States Collapse?"³ In the wake of the U.S. Subprime Mortgage Crisis that resulted in the September 2008 collapse of Lehman Brothers, Wall Street in general entered a period of heightened instability.⁴ In the aftermath of this turmoil, Goldman Sachs was left in a prominent position, a situation that *Rolling Stone* journalist Matt Taibbi, for one, viewed unfavorably: "The world's most powerful investment bank is a great vampire squid wrapped

around the face of humanity, relentlessly jamming its blood funnel into anything that smells like money.”⁵ The European banking crisis has exacerbated not only these financial problems but also the *perception* that events are spiraling out of control. For instance, Wall Street spent the first three days of the week of August 8-12 gyrating from a loss of 635 points (-5.6%), up 423 points the next day, then down 519 points on August 10th. The Dow Jones Average was down 2,000 points in three weeks.⁶ Such was the magnitude of the fluctuations that Wikipedia even has a separate entry for the month:

The August 2011 stock markets fall was the sharp drop in stock prices in August 2011 in stock exchanges across the United States, Middle East, Europe and Asia. This was due to fears of contagion of the European sovereign debt crisis to Spain and Italy, as well as concerns over France's current AAA rating, concerns over the slow economic growth of the United States and its credit rating being downgraded. Severe volatility of stock market indexes continued for the rest of the year.⁷

Standard and Poor's downgrading of America's credit rating from AAA to AA+ played a role in the downturn. The literary market, then, seems to operate in parallel with Wall Street, though the question of the novelty of the trend is open to debate. Still, a passage like this describing the plight America faces is typical: “America is decomposing right in front of our eyes, and it is time that we all admitted it. In the old days, if you met a stranger out on the streets you knew that you could almost certainly trust that person. But these days if you let your child wander one aisle over while you are shopping at Wal-Mart there is a chance that someone will try to abduct her.”⁸

Societal Collapse Novels

The genre of “coming economic crash” books is apparently a popular one, for they have been appearing regularly for decades. Since the Nixon era, for instance, we have seen Robert L. Preston's *How To Prepare For The Coming Crash* (1972); *Crisis Investing Opportunities and Profits in the Coming Great Depression*, by Douglas R. Casey (1980); Joseph E. Granville's *The Warning: The Coming Great Crash in the Stock Market* (1985); and *The Great Reckoning: Protecting Yourself in the Coming Depression* by James Dale Davidson (1994). What seems new this century is the growth of novels not simply about *economic* collapse but entire *civilizational* collapse. Under discussion here will be two works about stories depicting life in worlds far different than the one we know today. The first is James Wesley, Rawles' *Patriots: A Novel of Survival in the Coming Collapse* (1990-2009; the comma after

Wesley is deliberate), followed by *Survivors: A Novel of the Coming Collapse* (Rawles, 2011) which will be examined in an appendix.⁹

What is this sense of crisis? One writer has recently discussed the idea of what might be called “anxiety overload.” In a piece entitled “Dystopia is Now!” Jef Costello notes a curious paradox:

Whatever happened to the Age of Anxiety? In the post-war years, intellectuals left and right were constantly telling us — left and right — that we were living in an age of breakdown and decay. The pre-war gee-whiz futurists (who’d taken a few too many trips to the World’s Fair) had told us that in just a few years we’d be commuting to work in flying cars. The Cassandras didn’t really doubt that, but they foresaw that the people flying those cars would have no souls. We’d be men at the End of History, they told us; Last Men devoted only to the pursuit of pleasure — and quite possibly under the thumb of some totalitarian Nanny State that wanted to keep us that way. Where the futurists had seen utopia, the anti-futurists saw only dystopia. And they wrote novels, lots of them, and made films . . .

But those days are over now. The market for dystopias has diminished considerably. The sense that something is *very, very wrong*, and getting worse — (something felt forty, fifty years ago even by ordinary people) has been replaced with a kind of bland, flat affect complacency. Why? Is it because the anxiety went away? Is it because things got better? Of course not. *It’s because all those dire predictions came true.*¹⁰

The following two novels under review imagine a world in which those dire predictions indeed do come true.

Patriots: A Novel of Survival in the Coming Collapse

Rawles’ novel *Patriots* is both a novel and a survival manual. While at times the two interfere with each other, overall the tactic works. Rawles begins the novel with protagonist Todd Gray traveling back and forth between his home in western Idaho and his company headquarters in Chicago. Gray works for an accounting firm, and the economic situation has deteriorated to a point that the firm has brought in two experts in dealing with hyperinflation, one from Russia and one from Argentina. Rawles deftly ties that to his collapse scenario:

When the crunch came, it did not arrive without warning. By the turn of the century, Federal spending was out of control, and the debt and deficit problems were

insurmountable. By 2008, with the global credit market in free fall, bank runs and huge Federal bailouts were becoming more frequent. Collectively, the bailouts were a massive, unstoppable hemorrhage of red ink. The debt and deficit numbers compounded at frightening rates. But it was too agonizing to confront them, so they were ignored. A report by the Congressional Budget Office was alarming. It said that just to pay the *interest* on the national debt for the year, it would take 100 percent of the year's individual income tax revenue, 100 percent of corporate and excise taxes, and 41 percent of Social Security payroll taxes. Just before the Crunch, *interest* on the national debt was consuming 96 percent of government revenue.

The debt piled up at the rate of nine billion a day, or fifteen thousand a second. The official national debt was over six trillion dollars. The unofficial debt, which included "out year" unfunded obligations such as entitlements, long-term bonds, and military pensions, topped fifty-three trillion dollars. Even the official national debt had ballooned to 120 percent of the gross domestic product and was compounding at the rate of 18 percent per year. The Federal government was borrowing 193 percent of revenue for the year. The president was nearing the end of his term in office. The stagnant economy, rising interest rates, and creeping inflation troubled the president. Publicly, he beamed about having "beat the deficit." Privately, he admitted that the low deficit figures came from moving increasingly large portions of Federal funding "off budget." Behind the accounting smoke and mirrors game, the real deficit was growing. Government spending at all levels equated 45 percent of the Gross Domestic Product. In July the recently-appointed Chairman of the Federal Reserve Board had a private meeting with the president. The Chairman pointed out the fact that even if congress could balance the budget, the national debt would still grow inexorably, due to compounding interest.

The president didn't let trifles like ledger sheets and statistics get in his way. The economy was on a roll. The stock market was at an all-time high. It was business as usual for his administration. Instead of reducing the growth in government spending, he launched an immoderate bank lending stimulus package and another extravagant round of his pet "infrastructure building" programs in Iraq and Afghanistan. (4-5)

These developments naturally worried international bankers in Europe. Due to an "off the record" comment by the chairman of the Deutsche Bundesbank, in which he paired the words "imminent" and "default," the dollar collapsed.¹¹ Countries like Japan dumped their trillions of dollars in U.S. Treasuries. Rawles then imagines what would happen:

To help finance the ever-growing debt, the Federal Reserve decided to make a tactical move. It began monetizing larger and larger portions of the debt. The Fed already owned \$682 billion in Treasury debt, which was considered an "asset" for the purposes of expanding the money supply. In just a few days, Federal

Reserve holdings in Treasury debt more than doubled. The printing presses were running around the clock printing currency. The official domestic inflation rate jumped to 16 percent in the third week of August. To the dismay of the Fed, the economy refused to bounce back. The balance of trade figures grew steadily worse. Leading economic indicators declined to a standstill.

In reaction to the crisis, the lawmakers in Washington D.C. belatedly wanted to slash Federal spending, but were frustrated that they couldn't touch most of it. The majority of the budget consisted of interest payments and various entitlement programs. Previous legislation had locked in these payments. Many of these spending programs even had automatic inflation escalators. So the Federal budget continued to expand, primarily because of the interest burden on the Federal debt. The interest payments grew tremendously as interest rates started to soar. It took 85 percent interest rates to lure investors to six month T-bills. The Treasury Department stopped auctioning longer-term paper entirely in late August. With inflation roaring, nobody wanted to lend Uncle Sam money for the long term. Jittery American investors increasingly distrusted the government, the stock market, and even the dollar itself. In September, new factory orders and new housing starts dropped off to levels that could not be properly measured. Corporations, large and small, started massive layoffs. The unemployment rate jumped from 12 percent to 20 percent in less than a month.

The catalyst for the real panic, however, was the stock market crash that started in early October. The bull stock market had gone on years longer than expected, defying the traditional business cycle. Nearly everyone thought that they were riding an unstoppable bull. From fifteen to twenty billion in new mutual fund money had been pouring into the stock market every month. The mutuals had become so popular that there were more mutual funds listed than individual stocks. By 2009, there were 240,000 stockbrokers in the country. It was the 1920's in *deja vu*. Just before the Crunch, the Dow Jones Industrial Average was selling at a phenomenal sixty-five times dividends — right back where it had been just before the 2000 dot-com bubble explosion. The market climbed to unrealistic heights, driven by unmitigated greed. (5-6)

Next, over the course of nineteen days, the stock market dropped 7,550 points. “Finally, the government suspended all trading, since there was almost no one buying any of the issues that came up for sale.” Then, as if to prove how flat indeed the world had become,¹² Rawles writes that “Because all of the world's equities markets were tied inextricably together, they crashed simultaneously.” As a result, the London and Tokyo markets had completely crashed, and within a few weeks “the domestic value of the dollar collapsed completely.” Given the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation's guarantee to insure all deposits “to \$200,000,” the government had no choice but to do so by printing yet more paper dollars. Inflation followed (6-7).

The numbers explain why Gray's company had invited experts on inflation. "Inflation jumped from 16 percent to 35 percent in three days. From there on, it climbed in spurts during the next few days: 62 percent, 110 percent, 315 percent, and then to an incredible 2,100 percent. . . . thereafter, the value of the dollar was pegged hourly." Pensioners, those on fixed incomes or unemployment insurance, and welfare recipients were wiped out. Commodity prices soars; a can of beans, for instance, cost \$150 dollars. "The riots started soon after inflation bolted past the 1000 percent mark. Detroit, New York, and Los Angeles, were the first cities to see full scale rioting and looting. Soon, the riots engulfed most other large cities" (7-8).

And so civilization in America collapsed. The human toll was enormous. In total Rawles posits that over three years one hundred and sixty million Americans died, mostly from starvation, exposure, and disease. An influenza epidemic alone took sixty-five million people (257). This sequence of events explains why Rawles chose the following passage to preface the opening chapter. Penned by *Star Trek* creator Gene Roddenberry, it reads:

. . . nuclear warfare is not necessary to cause a breakdown of our society. You take a large city like Los Angeles, New York, Chicago — their water supply comes from hundreds of miles away and any interruption of that, or food, or power for any period of time you're going to have riots in the streets. Our society is so fragile, so dependent on the interworking of things to provide us with goods and services, that you don't need nuclear warfare to fragment us anymore than the Romans needed it to cause their eventual downfall. (1)

Rawles adds a handful of descriptions of what happens when a complex, high-tech society collapses. People lose jobs because product demand falls and fuel becomes scarce. This scarcity also means trucks cease to become the normal means of distribution. Railroads are still economical, but looters purposely derail trains to strip them of valuable cargo. Ironically, oil refineries lacked their own power sources, so when the electricity stopped flowing from the power grid, they, too, shut down. At an aluminum plant, molten metal began to cool in the pipes of the factory when power was lost. Solidified, it destroyed the plant. One of the starkest depictions of collapse comes in the account of prisons. Lacking power to operate cell doors and run security cameras, prisons saw rampant rioting. "At many prisons the guard forces could not gain control of the prison population, and there were mass escapes. At several others, guards realized that the overall situation was not going to improve, and they took the initiative to do something about it. They walked from cell to cell, shooting

convicts. Scores of other prisoners died at the hands of fellow convicts. Many more died in their cells due to other causes; mainly dehydration, starvation, and smoke inhalation” (9-11).

Now that the roots of the collapse have been established and some of the consequences sketched, Rawles can begin his story in earnest. The cast involves a group of college friends from the Chicago area, now grown and working. Presciently, they formed a retreat group in rural Idaho in case there was ever a need to evacuate urban areas and hole up while troubles abound. Significantly, the group is ecumenical and multiracial, though the theology is decidedly Christian. Throughout the novel, characters pause to pray and never do they swear. Mary, Todd Gray’s wife, is a reliable Christian woman.¹³ Three single men belong to the group. Dan Fong is Chinese American, while Kevin Lendel is Jewish.¹⁴ Tom Kennedy (T.K.) is the third man (his mother was Spanish from Spain). Jeff Trasel, a former Marine, was originally a member, but let his membership lapse. (He later arrived with his girlfriend.) Next come Mike and Lisa Nelson. Mike trained in botany but ended up as a Chicago policeman, while Lisa is an airbrush artist. Finally, there is the Layton couple, Ken and Terry, whose whereabouts become a concern for the others. Doug Carlton, a college student, later joins the group in Idaho, and beginning in chapter twenty-three, Ian Doyle, an Air Force pilot, and his wife Blanca fly in to join Gray’s group.

The first part of the novel sets up preparation of the fortified Idaho ranch that the group has acquired. As societal breakdown moves gradually from the cities to the towns to the country, the risks now threaten the group. Rawles describes the exhaustive security precautions taken to secure the compound. The doors and door jambs, windows and frames, for instance, are heavily reinforced with steel. Fences run around the perimeter of the group house, and surveillance equipment is used extensively. One colorful feature is a set of “spider holes” dug along the road in front of the house, allowing members to set up an undetected ambush when intruders are spotted. Throughout the timespan of the novel, armed sentry duty around the house is routine. As events prove, these precautions are necessary. This setting also allows Rawles a way to insert various new characters into the story.

“Guests”

Many authors, such as Chaucer in his *Canterbury Tales*, have employed the travel or pilgrimage device to structure their narratives. *Patriots* does the reverse; the group’s fortified retreat is the center of action and most peripheral characters encountered come

wandering by. Not all of them mean well. For instance, the first such encounter is with two men trudging along the frozen road carrying heavy packs and pushing a cart. An ambush is quickly arranged and the men are disarmed. They claim to be refugees but turn out to be something worse: When Gray and his men examine one of the bags the men have been carrying, they are in for a shock. "What, did you sweet guys shoot a poor little Bambi?" Mike Nelson asks. "Or did you just pick out some farmer's fat little calf to shoot? It's a good thing that it's so cold, otherwise all your fresh meat would have spoiled in a heartbeat." Opening one of the bags, he began to vomit violently. Another member of the group came over to check. "There, he saw that Mike had just uncovered a clear plastic bag containing three small human legs and four small human arms." He executed the two cannibals on the spot (97-101).

Not all trekkers were as poisonous. One day a twenty-two-year-old man dressed in camouflage gear came by and he, too, walked into the ambush. He turned out to be a college student more or less roaming on his own, trying to find a peaceful place to settle down. He had been at the University of Southern Colorado when the meltdown occurred and tried to get back to his parents' place in Missoula, Montana. When his car had run out of gas, he was reduced to hopping a train, then to walking. It was a long trip. Unfortunately, when he finally reached Missoula, he found that his parents' home had been burned down. "The evening after I buried what was left of my mom and dad's bodies, I dug up my cache in my folks' backyard" (128-130). The young man's name is Doug Carlton, and because he has military training and is fit and willing to work, he is the first outsider to be invited into the group.

In another instance, a family of three is stopped while riding mountain bikes past the retreat. After a cursory search, they are grilled about their identities and intentions. It turns out that the father, Lon Porter, is a highly skilled Boeing machinist. Since they have no real place to go either, they are also invited to join the group, as Porter's skills will help them all survive (138). Rawles' primary concern, as mentioned, is to offer a useful survival manual for any reader willing to pay attention. Toward that end, he spends many pages giving precise descriptions of what is needed.

Guns

Rawles uses his characters' behavior to instruct his readers on which firearms are to be acquired. "Purchasing for each member began with a battle rifle, a riot shotgun with a spare 'birdgun' long barrel and screw-in choke tubes, a .45 automatic pistol, and a .22 rifle for target

practice and small game hunting. Next,” writes Rawles, “came all of the paraphernalia to support these guns: ammunition, dozens of magazines, cleaning kits, spare parts, holsters, and an Army LC-1 ‘web gear’ harness with canteen and gun magazine pouches” (43). As guns are among the main characters in this novel, it is cumbersome to list even a fraction of those discussed (Springfield Armory M1A, Colt CAR-15, Ruger Mini-14 and so on).

Meticulously, Rawles inserts instruction into the narrative. For instance, Todd and Mary, we learn, “loaded half of the magazines for each of their guns. Todd’s plan was to alternately unload these magazines and load the other half of their magazines twice a year. This would prevent the magazine springs from ‘taking a set’” (13). Rawles also introduces a device known as a “drop-in Auto-sear.” Available only through a loophole in the strict laws against automatic weapons, this device turns an AR-15 or CAR-15 into a machine gun. “It means,” Dan Fong lectures, “that instead of having a two-position selector switch — SAFE and FIRE — you have a three-position switch SAFE, SEMI, and AUTO. The D.I.A.S. can’t do this all by itself though. You also need an M16 bolt carrier and a set of M16 lower-receiver internal parts.” Concluding, Fong notes, “Now all of you already have early model hard-chromed M16 carriers in your ARs. That was part of the group standard set of upgrades. As you recall, I once insisted that we standardize with the chrome carriers, tritium front sights, and the five-slot closed cage M16A2 flash hidiers” (63-64).

Apparently, Rawles is serious about using this novel as an actual form of survival instruction. That would explain the range and depth of his teachings on the proper use of firearms. Consider, for instance, that Dan Fong always remembers to pour water in the area beneath the muzzle of his gun when setting up for sniper action, as this keeps rising dust from exposing his position (317). Throughout, we are treated to passages such as “The one in the lead, a man, was armed with a Thompson submachinegun with a horizontal foregrip. Following ten yards behind him was a tall woman, armed with an M249 SAW” (341). Or this one with pilot Doyle speaking: “I got these gems from the AP’s arms room, along with three Beretta M9 pistols. They were the last guns still in there. Unfortunately, there was no small arms ammo left on base. They only kept a small quantity on hand for base security, and that had been cleaned out when the APs left. The nearest ammo supply point was way the heck down at Fort Huachuca. Luckily, I had a few hundred rounds of commercial .223 at home, plus three .50 caliber ammo cans full of nine-millimeter ball, tracer, and soft nose” (298). Guns and ammunition are everywhere an integral part of the novel.

Other Weapons and Such

Rawles — assuming he knows what he is talking about — daringly supplies a long list of information on constructing and using weapons other than guns, some illegal in normal times. For instance, when discussing Molotov cocktails, a character informs readers that gas is too thin to stick to a tank or armored personnel carrier. “You can thicken it with laundry detergent. Styrofoam also works great. You want to get it thickened to the point where it has the consistency of heavy maple syrup.” The group then sets out to mass produce these thickened Molotov cocktails, which they store in canning jars. Velcro is attached to the top of each lid, while its corresponding part is attached to an eighteen-inch long strip of rag soaked in diesel fuel and sealed in a Ziploc bag, which is then taped to the side of the Mason jar. Weapons are now ready for deployment (266–267).

For a more powerful weapon such as a homemade thermite grenade, the group simply needed to mix iron oxide (simple rust) with powdered aluminum. The former came from a paint shop that used natural black iron oxide (Pfizer brand) as pigment, while the latter came from Creslite coarse brille aluminum powder. Magnesium ribbon obtained from a chemistry professor provided the fuse. Again showing the instruction manual nature of *Patriots*, Rawles has people at the retreat use a hand crank concrete mixer to combine the iron oxide and aluminum powder. “They used a ratio of three parts aluminum powder to eight parts iron oxide powder. A blob of flare igniter, bisected by lengths of one-eight-inch cannon fuse and the magnesium ribbon, was taped into the opening of each can on top of the thermite mixture” (266–268). Chemical weapons are also discussed. For example, a powerful toxin called ricin can be derived from castor beans. Rawles advises mixing it in the solvent DMSO “so it could be absorbed directly through the victim’s skin.” Another poison is colchicine, which is extracted from fall crocus flowers (337).

More mundane matters also occupy Rawles’ attention. Automobiles, for instance, are critical because Todd Gray, his wife, and their friends all originally live in Chicago, Illinois, one of the primary areas prone to civil disorder in the event of societal collapse. Thus Rawles instructs us through his characters what to do. Ken Layton, a mechanic in the group,

convinced the group members to buy older American-made cars and trucks and then fully restore and modify them. To Ken’s way of thinking, new model cars and trucks were far too complex, broke down too easily, required specialized tools to work on, and were just too expensive. He also pointed out that late-model cars are a conspicuous sign of wealth, and might serve as a target during periods of social unrest. He convinced the group members to buy either late 1960s or early 1970s

Ford cars and trucks or Dodge Power Wagon pickups. His only stipulation was that they had “straight” bodies (never involved in a collision) and were free of rust. That meant that most of the members bought their cars and trucks from “rust-free states” like California, Arizona, and New Mexico. They found them through the Internet or *Hemming’s Auto News*. (47)

The Dodge Power Wagon was a popular choice, as was the Ford Bronco. (Two couples also bought late-60s Ford Mustangs because they shared the same type of 289 or 302-cubic inch engine with the Bronco.)

Food necessarily is a main concern. When power outages became common, “Todd methodically sliced, marinated, and jerked nearly all of the elk, venison, and salmon in the chest freezer. The exhausting process took five days” (12). Huge supplies of food were prepared. “During the course of the first two years after they bought their home near Bovill, the basement was gradually filled. Aside from the bulkier items such as five-gallon plastic buckets filled with grain, rice, beans, and powdered milk, most of the group members’ supplies were stored in G.I. surplus wall lockers that Mike Nelson found on sale at Ruvel’s Surplus on West Belmont Avenue in Chicago. . . . Each container was marked with an Avery label with the owner’s name, date of purchase, and the anticipated expiration” (66). “Terry had used the dry-ice packing method years before. In this method, a five-gallon pail was poured nearly full of grain, and then a large chunk of dry ice was dropped in. Then she would wait while the dry ice sublimated, displacing the air in the container with heavier carbon dioxide. Once the dry ice was nearly gone — less than the size of a quarter — she would seal the lid” (254). Naturally, gardening became a daily chore, and Todd duly put in both a vegetable patch and an orchard, both fed by well and a pond filled by a solar-powered pump.

Practically every page of the novel contains useful information on survival during trying times. What kind of batteries to use and how to charge them is mentioned (12). When in need of someone else’s car in a hurry, “The best place to find a car with keys in it is in a parking lot of one of these oil change places, or a mechanic’s shop” (79). Given law enforcement’s interest in paramilitary groups, Rawles has the group’s standing rule be “If we are carrying guns, no camouflage clothing, but if we are unarmed, camo uniforms are okay” (42). Evading the police? By spraying all surfaces with WD-40 (a popular lubricant), forensic experts will have great trouble finding fingerprints (83). Further, to avoid capture by the police, one should avoid all contact with family and friends. After all, “the vast majority of wanted criminals were captured because they returned to their old haunts and

renewed contacts with their former associates" (92).

"You can even run a diesel on home heating oil, since it is basically the same stuff. It's just dyed differently so that people don't try to cheat on the road taxes. For that matter, you can even stretch diesel with used vegetable oil if you filter it" (122-123). When stockpiling seeds, take care to use only non-hybrid varieties because they "bred true" generation after generation, unlike the hybrid varieties (182).

"To provide better sighting in low-light conditions, one can run a strip of white bandage tape down the top of the barrel of a shotgun" (41). Also, if one is planning to conduct night action, Rawles gives the pros and cons of night goggles versus flares and tritium gun sights. On balance, he believes night goggles are a minus because they are exotic equipment and need the proper batteries (207-208). Rawles also has one of his characters lecture on the problem with owning full-ounce gold coins. In post-collapse society, their value is too concentrated and can only buy large things such as six cows. Far smaller denominations of coin are called for in daily trade, or one may consider a medium such as .22-rimfire ammunition (216).

Communications methods are also discussed at length, with Rawles discoursing on the various brands of CB and ham radios and how to modify them for various purposes. An interesting observation he makes concerns codes. "Get yourself two copies of the same book. A big fat novel works best. It has to be the same book, from the same publisher, and the *same edition*." Bibles and dictionaries are no good because they are too obvious. To encode,

you look through the book and first find the words you want to encode. You write down groups of numbers, starting with page number, then paragraph number, then line number, and the number of words into the sentence where your word sits. If you can't find the complete word, then you spell it out a letter at a time, using the first letters of words you select. You write it all down in groups of three numbers. Between each group, you say 'break.' So a transmission would sound like: '202, 003, 015, 003 Break. 187, 015, 006, 018 Break,' and so on. As you use each word, you scratch it out, so you never use the same code groups twice. . . . You should change books frequently. You should also institute a list of 'telltale' operating procedures that an operator can use to discreetly let everyone on the net know that he has been captured and is being forced to transmit under duress. . . . I'd recommend using pairs of obscure novels — either long out of print or published by a small 'vanity' publisher, for your codebooks." (365)

Medicine and Health

Of course common injuries were part of daily life. One day, the character Margie injured her

left arm with an ax. The team had a complete store of medical goods, so Mary, an occupational therapist, was able to use a “scrub suit” uniform and sterile surgical gloves to sew the wound (184-187). Also, Rawles inserts the information that in order to test aging medicine, one should dissolve a capsule of it in clear water to see if it becomes cloudy or precipitates. If so, it is no longer good. (184-187). Earlier in the novel, a far more serious injury is treated. A friend’s girlfriend is shot in a roadway holdup, with the bullet entering just under her collarbone and exiting after smashing her left shoulder blade. Mary performs the operation on the kitchen table with the aid of Colonel Fackler’s NATO Emergency War Surgery manual (28-31).

For childbirth, the retreat has a small library about pregnancy and childbirth. When Todd’s wife Mary gives birth, she avails herself of *Heart and Hands*, a midwife’s training book (176). Rawles uses the event to take readers through a routine childbirth, and he does so graphically. As always, he appears to be addressing common challenges survivors will face in the event of societal collapse. Having a set of dental tools is also welcome. When Lon develops a severe toothache, the tooth must be pulled. Mary used the proper tools and fortunately had a supply of Lidocaine, “so the extraction was not painful.” “The procedure turned out to be valuable experience for Mary Gray. It was the first of nine teeth that she would pull in the next few years” (255).

Rawles weaves a bibliography of useful books into his narrative, many of which are self-described by their titles. For instance, there is *How to Prosper During the Coming Bad Years* by Howard J. Ruff and *Life After Doomsday* by Bruce Clayton. Next are the recipe books *Making the Best of Basics* and *Carla Emery’s Encyclopedia of Country Living, The Complete Medicinal Herbal* by Penelope Ody, *The Cure For All Diseases* by Hulda Clarke, Elizabeth Davis’s *Heart and Hands*, and *Ten Essential Herbs* by Lalitha Thomas. For livestock, there is *Raising Sheep the Modern Way* and the *Merck Veterinary Manual*. Others are *Where There Is No Dentist*, *The Blaster’s Handbook* and *The Survivor* compendium.

Bad Guys

Like most post-collapse writers, Rawles drives home the point that for life after the breakdown of government, lawlessness becomes rampant and a deadly threat. As we have seen, there are individuals and small groups of marauders afoot, but there are also armed and vicious gangs as well. Chapters 14 and 15 detail the challenges of dealing with a gang of twenty-four outlaw bikers who have plundered towns in the region and are now nearing the home ground of the protagonists. Though the retreat itself has not been threatened, Todd

argues that it is in their own best interest to take the fight to the outlaws in the next town. “Look, I realize that an operation like this is extremely dangerous. But as long as we let vermin continue to operate freely, they are going to be a thorn in our side.” Then, quoting a friend, he concludes that “Scaring hostiles away is never very satisfactory, be they mosquitoes, crocodiles, or people, because they will be back later, with friends” (189).

Todd Gray’s group has adopted the name “The Northwest Militia” and they pair up with another local group who call themselves the “Troy Templars,” named after their town of Troy, Idaho. A reconnaissance mission was able to map out the biker-occupied town of Princeton, Idaho, which is almost due west of the Northwest Militia’s town of Bovill. The biker gang represents brute force unleavened by morality. Rape and murder of residents is routine, as is torture of children. Thus, Gray’s group is given an ethical obligation to stamp out evil, which they do, employing a number of their improvised explosives; the gang is annihilated.

Ideologies

To the extent Rawles himself may share the views of his characters, he is a libertarian, anti-government survivalist. His novel blames the Federal government for the crash, and a story-within-a-story about the plight of two libertarian brothers gives vent to fears that law enforcement has overstepped its constitutional boundaries. The final quarter of the novel is taken up with a struggle for constitutionally backed independence in the Northwest region against a joint U.S.-U.N. force of questionable legitimacy.

The story-within-a-story concerns Matt and Chase Keane, two young men who legally deal in guns at traveling gun shows. When the brothers end up in a shootout and have to flee, the media paints them as part of the “Radical Right” in America. Describing the brothers’ abandoned gear as an “arms cache” and “crime tools,” a magazine story mixes half truths with lies to convict the brothers in the public’s mind. “The lengthy article was full of innuendoes and references to the Keane brothers as ‘gun nuts’ (somewhat true), ‘survivalists’ (true), ‘militia cell members’ (a lie), ‘white separatists’ (a lie), ‘with ties to the KKK (a lie), ‘unlicensed gun dealers (a half-truth), ‘organizers of a jural society’ (true), ‘adherents of racist “Identity” Christianity’ (a lie), and ‘having extensive contacts with the Elohim City neo-Nazi compound’ (a lie)” (90-91).

Rawles may also be making a personal statement when he describes the Keane brothers’ beliefs. “Matt and Chase were dyed-in-the-wool conservatives. Like many other conservatives, they felt that the Waco and Ruby Ridge incidents were nothing short of government

massacres of law-abiding Christians who just wanted to be left alone” (67). In academic literature, in the eyes of portions of the government, and in public perception, the Keanes are the archetype of “radical right” dissidents, who merit the treatment they are given by society and its hired law-enforcement agents.¹⁵ Rawles, in contrast, paints them in a positive light for holding those very views, specifically:

The Keanes derided the unconstitutional policies and legislation that came out of Washington, D.C. They referred to D.C. as “the District of Criminals” or “the District of Chaldeans.” The Keanes hated Washington, D.C. career politicians. They also hated the BATFE and the FBI. They had grown up admiring the FBI, but eventually despised it. The agency had been totally politicized, corrupted, and purged of any agents not loyal to the D.C. careerists. Even its world-famous crime lab was caught fabricating evidence, as in the Lockerbie bombing case. They were convinced that the Oklahoma City bombing was a government setup. There was too much evidence pointing to *two* bomb blasts in rapid succession, one of which must have been *inside* the Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building. There was also strong evidence that the ATF had prior knowledge that the explosions were going to occur.¹⁶ (68)

Here again, Rawles provides instruction, in this instance how to evade a massive manhunt and resume life under assumed identities. After a shoot-out with police in North Carolina, the Chase brothers quickly leave the scene, driving north to Baltimore, where they make an anonymous purchase of a new truck. Now with two vehicles, they drive separate ways with plans to meet four or five days hence. For his part, Chase drives straight through to Fargo, North Dakota, there abandoning their motor home. Buying bus tickets to disparate destinations, he goes to Minneapolis, where he switched to an Amtrak train to Chicago. There, he purchased another train ticket, this time to Dallas, but he actually disembarked in Hot Springs, Arkansas. After hitchhiking to Texarkana, he took a bus to his destination of Baton Rouge, where he met his older brother (86-87). Like most other survivalists in the novel, the Keanes are practicing Christians (83). Once “the Crunch” begins four years later, the brothers reunite with their family in the Pacific Northwest. Life is not easy, however, and it is later that winter that “they ate the dogs.”

In some ways, life was returning to a functional, though primitive, mode. Though the militias continued to train, rudimentary businesses were beginning to spring up. In the spring of the fifth year after the collapse, two new characters enter the novel, Ian and Blanca Doyle, who arrived in Idaho in ultra-light aircraft. Ian Doyle was an Air Force fighter pilot

stationed in Arizona when the Crunch hit. Because Phoenix and Tucson descended into chaos, they flew to northern Arizona, where they stayed for four years. Then two gangs began heading their way, so, after a nighttime raid on the gang's town, the Doyles abandoned Arizona and flew to Todd Gray's compound in Idaho. Bigger problems, however, await them there.

The Government is the Problem

When a power struggle erupts between reconstituted Federal forces and the local population in Idaho, the latter are branded guerrillas. Based as they are in Idaho and other areas of the Pacific Northwest, this takes on significance when paired with what is perhaps the most noteworthy current attempt to achieve survival for the white population, which is Harold Covington's Northwest Front.¹⁷ In Covington's fiction, the rebel army is known as the Northwest Volunteer Army (NVA), while in *Patriots* the group is called the Northwest Militia. Both authors advocate fighting in small units in the Northwest.

The chapter that begins the saga of the struggle against the Federal government is disparagingly titled "Federales," and Rawles describes the first government official we meet as being somewhat ludicrous. "The 'Undersecretary of Information,' Mr. Clarke, [was] an overweight man with a florid face. He wore a polyester suit, and carried a chrome-plated Savage .32 automatic pistol in a hip holster. In comparison to his great bulk, the small pistol appeared almost laughable" (256). Mr. Clarke read a prepared speech by President pro-tem Hutchings of the Provisional government. Based at Fort Knox, Kentucky, this rump government has control only of that state, Tennessee, Mississippi and Alabama and is now attempting to exert control over the mountain states. Ominously, this government is being assisted by militaries from other United Nations countries.

The UN Regional Administrators will oversee the many tasks required to accomplish a complete national recovery. For example, they will be setting up regional police forces, which will be under their direct control. They will oversee the issuance of the National ID Card. They will appoint judges that they deem properly qualified. Each Regional Administrator will bring with him on his staff a regional tax collector and a regional treasurer who will handle issuance of the new national currency. Rest assured that the new currency is fully backed by the gold reserves of the national depository. (258)

Part of the new government's plan for "pacifying" the former United States is to radically

limit the firepower citizens are allowed to possess. Clarke reads off a long list of proscribed weapons:

- All fully automatic weapons, regardless of prior registration under the National Firearms Act of 1934,
- any rifle over thirty caliber,
- any shotgun or weapon of any description over twelve gauge in diameter,
- all semiautomatic rifles and shotguns,
- all rifles and shotguns capable of accepting a detachable magazine,
- any detachable magazine regardless of capacity,
- any weapon with a fixed magazine that has a capacity of more than four cartridges,
- all grenades and grenade launchers,
- all explosives, detonating cord, and blasting caps,
- all explosives precursor chemicals,
- all firearms regardless of type that are chambered for military cartridges such as 7.62mm NATO, 5.56 mm NATO, .45 ACP, and nine-mm parabellum,
- all silencers,
- all night vision equipment including infrared, light amplification, or thermal,
- all telescopic sights,
- all laser aiming devices, all handguns regardless of type or caliber . . .

The rules also ban “private possession of armored vehicles, bayonets, gas masks, helmets and bulletproof vests, encryption software or devices, and all radio transmitters — other than baby monitors, cordless phones, or cell phones.” Finishing off the list, Clarke concludes that the following are also banned: “full metal jacket, tracer, incendiary, and armor piercing ammunition, all ammunition in military calibers, chemical agents of any sort including CS and CN tear gas, OC ‘pepper spray,’ and all military-type pyrotechnics and flare launchers” (261-2).

The crowd is having none of it. As head of the Northwest Militia, Todd Gray enunciates his goals and objections: “Restoring industry, utilities, transportation, and communications are indeed worthy goals. However, if doing so means surrendering our personal freedom, then our answer is an emphatic *no*. In fact, I find your concepts of ‘necessity,’ ‘public safety,’ and ‘the public good’ are completely out of line. And I believe that I speak for the vast majority of the Idaho and Washington Citizens assembled here.” Gray next reveals the anti-globalist sentiment of the novel. “Without further ado, I’d like to invite you gentlemen to immediately get in your airplane and go find yourselves somebody more naive to swallow your globalist horse manure.”¹⁸ Finally, signaling his intentions to fight to back up his concept of liberty and freedom, Gray threatens, “Don’t bother sending out your

so-called 'Regional Administrator.' Whoever it is will either be sent packing or end up the recipient of a tall tree and a short rope." The gauntlet has been laid down, for Clarke has stated that anyone caught with said weapons will be "summarily executed" (262-3).

Groups of militias formed spontaneously after the edict was announced. Rawles writes approvingly of the actions of these groups and gives at least two of them names that directly challenge the actual government position on standing up for liberty (as opposed to the fictional government in the novel). The Gordon Kahl Company, for instance, is named after a man who opposed government taxation and was pursued by federal agents for that reason. When marshals ambushed Kahl, he killed two of them and escaped. Later, he was tracked by an FBI agent to a bunker in Arkansas and killed. One anti-government group claimed that Kahl was a "principled patriot, tax protest, and brave family farmer, [and] was killed while fighting government oppression."¹⁹ The Samuel Weaver Company is named after Sammy, the son of Randy Weaver, target of the siege of Ruby Ridge, who was killed by U.S. marshals. Character Todd Gray advocates three to twelve members of a militia, the better to avoid concentrated attack. This idea of "phantom cell" or "leaderless resistance" is often attributed to Louis Beam, Klansman and author of the essay "Leaderless Resistance."²⁰

While Federal and U.N. troops have far superior firepower, the patriots have the ability to remain unseen. "The guerrillas," Rawles tells us, "were almost impossible to locate. The vast areas of National Forest, much of it roadless, were ideal hiding places. The townsmen were sullen. Only a few cooperated with the authorities. Most of them," he continues, "clearly favored the militias and did their best to feed them with supplies and current intelligence. There were countless acts of sabotage against parked vehicles. They ranged from punctured tires and sand poured in fuel tanks to immolation with Molotov cocktails" (336).

The stakes are high. Rawles informs us that government troops are brutal. "When they end up looting a town, it can take a couple of days or more. Sometimes it's even three or four days before they can get the soldiers sobered-up, their pants zipped, and back on the road." Resistance is met with reprisal; in five states "they've executed the governors on the spot and put their puppet governors in place" (290). Again, orders coming from the U.N., rather than the reconstituted U.S. government in Fort Knox, rankles the American resisters. The Second Corps that invades Idaho, for example, is composed of seventy-five percent foreign troops, mainly Belgians and Germans (293). In that sense, the fight becomes one against foreign oppression.

Chapters 24-32 catalogue the war between the government and militia patriots. Know-

ing the federal troops would target his ranch, Todd Gray ordered that they move to a hidden position in the national forests in the area. The move was arduous. Gray's decision, however, was vindicated when a fellow militia group, the Templars, elected to hunker down around their compound, and Federal troops obliterated them with artillery fire, leaving no survivors (306-7). Gray, though, was not going to let the U.N. troops have his ranch for free; in fact, the cost would be high because he had booby-trapped the property with dynamite and gasoline bombs. When German troops broke into the house, Gray struck back:

“Okay you goons, you want my house and everything in it? Well then, it's all yours!” Then he pressed a button on the panel in front of him. The house erupted in flames with a tremendous roar. Six sticks of dynamite hidden in separate parts of the house detonated simultaneously. Each of the six was taped to the seam on a five-gallon can of gasoline. Two of the cans were hidden at the ends of the attic, one beneath the kitchen range, one beneath the hide-a-bed, and two in the basement. The combined explosion was so powerful that it sent several of the heavy metal window shutters flying more than thirty feet outwards. The roof of the house split into two halves, and landed on either side of the house, engulfed in flames. A huge ball of fire rose from the house, billowing upward in a mushroom cloud. It gradually turned to black, then to gray as it rose higher in the sky. Todd smiled in satisfaction.

Activating other hidden bombs, he was able to kill many more enemy soldiers (310-12).

Chapter 26 is devoted to the exploits of one member of Gray's group, Dan Fong, a crack sharpshooter. Rawles achieves a Hemingwayesque level of narrative when describing Fong's preparation for a solo attack on approaching troops:

He pulled out his favorite knife, the TrinitY Fisherman that he had inherited from T.K. He stared for a while at the fish symbol inlaid in brass in the knife's handle. The knife meant more to him than most of his other possessions. He began to peel a raw turnip to start his breakfast. He peered through his binoculars for a while, nibbling on turnip slices as he watched. Then he ate half of a small round loaf of wheat bread. He looked through his binoculars for a while longer, and then ate two sticks of elk jerky. Fong picked up his binoculars again. To the west, he could see Army scouts on dull painted motorcycles approaching town. He studied their movements carefully. He took a few swigs from his canteen. A few minutes later, he could see dismounted infantry approaching, walking on the shoulders of the state highway that traversed Potlatch. He wiped the TrinitY knife clean on his trouser leg and tucked it back into the brown leather sheath that was stamped “Matthew 4: 19.” (316-17)

Fong was able to kill soldiers at twelve hundred yards out. In rapid succession, he killed fifteen men. "The brass in the foxhole was up above his ankles now. He looked down to his magazines and ammo boxes at the lip of the foxhole, and was astonished to find that he only had two loaded rounds of .50-caliber ammunition left," writes Rawles. Fong then "fired these last two rounds single shot through the McMillan at the cab of a deuce-and-a-half truck that was nine hundred yards distant. With his second and last shot, the truck careened into a ditch on the side of the road and rolled over onto its side. Fong smiled in satisfaction" (318). He then retreated to a second foxhole, continued his sniper activity, and more soldiers fell. Attempting to leave that foxhole, Fong's luck ran out. "Dan put on his pack and stood up. Just as he started to run, he was struck by a bullet, knocking him back to the ground. It struck his right buttock and carried through to smash his pelvis. Through a gaping exit wound just below his belt, Dan could see part of his hipbone protruding. As he writhed on the ground in shock from the hit, a second bullet struck him, deeply slicing into his belly, sending his intact intestines sliding out to land at his side. 'Oh crud,' he exclaimed" (321).

A warrior, Fong continued to fight, soon reaching twenty-eight confirmed kills. His wounds, however, were mortal and he was dying on that hill. "Dirt and twigs were sticking to them. He shook his head and said, 'Oh what a mess I am. Gut shot. Give me strength, Lord.'" His body convulsed, his diaphragm was in spasm, and his hands shook uncontrollably. "The party's over," he muttered. With his last breath he said, "God Bless the Republic, death to the New World Order. We shall prevail. *Freedom....*" Then, "a broad smile spread across his face as he lost consciousness" (322).

Elsewhere, Gray's militia pressed on with their attack, in one instance destroying four stationary tanks with thermite grenades. "Watching the tanks burn was gratifying." For their part, the Doyles used their lightweight experimental planes, now fitted with guns, to strafe enemy troops as well as helicopters on the ground (329-30). The militias were inflicting serious injury on their opponents. Though the U.N. forces had superior firepower and even used poison gas on the rebels, they could not pacify northern Idaho. As the Crunch entered its sixth year, the militias continued their guerilla activity. Chapter 29 chronicles a winter assault on billeted troops. After killing the sentry, Gray's team stole VX nerve gas and turned it on their enemies. They also destroyed military vehicles, a generator and the buildings housing the soldiers (347-9).

In another ambush, they captured Major Udo Kuntzler by planting bombs on the road his Humvee was taking to a meeting with a company commander. After killing his guards, the militia members bound Kuntzler and spirited him away on a waiting dogsled. The team was

elated that “they had captured so many fine weapons and night vision devices. They didn’t realize it until later, but they had also just captured some very important documents and the man who would become the most valuable intelligence asset in the Pacific Northwest theatre of operations” (350-52). Using nerve gas again, the patriots attacked a high-level meeting of commanders and U.N. personnel. One Colonel Horst Blucher opened the meeting with a pessimistic account of the ongoing guerilla war:

“Since arriving in this region, we have suffered 918 casualties, killed and wounded. Another 97 of our soldiers, mainly American nationals, are missing — and presumed either dead or deserted. 126 of our vehicles and 11 aircraft have been destroyed, mainly by arson. An additional three trucks and one APC have been stolen and not yet recovered.

“Over 400 weapons of all descriptions are missing, and presumably now in *zuh* hands of these terrorists. Of those, most were lost in ambushes. A surprisingly large number were taken by deserters. Another 312 weapons, mainly vehicular mounted, have been written off our property books as ‘destroyed.’

“*Zuh* strength of *zuh* terrorist bands in northern Idaho was originally estimated at around 150. Now, despite heavy losses that we have inflicted, their strength is estimated at over 700, and growing. They are actively recruiting in the towns and on ranches. Their recruits are mainly young, healthy, and already proficient with firearms. In this region almost every adult male, and many females, are skilled hunters and *scharf* shooters. This dreadful winter weather has decreased *zuh* number of attacks, but at *zuh* same time reduced our own effectiveness in our counterinsurgency campaign. These terrorists are using *zuh* inclement weather to their advantage, to conduct training of their new recruitments at remote camps within *zuh* National Forests.” (353)

Just then a nerve gas bomb exploded, catching the soldiers off guard. They all died in the attack.

Government mistreatment of innocent citizens and ill-advised edicts only worsened the government’s position. For example, a requirement for first newborn babies, then all citizens, to use an implanted biochip in their right hands only bred discontent. Troop morale got worse as well, and an increasing number of soldiers — and even entire companies — “had turned coat en masse” (354-5). At one point, a team led by Matt Keane tunneled under a convention center hosting a party for hostile forces. They later learned that the body count was one hundred and twelve people. The losses were not all one-sided, however, for Keane’s father died when he stepped on a landmine, and his mother when Federal forces adopted a policy of indiscriminately destroying all isolated cabins in the region. She was simply in the

wrong place at the wrong time. Keane was able to exact more revenge when he led a raid that captured four armored personnel carriers and two tanks, in addition to capturing 442 Federal soldiers at a critical command center in Moscow, Idaho. The loss of this post resulted in the collapse of U.N. power in Idaho, signaling the end of effective government attempts to take back the Pacific Northwest (370-78).

President Hutchings became increasingly ruthless and began to concentrate on destroying the food available to his adversaries. "When farmers were put into custody, their crops were either confiscated, plowed under, or burned. Bulk food stocks were carefully monitored by the authorities. Despite these efforts, the guerrillas rapidly gained in numbers. As the war went on," Rawles writes, "resistance gradually increased beyond the UN's ability to match it. Every new detainment camp spawned the formation of new resistance cells. Every reprisal or atrocity by the UN or Federal forces pushed more citizens and even Federal unit commanders into active support for the guerrillas." Hutchings, his cabinet, and most of the senior UN administrators then fled to Europe, and "the UN and Federal forces capitulated en masse. There was no final battle. The war ended with a whimper rather than a bang. The resistance army units rolled into Fort Knox on July fourth, unchallenged. They lowered the UN flag and raised Old Glory without much fanfare" (380).

The Federal surrender led to the resumption of open elections, and members of the Constitution Party and Libertarian Party did well. Over the next three years, amendments to the Constitution were added, including:

The 27th Amendment granted blanket immunity from prosecution for any crimes committed before or during the Second Civil War to anyone who actively fought for the resistance.

The 28th Amendment repealed the 14th and 26th Amendments. It also made full state Citizenship a right of birth, only applicable to native-born Citizens who were the children of Citizens. It allowed immigrants to buy state citizenship. It clarified "United States citizenship" as only having effect when state Citizens traveled outside the nation's borders, and outlawed titles of nobility such as "esquire."

The 29th Amendment banned welfare and foreign aid, removed the United States from the UN and most foreign treaties, capped Federal spending at 2 percent of the GDP, capped the combined number of foreign troops in the fifty states and on Federal territory at one thousand men, and limited the active duty Federal military to a hundred thousand men, except in time of declared war.

The 30th Amendment amplified the 2nd Amendment, confirming it as both an unalienable individual right and as a state right, repealed the existing Federal gun-control laws, preempted any present or future state gun-control laws, and

reinstated a decentralized militia system.

The 31st Amendment repealed the 16th Amendment, and severely limited the ability of the Federal government to collect any taxes within the fifty states. Henceforth, the Federal government's budget could be funded only by tariffs, import duties, and bonds.

The 32nd Amendment outlawed deficit spending, put the new United States currency back on a bimetallic gold and silver standard, and made all currency "redeemable on demand."

The 33rd Amendment froze salaries at six thousand dollars a year for House members and ten thousand for Senators, limited campaign spending for any federal office to five thousand per term, and repealed the 17th Amendment, returning Senators to election by their state legislatures.

The 34th Amendment restored the pre-*Erie Railroad v. Tompkins* system of Common Law, invalidated most Federal court decisions since 1932, and clarified the inapplicability of most Federal statutes on state Citizens in several states.

The 35th Amendment reinstated the allodial land-title system. Under a renewed Federal Land Patent system the amendment mandated the return of 92 percent of the Federal lands to private ownership through public sales at one dollar in silver coin per acre.

Gradually, the economy recovered and "For the first time since before the First Civil War, it became the norm to again refer to the nation plurally as *these* United States, rather than singularly as The United States. The change was subtle, but profound" (381-2).

Conclusion

Obviously, Rawles' collapse thesis is conjectural. Despite the grave economic conditions brought on by the 2008 Wall Street crisis, America and the rest of the world have continued to muddle through. Food remains plentiful, gas still flows from the neighborhood pumps, and the sports channels provide non-stop entertainment. Twenty-twelve is an election year, and there is no talk by the candidates of imminent collapse. Those who opt to follow Rawles' advise do so as a personal decision, not as part of a sweeping trend to retreat to the country.

For the time being, *Patriots* will remain just another work of fiction, a short piece of entertainment that allows the reader to escape the realities of current life. Still, we do continue to hear voices that reverberate with the same message as Rawles'. For instance, novelist Alex Kurtagic recently penned the following:

The age of chaos offers opportunities to those able to "sell" a new dream. Although

the present liberal, egalitarian, progressive establishment appears superficially invincible, they do not represent a unified, cohesive, monolithic, totalitarian order: they are, in fact, a rainbow coalition of competing and sometimes contradictory factions that happen to share a set of core beliefs. They are also degenerative and disintegrative, and the logical conclusion of their project is the complete breakdown of society. This has become increasingly apparent since the adoption of multiculturalism as an official government policy, and the adoption of globalism as the modern capitalist paradigm. Worse still, they are contrary to nature, so their continuity results in constant stress and strenuous effort. Division, degeneration, disintegration, stress, and exhaustion grow ever more apparent. And the end of prosperity in the West will make social and cultural upheavals more difficult to contain or diffuse. Thus, in the escalating confusion, even the apolitical, conventionally thinking citizen will in time become receptive to new, exotic, and even quixotic ideas. Once the confusion becomes severe enough, they will be looking for a radical ideology, a harsh religion, an authoritarian strongman, or Caesar. They will be looking for meaningful symbolism, for utopian daydreams, for a new romanticism, for something that projects order and strength, is distinctive amid the chaos, and makes them feel powerful and part of something strong.²¹

To survive such a collapse, people would do well to read Rawles' *Patriots* and follow its advice. Future events, then, will determine whether the novel remains just a work of fiction, or whether it goes down in history as an indispensable survival manual for the masses.

Appendix

Survivors: A Novel of the Coming Collapse

Survivors, Rawles' sequel to *Patriots*, is a far less substantial account of a fictional account of a world collapse than its predecessor. At 382 pages (including a ten-page glossary that is similar to the one in *Patriots*), the hardcover version of *Survivors* is considerably shorter than the paperback *Patriots*. As Rawles writes in an introductory author's note, though a sequel, the action in *Survivors* takes place contemporaneously with the events in *Patriots* and it shares some characters, such as Ian and Blanca Doyle. It is also set in the same world of collapse as *Patriots*, giving it the effect of filling in background to the first story. Much of the narrative, however, involves new characters in places other than Idaho. Another point is that *Survivors* is simply not a survival manual, though it does offer fictional accounts of how some Americans manage to survive in a world in which civilization has been knocked back to a more barbaric stage. Finally, there is little anti-government ideology in the story, and essentially no government activity at all, good or bad.

The heart of Rawles' story in *Survivors* tests the question implied by Paul Kennedy's "imperial overstretch" thesis,²² to wit, What happens when a world empire (America's) collapses? The answer comes in the form of a narrative involving the life of Andy Laine, an America soldier caught in Afghanistan when the world economic system implodes. The story revolves around two poles: the location of Laine at any given time, and a small community in Bloomfield, New Mexico, near "the Four Corners," the only place where four American states meet. There, his brother, fiancée and others hold out against discouraging odds. As in *Patriots*, the world economy teeters. "Lately," Rawles writes, "the war effort had been taking a backseat [*sic*] to tumultuous economic events emanating from New York City and the world's other financial centers." Laine goes on to explain, "The whole system is breaking down. The global credit market is frozen, the sovereign debt problems have blown up past the GDP levels for most countries, and the derivatives have totally imploded. We're in a world of hurt. I think there'll be some major riots and looting soon" (4).

Laine's pessimism is justified, as "the Crunch," as it is called, gets worse. Over eight pages, Rawles describes the breakdown, much as he did in *Patriots*. The unofficial American government debt is \$53 trillion and the government was borrowing 193 percent of that year's revenue. A Deutsche Bundesbank official makes the comment "A full-scale default on U.S. Treasuries appears imminent," causing the dollar to collapse. Businesses lay off massive numbers of workers and the stock market crashes. "With overseas dollars being redeemed in large numbers and with the printing presses running day and night turning out fiat currency, hyperinflation was inevitable. Inflation jumped from 16 percent to 35 percent in three days. From there on, it climbed in spurts during the next few days: 62 percent, 110 percent, 315 percent, and then to an incredible 2,100 percent. The currency collapse was reminiscent of what had happened in Zimbabwe." A can of beans now cost \$150. "Detroit, New York City, and Los Angeles were the first cities to see full-scale rioting and looting. Soon the riots engulfed most other large cities including Houston, San Antonio, Chicago, Phoenix, Philadelphia, San Jose, San Diego, Dallas, Indianapolis, and Memphis" (14-21). Andy Laine finds himself stranded in Afghanistan when this transpires.

Half of the book chronicles the trials and tribulations Laine faces as he hitches a ride to Germany, is mustered out of the military, and must get back to the United States using only his wits. He ends up being one of the lucky ones. "A few soldiers were able to extract themselves with escape and evasion tactics, but most died from starvation, exposure, illness, wounds, or execution after being captured. Half of the entire U.S. Marine Corps — heavily deployed in Afghanistan — was written off in this manner" (334). Just to get to an ocean,

for instance, Andy must cycle across France. As all commercial air traffic has ceased, a ship is his only hope for getting home, and from northern France he sails to England, where he finds a yacht headed for Belize, on the east coast of Central America. Once back on land, Laine is ambushed and breaks his leg trying to escape, leading to five months of rehabilitation at the home of a “Good Samaritan.” Eventually, he is able to cross Mexico on horseback, then continue through Texas and New Mexico, where he will meet up with his brother and fiancée. All along the route, risks are abundant.

The bulk of the other half of the novel is situated in Bloomfield, New Mexico, but other parts take place in Kentucky, Tennessee, Texas, Arizona, and a flashback to Honduras, where a far younger Ian Doyle meets his future wife Blanca. The Laine family compound in Bloomfield provides a chance for Rawles to display tactics of community building for mutual safety, and a local refinery keeps the power going, but it is also the target of an attack by a vicious Mexican-American gang. To blunt the attack, Lars Laine, brother of Andy, and other men mount an assault on La Fuerza, Ignacio Garcia’s gang.

The novel ends inconclusively with Ian and Blanca flying to the Idaho base of friend Todd Gray. The last line in the story is Ian saying “We just have to live by faith,” as they circle Gray’s farm. Rawles cements this idea when on the following two pages he writes an acknowledgement of those who helped him, followed by a long passage from Proverbs 1: 24-33. He closes by paraphrasing the passage: “I implore you: Get right with God, and get your Beans, Bullets, and Band-Aids together! Our only certain hope is in Christ Jesus” (372).

NOTES

1. *Patriots: A Novel of Survival in the Coming Collapse*, (Berkeley, CA: Ulysses Press, 1990-2009), 96.
2. <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/9/11>. Many experts have questioned the official story of 9/11, however. See, for example, David Ray Griffin, *The New Pearl Harbor: Disturbing Questions about the Bush Administration and 9/11* (Northampton, MA: Olive Branch Press, 2004) and *The New Pearl Harbor Revisited: 9/11, The Cover-Up, and the Exposé* (Northampton, MA: Olive Branch Press, 2008); Thierry Meyssan, *9/11: The Big Lie: The Pentagon Plane Crash that Never Happened* (London: Carnot Publishing Ltd., 2002); and Albert D. Pastore, *Stranger Than Fiction: An Independent Investigation of the True Culprits Behind 9-11* (Tempe, Arizona: Dandelion Books, 2003).
3. “Whither Japan Should the United States Collapse?” Hokkai Gakuen University’s *Studies in Culture*, No. 44, December 2009.
4. Andrew Hamilton’s review of former Treasury Secretary Henry M. Paulson, Jr.’s book *On the Brink: Inside the Race to Stop the Collapse of the Global Financial System* (New York: Business Plus, 2010) opens with these lines: “Most people, including most members of the elite, are unaware

that the financial system of the United States — and through it the global economy — nearly collapsed in 2008. But it did; the dramatic title of ex-Treasury Secretary Henry Paulson's memoir is *not* an exaggeration. Had events unfolded without timely government intervention, the consequences would have equaled, if not exceeded, the Great Depression." See "Henry Paulson's *On the Brink*" (<http://www.counter-currents.com/2010/08/on-the-brink/>).

5. Matt Taibbi, "The Great American Bubble Machine," *Rolling Stone*, http://www.rollingstone.com/politics/story/28816321/inside_the_great_american_bubble_machine.
6. See <http://finance.yahoo.com/news/Stocks-resume-selloff-Dow-apf-1767216167.html?x=0&sec=topStories&pos=2&asset=&code=>. These gyrations came on the heels of Standard & Poor downgrading America's credit rating from a sterling AAA to AA+.
7. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/August_2011_stock_markets_fall.
8. "10 Signs That America Is Decomposing Right In Front Of Our Eyes," <http://theintelhub.com/2012/02/21/10-signs-that-america-is-decomposing-right-in-front-of-our-eyes/>. An Alex Jones article in 2011 is titled "Even Goldman Sachs Secretly Believes That An Economic Collapse Is Coming," <http://www.prisonplanet.com/even-goldman-sachs-secretly-believes-that-an-economic-collapse-is-coming.html>.
9. James Wesley, Rawles, *Patriots* and James Rawles, *Survivors: A Novel of the Coming Collapse* (New York: Atria Books, 2011). The printing history of Rawles' *Patriots* may be representative of publishing in the Internet age. Rawles explains the copyright dates here (<http://www.rawles.to/patriots.htm>):

There was some confusion about the various editions of the novel. Some people have written asking if *Patriots* is a sequel to the *Triple Ought* or *TEOTWAWKI* draft editions. It isn't. Rather, it is a thoroughly fleshed-out edition of the same story line. There is a wealth of new technical detail in *Patriots*, and even some new characters. Much of the material was suggested by readers from all around the globe who had read one the draft shareware editions. I greatly appreciate their input!

To avoid any further confusion, let me explain the various iterations of the novel:

- 1.) *The Gray Nineties* was the title of a 19 chapter draft edition of the novel. It was distributed as shareware via the Internet from 1995 to 1997. There were 17,000 copies downloaded.
- 2.) *Triple Ought* was a 27 chapter draft edition of the novel. It was distributed via the Internet from 1997 to early 1998. It was highly successful, with 82,000 downloads logged from the main site and 11 mirror sites in North America and Europe. The various Triple Ought sites were linked by more than 150 web sites dedicated to Christian, patriotic, survival, and Y2K issues. It was reviewed in a variety of on-line publications as well as print publications such as *American Survival Guide* magazine and *The Idaho Observer*.
- 3.) *TEOTWAWKI: The End of the World as We Know It* was a 33 chapter expanded self-published edition of the novel, printed and Velo bound in 8-1/2 x 11 format. It included six appendices. Note: TEOTWAWKI was never distributed as shareware. It was sold during 1997 and 1998. This was a limited edition, with just 1,600 copies printed.
- 4.) *Patriots: Surviving the Coming Collapse* was the title of a 31 chapter (352 page) abridged edition of the novel that was in trade paperback from Huntington House. It was in print from November of 1998 to January of 2005, and was consistently their best-selling title. It went through three editions and nine printings, with 37,500 copies sold.
- 5.) *Patriots: Surviving the Coming Collapse (Expanded Edition)* was the title of a 33 chapter (384 page) edition of the novel published by XLibris Press. It was in print from November of 2006

to February of 2009, and was their best-selling title for nearly all of that time, with 26,220 copies sold.

- 6.) *Patriots: A Novel of Survival in the Coming Collapse* is the title of a 33 chapter (400 page) updated edition of the novel that is now out in trade paperback from Ulysses Press of Berkeley, California. (There will not be a hardback edition.) **This new edition includes both a glossary and an index.** There were 40,000 copies printed in just the first month that the book was released. [bold in the original]
10. See <http://www.counter-currents.com/2012/01/dystopia-is-now/>
11. The recent debt limit crisis in America eerily mimics Rawles' contrivance. "Under US law, the United States Department of the Treasury cannot incur debt beyond the debt ceiling set by Congress. A failure to raise the debt ceiling would result in the government being unable to fund the spending which it is by law required to do, and which had been previously authorized by Congress. In addition, the Obama administration stated that, without this increase, the US would enter sovereign default (failure to pay the interest and/or principal of US treasury securities on time) thereby creating an international crisis in the financial markets. Alternatively, default could be averted if the government were to promptly reduce its other spending by about half." (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Debt_ceiling_crisis).
12. Cf. Thomas L. Friedman, *The World Is Flat: A Brief History of the Twenty-first Century* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2005).
13. The strong Christian theme is prominent throughout the book. For instance, when college student Doug Carlton relates his long journey from Pueblo, Colorado, to Montana, he says that he wished he had packed a pocket-sized Bible because "A few verses aren't enough. You need the Word to keep you going and to maintain your balance" (133). Later (136-7), Todd Gray gives a group of strangers a significant amount of food and ammunition for free. "Mister, I can't thank you enough," says the recipient. "Don't mention it. It's the Christian thing to do. Goodbye and good luck. May God bless you and grant you safe travel," Todd answers. Back at the retreat, Bible study and prayer meetings are held each evening after dinner (149). Pilot Ian Doyle at one point says, "Like I say, we prayed that you would still be here. In times like these, you just have to have total faith in the Lord" (288). Also, Matt and Chase Keane, whose story is treated separately from the Idaho setting, are depicted as sincere and practicing Christians.
14. Interestingly, Rawles' description of Lendel fits the stereotype of the intelligent Jew. He is bookish and a computer whiz. Todd Gray is described as being "in awe of Kevin's intelligence" (35). This is a central theme of Kevin MacDonald's *A People That Shall Dwell Alone: Judaism as a Group Evolutionary Strategy* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 1994), as well as his two following books. In fact, in recent years many authors have been writing on Jewish intelligence. Richard Herrnstein and Charles Murray, for instance, noted elevated Jewish intelligence in *The Bell Curve: Intelligence and Class Structure in American Life* (New York: The Free Press, 1994). Gregory Cochran and Henry Harpending have a chapter in *The 10,000 Year Explosion: How Civilization Accelerated Human Evolution* (New York: Basic Books, 2009) titled "Medieval Evolution: How the Ashkenazi Jews Got Their Smarts," while Jon Entine, writing in *Abraham's Children: Race, Identity, and the DNA of the Chosen People* (New York: Grand Central Publishing, 2007), discusses the topic in chapter thirteen, "Smart Jews: Jewish Mothers or Jewish Genes?" A full-length overview can be found in Richard Lynn, *The Chosen People: A Study of Jewish Intelligence and Achievement* (Augusta, Georgia: Washington Summit Publishers, 2011).

With respect to race relations, nowhere does Rawles disparage African Americans or their

behavior during the riots. On the contrary, he late in the novel introduces a black couple, Tony and Teesha Washington, who are upright and courageous. (Ironically, when discussing World War Two, Tony Washington repeatedly refers to the Japanese as “Japs” [342-43]). Near the end of the novel, Rawles also inserts dialogue on the evils of racism. Matt Keane has now formed his own rebel militia and is speaking to former policeman Mike Nelson, who says, “I heard Tony Washington mention that you used to be a racist, but now you are not. What’s up with that?” “I wouldn’t say that I was a racist, *per se*,” Matt replies. “I equate racism with supremacism. If anything, I was a separatist, not a supremacist. And yes, frankly, I *was* reluctant to work with blacks. I had always kept my distance. But fighting alongside the Washingtons certainly reformed me. They were with us on the St. Maries kayak raid. Tony saved my life two different times that day. I owed him. And I owed him an apology.” Mike cocked his head and asked, “So you’ve sworn off racism? You don’t have *any* animosity toward blacks?” “Absolutely none. They’re fighting and bleeding along with the rest of us. I’d be happy to have anyone of Tony’s caliber join the Keane Team regardless of race. I don’t care if they are white, black, or green.” Matt grinned and added, “We’re equal opportunity destroyers.” Mike shook Keane’s hand, and looking him in the eye, declared, “You’re a good man” (372).

Curiously, Rawles appears anti-Mexican in that he conjures up images of Mexican and Mexican American gangs terrorizing the land. In *Patriots* this is not explicit, but in the sequel *Survivors* he has a gang of Mexicans and Mexican Americans threatening the town of Farmington, New Mexico. More to the point, Rawles creates a vicious and amoral gang originating in Houston, Texas, led by Ignacio Garcia. Unlike the Tony and Teesha Washington characters, there are no positive Mexican American characters to counter the negative depictions.

15. Three researchers who have extensively catalogued the groups composing “the far right” or “White Nationalists” are Carol Swain, *The New White Nationalism in America: Its Challenge to Integration* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004); Leonard Zeskind, *Blood and Politics: The History of the White Nationalist Movement from the Margins to the Mainstream* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2009); and George Michael, *Confronting Right-Wing Extremism and Terrorism in the USA* (New York: Routledge, 2003). I have addressed the work of these authors in “Studies of White Nationalism in the United States: Part One,” *Journal of Hokkai Gakuen University*, No. 144, June 2010 and “Studies of White Nationalism in the United States: Part Two,” *Journal of Hokkai Gakuen University*, No. 147, March 2011. To show how the subjects of these books are often caricatured by the mass media, see my essay “Hollywood Considers White Nationalism: Two Films,” *Journal of Hokkai Gakuen University*, No. 146, December 2010.

For an example of government suspicion about a broad range of American citizens, see the U.S. Department of Homeland Security’s April 2009 “Rightwing Extremism: Current Economic and Political Climate Fueling Resurgence in Radicalization and Recruitment” (<http://www.fas.org/irp/eprint/rightwing.pdf>). As reported, the document “warns against the possibility of violence by unnamed ‘right-wing extremists’ concerned about illegal immigration, increasing federal power, restrictions on firearms, abortion and the loss of U.S. sovereignty and singles out returning war veterans as particular threats” (<http://www.wnd.com/2009/04/94803/>). The report notes that “the return of military veterans facing significant challenges reintegrating into their communities could lead to the potential emergence of terrorist groups or lone wolf extremists capable of carrying out violent attacks. . . . Returning veterans possess combat skills and experience that are attractive to right-wing extremists,” it says. “DHS/I&A is concerned that right-wing extremists will attempt to recruit and radicalize veterans in order to boost their violent

capacities.”

16. This hatred of the government, particularly the FBI, does coincide with the views held by fictional terrorists in the works of White Nationalist leader William Pierce. Writing under the pseudonym Andrew Macdonald, he published *The Turner Diaries* (New York: Barricade Books, 1978 [1996]) and *Hunter* (Hillsboro, WV: National Vanguard Books, 1989). The former book is available for free download at <http://ia341242.us.archive.org/2/items/TheTurnerDiaries/TurnerDiaries.pdf>.
17. To outline his plans for White survival in the Northwest, Covington has penned four novels about the quest for independence from America. Popularly, they are known as the Northwest Quartet. They are *The Hill of the Ravens* (Bloomington, IN: 1st Books, 2003); *A Distant Thunder* (Bloomington, IN: authorHouse, 2004); *A Mighty Fortress* (New York, London, and Shanghai: iUniverse Inc., 2005); and *The Brigade* (Xlibris Corporation, 2008). In a later essay in this series, I will consider Covington's *oeuvre*.
18. If Rawles agrees with Todd Gray's stance, then he is voicing what is commonly referred to as “conspiracy theorizing” with respect to a fear of “The New World Order.” This becomes more apparent when Gray later announces:

“The bottom line, in my estimation, is that since the U.S. is bankrupt, and our creditors — the international bankers, that is — have sent their bully boys to collect on the debt. They consider every square inch of real estate, every capital asset, and even your labor and the future labor of your children to be surety for that debt. It's sort of like when people buy cars on credit and then stop making the payments. The bank sends a repo man to tow the car away. If you can picture that on a global scale, what is going on is ‘kingdom towing.’ The Federals may think that they are still in control, but in reality they are just errand boys for the banksters — the Rothschilds and Bilderberg Group fat cats of the world.” (290)

Mention of the Rothschilds conjures up the myth of Jewish world domination, a theme with a long history. Three examples from recent years are Andrew Carrington Hitchcock, *The Synagogue of Satan: The Secret History of Jewish World Domination* (Austin, Texas: RiverCrest Publishing, 2007); Michael Collins Piper, *The New Babylon: Those Who Reign Supreme, a Panoramic Overview of the Historical, Religious and Economic Origins of the New World Order* (Washington, DC: American Free Press, 2009); and Texe Marrs, *Conspiracy of the Six-Pointed Star: Eye-Opening Revelations and Forbidden Knowledge About Israel, the Jews, Zionism, and the Rothschilds* (Austin, Texas: RiverCrest Publishing, 2011).
19. Quoted in Zeskind, *Blood and Politics*, 76. A fuller description can be found in James Corcoran, *Bitter Harvest: Gordon Kahl and the Rise of the Posse Comitatus in the Heartland* (New York: Viking Penguin, 1990). It is possible Rawles used parts of Kahl's story to create the characters of the Keane brothers discussed above.
20. See Zeskind, 88-95 and Michael, 115-16.
21. Alex Kurtagic, “Vanguard, Aesthetics, Revolution,” *Counter-Currents Publishing*, May 1, 2012, <http://www.counter-currents.com/2012/05/vanguard-aesthetics-revolution/>.
22. Paul Kennedy, *The Rise and Fall of the Great Powers: Economic Change and Military Conflict from 1500 to 2000* (New York: Random House, 1987).