

Welcome to this week's presentation & conversation hosted by the **Canadian Association for the Club of Rome**, a Club dedicated to intelligent debate & action on global issues.

The views and opinions expressed in this presentation are those of the speaker & do not necessarily reflect the views or positions of CACOR.

CACOR Live

The Major Changes in Our MTI Cultures in the Last 86 Years.

Profile: Ruben Nelson was raised by strong prairie women and educated at Queen's and United Theological College (India). This background enabled him to become a Canadian pioneer of serious futures studies and strategic foresight. Ruben has: taught at Queen's and U Calgary; worked for a host of clients in and beyond Canada; and conceived and created new institutions. Today, he is Executive Director of Foresight Canada, Secretary Ralph Connor Memorial United Church, and a recently retired Director of CACOR.

Summary: His objective is to stimulate insight into the truly significant changes in our Modern Techno-Industrial (MTI) world that have occurred since he was born or are now occurring, especially those that are blindingly obvious, i.e. they are simply not there for you until you have learned to see them. This probe contributes to learning to see, explore, and understand the world we have so unconsciously co-created since the end of the 1930s depression.

CACOR acknowledges that we all benefit from sharing the traditional territories of local Indigenous peoples (First Nations, Métis, & Inuit in Canada) and their descendants.



Website: canadiancor.com
YouTube: [Canadian Association for the Club of Rome](https://www.youtube.com/c/CanadianAssociationfortheClubofRome)
2025 Nov 05 Zoom #268
[Donate to CACOR](#)



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Nakurmiik!

takk

ありがとうございます

Thank You!

dohā pina maač

Nakitktam

Merci Beaucoup!

நன்றி





MAJOR CHANGES

In Our MTI* Cultures in the Last 86 Years

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Foresight Canada
November 5, 2025
CACOR Live
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*Modern Techno-Industrial



**“It
matters
when
we are
cast into
history.”**



**“It
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when
we are
cast into
history.”**

May 15, 1939

Our Apprehension of Reality Shapes Our Responses to It



"Our perspective on the world determines how we behave in the world."

Fouts and Jensvold, *Probing Human Origins*, 2002

Foundational Insight

**“ ‘Human freedom in history’
never means the freedom to avoid
the fundamental trends of an epoch.”**

Langdon Gilkey

Foundational Warning

And the LORD said to me:

“The prophets are prophesying lies in my name; I did not send them, nor did I command them or speak to them. They are prophesying to you a lying vision, worthless divination, and the deceit of their own minds/hearts.

Jeremiah 14:14 (RSV)

A Word about Our MTI

Form of Civilization

A Word about Our MTI

Form of Civilization

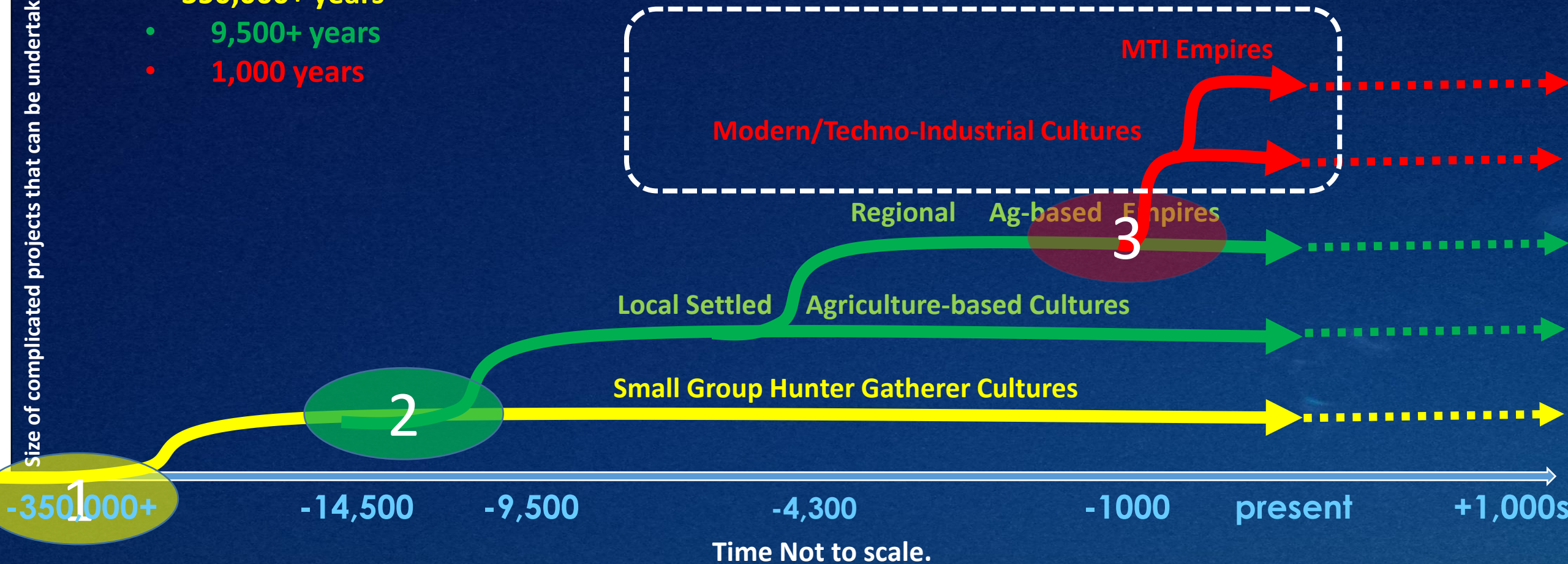
A particular way of grasping and responding to Reality

3 Main Phases of Civilization have Emerged to Date

Longevity of Each Phase:

- 350,000+ years
- 9,500+ years
- 1,000 years

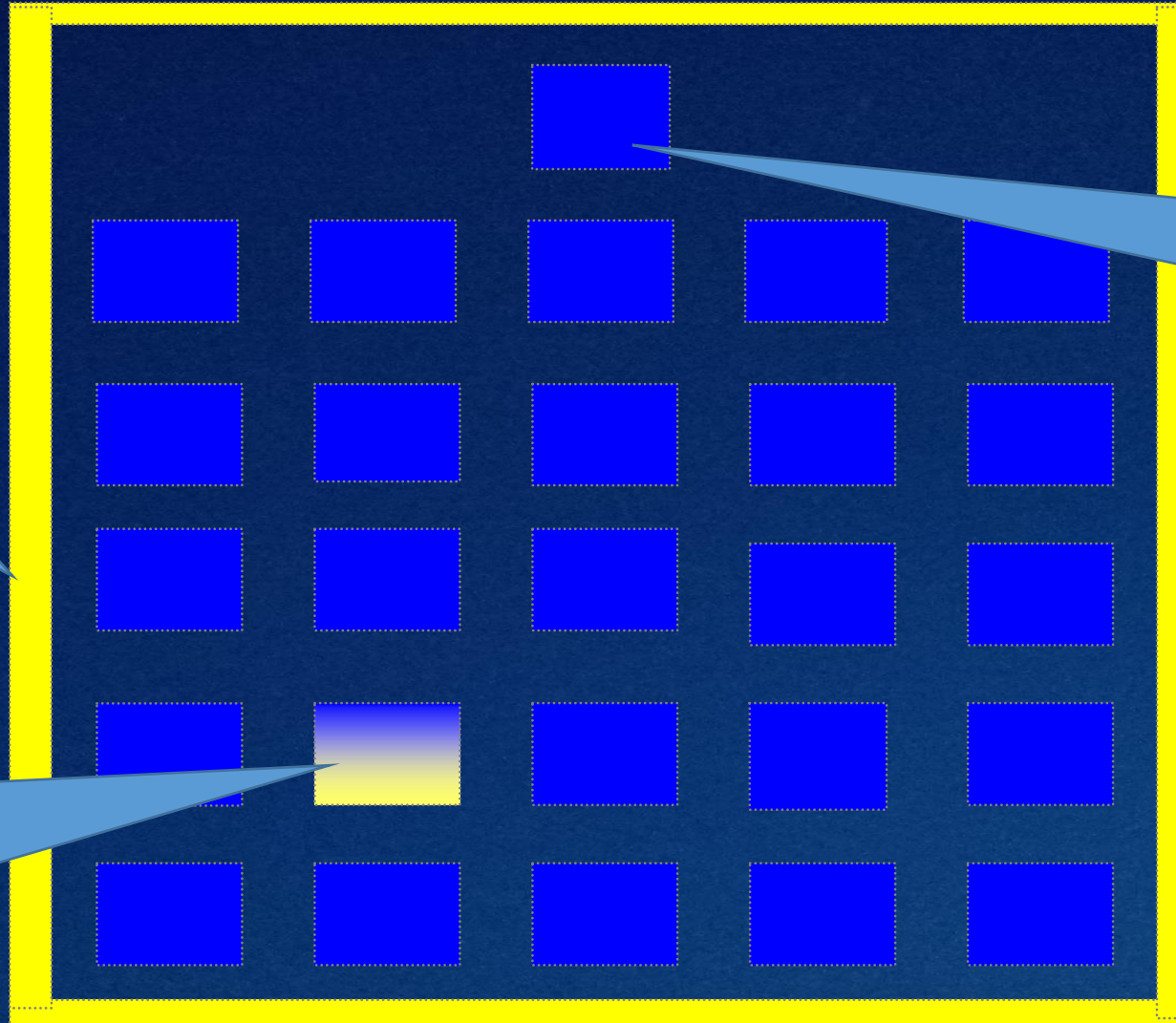
Size of complicated projects that can be undertaken.



Modern Techno-Industrial Imagination – Official matters

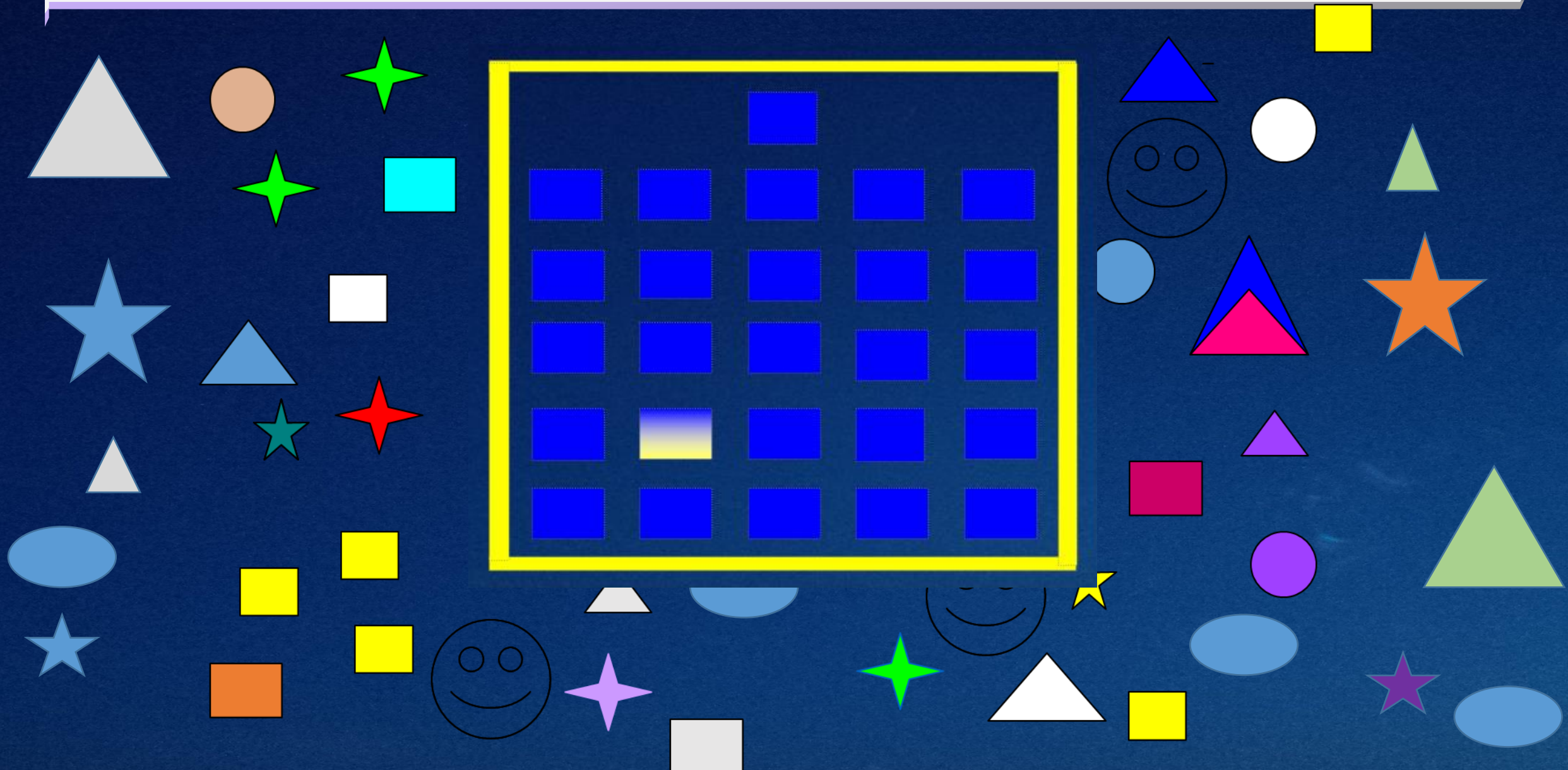
“Public” matters
sharply
distinguished
from “Private”
affairs.

Siloed
X without Y
Forever.
“allergic to context”



Hierarchical
“Truth and
Authority
are always up”

Our Modern Techno-Industrial (MTI) Imagination



Prime Directive: Improve & Extend MTI Cultures

- Owning WEALTH = “success.”
- Wealth = command over goods and services.
- Success for all over time means we must increase WEALTH forever.
- The ECONOMY is the means by which we generate wealth.
- MTI cultures create more wealth than any other.
- The ECONOMY trumps all else. It must grow forever.
- The ECONOMY must also be defended.
- Therefore we must improve and extend MTI cultures forever.

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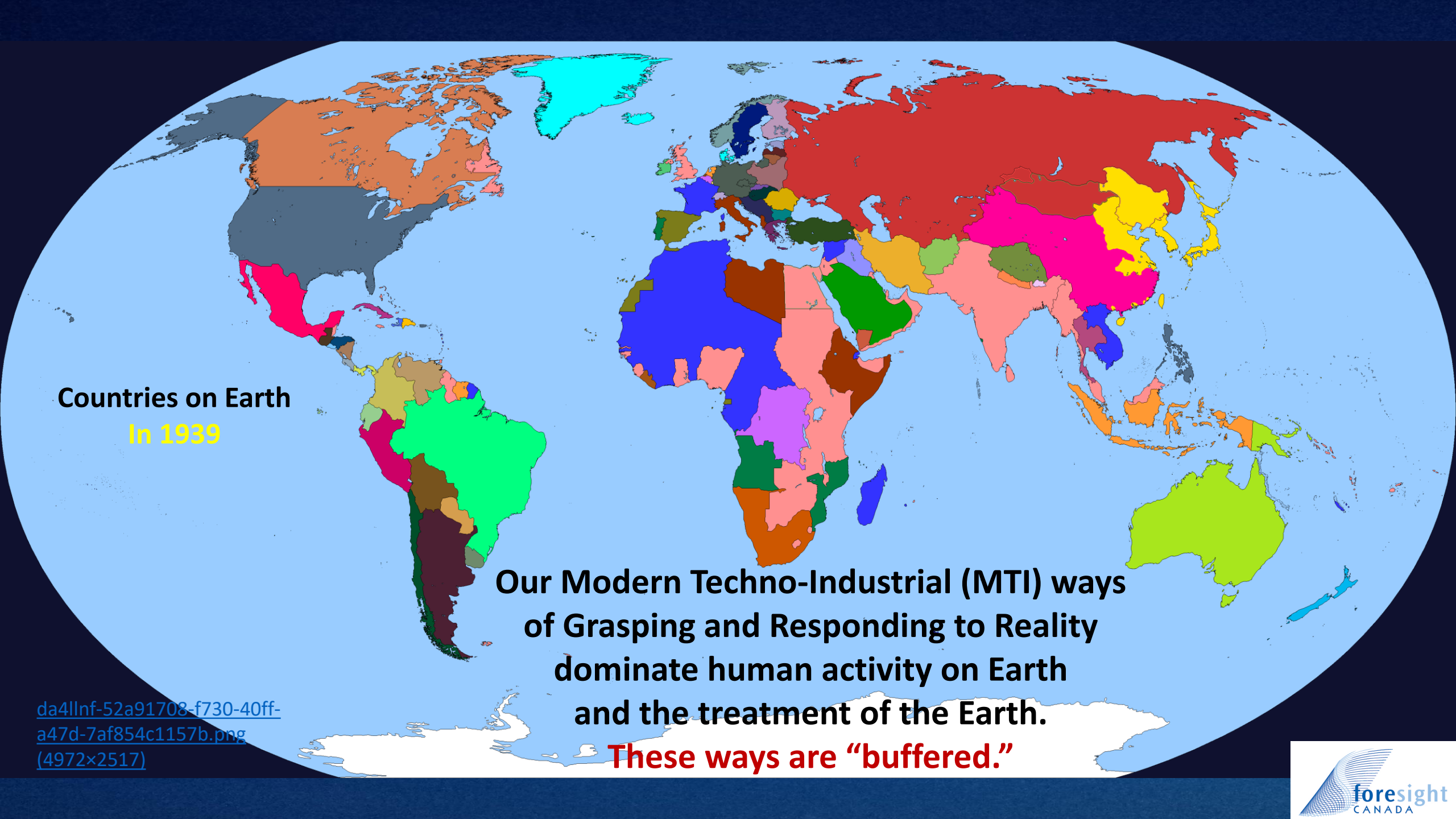
Caution:
In 1939 this Impulse is
buffered/softened.

MTI World in 1939

As now understood by Ruben

**Countries on Earth
In 1939**

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(4972x2517)



**Countries on Earth
In 1939**

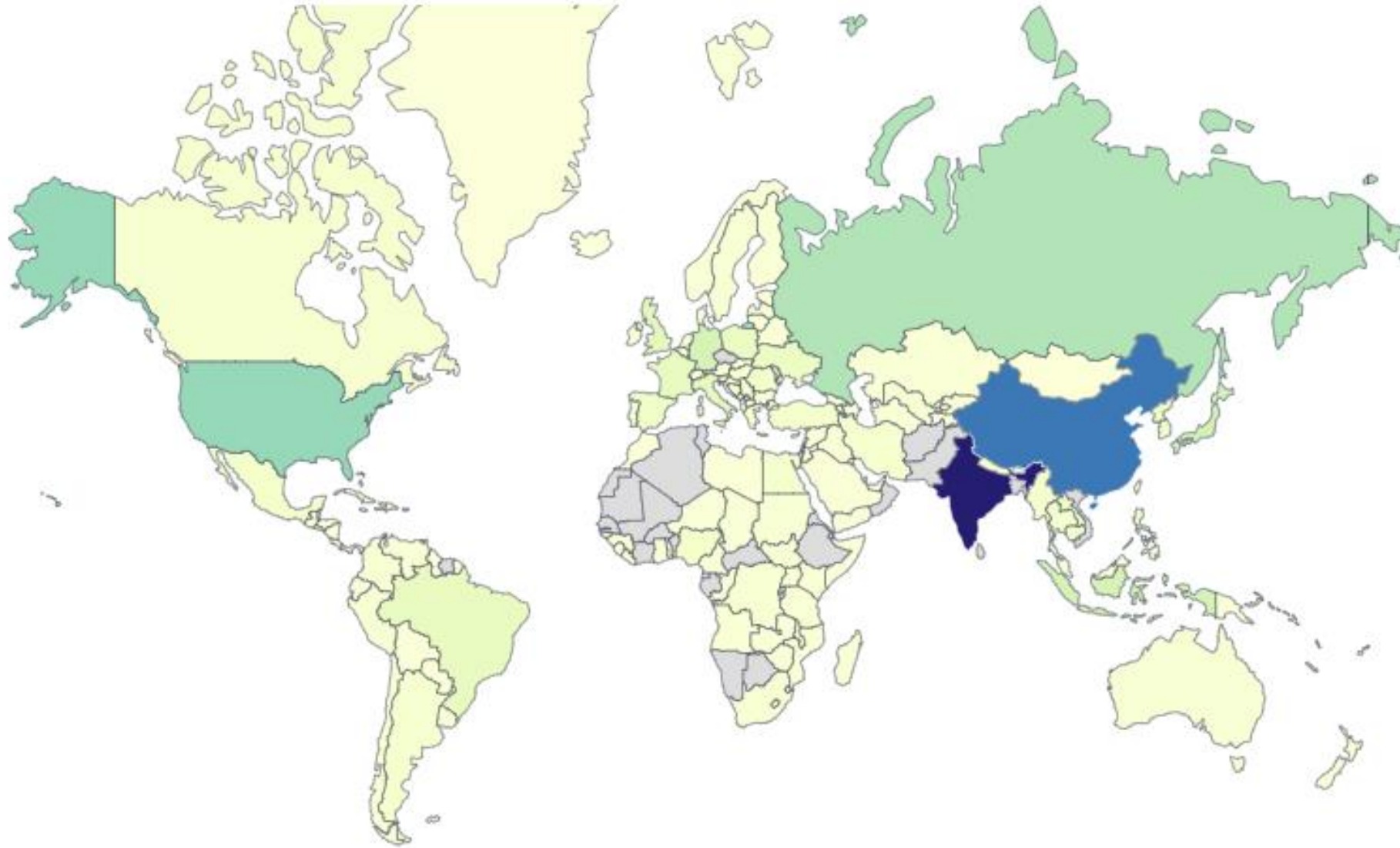
**Our Modern Techno-Industrial (MTI) ways
of Grasping and Responding to Reality
dominate human activity on Earth
and the treatment of the Earth.**

These ways are “buffered.”

[da4llnf-52a91708-f730-40ff-
a47d-7af854c1157b.png](#)
(4972x2517)

Population by Country in 1939

Total approx. 2.1b



India	377m
China	278m
USA	133m
Russia	108m
Germany	69m
UK	48m
France	42m
Brazil	40m
Canada	11.6m

1939 Population

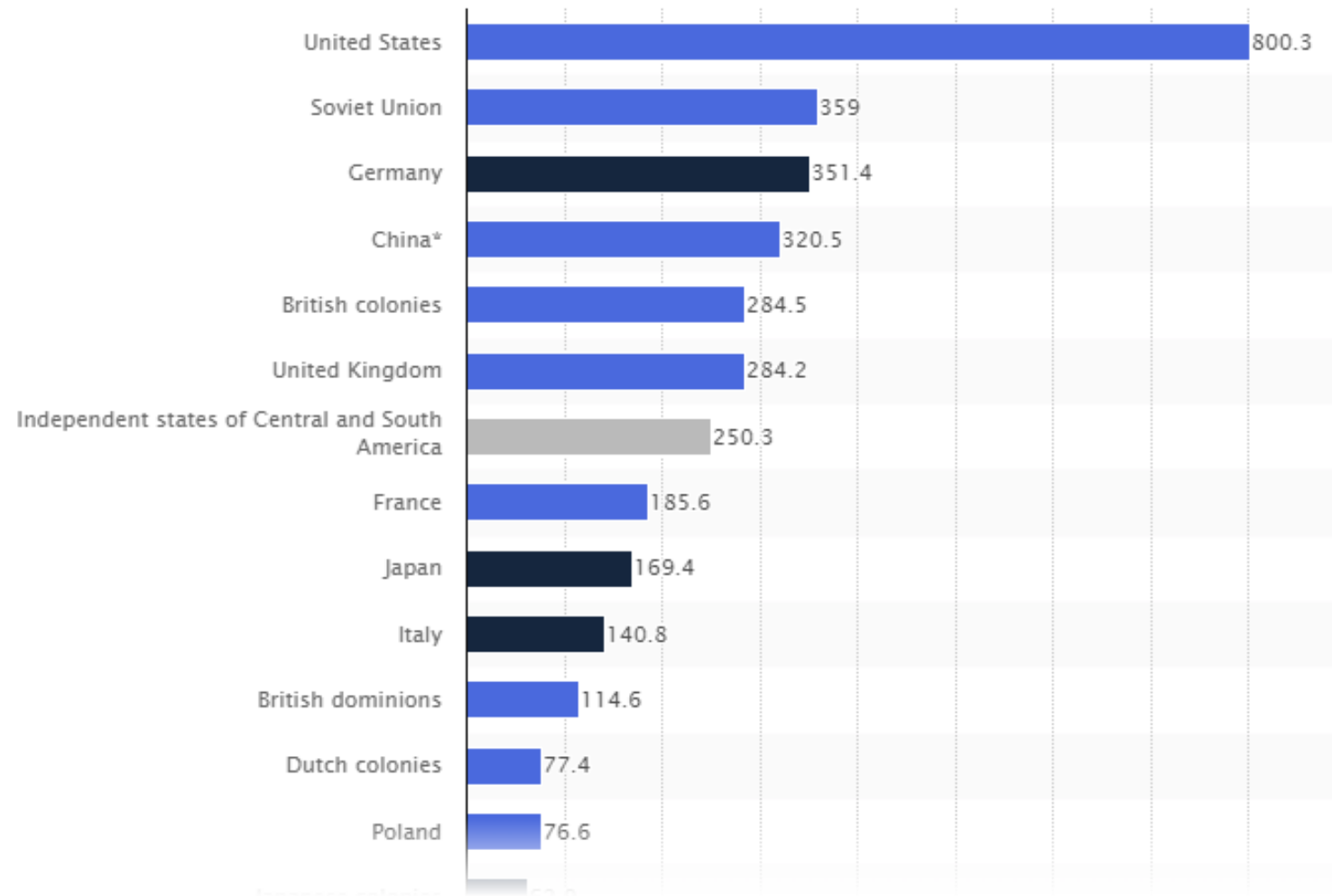


<https://worldpopulationreview.com/country-rankings/population-by-country-in-1939>

Estimated pre-Second World War gross domestic product (GDP) of selected countries, territories, and regions in 1938

(in billion 1990 international dollars)

Approx. \$10 trillion in 2025 dollars.



<https://www.statista.com/statistics/1334182/wwii-pre-war-gdp/>

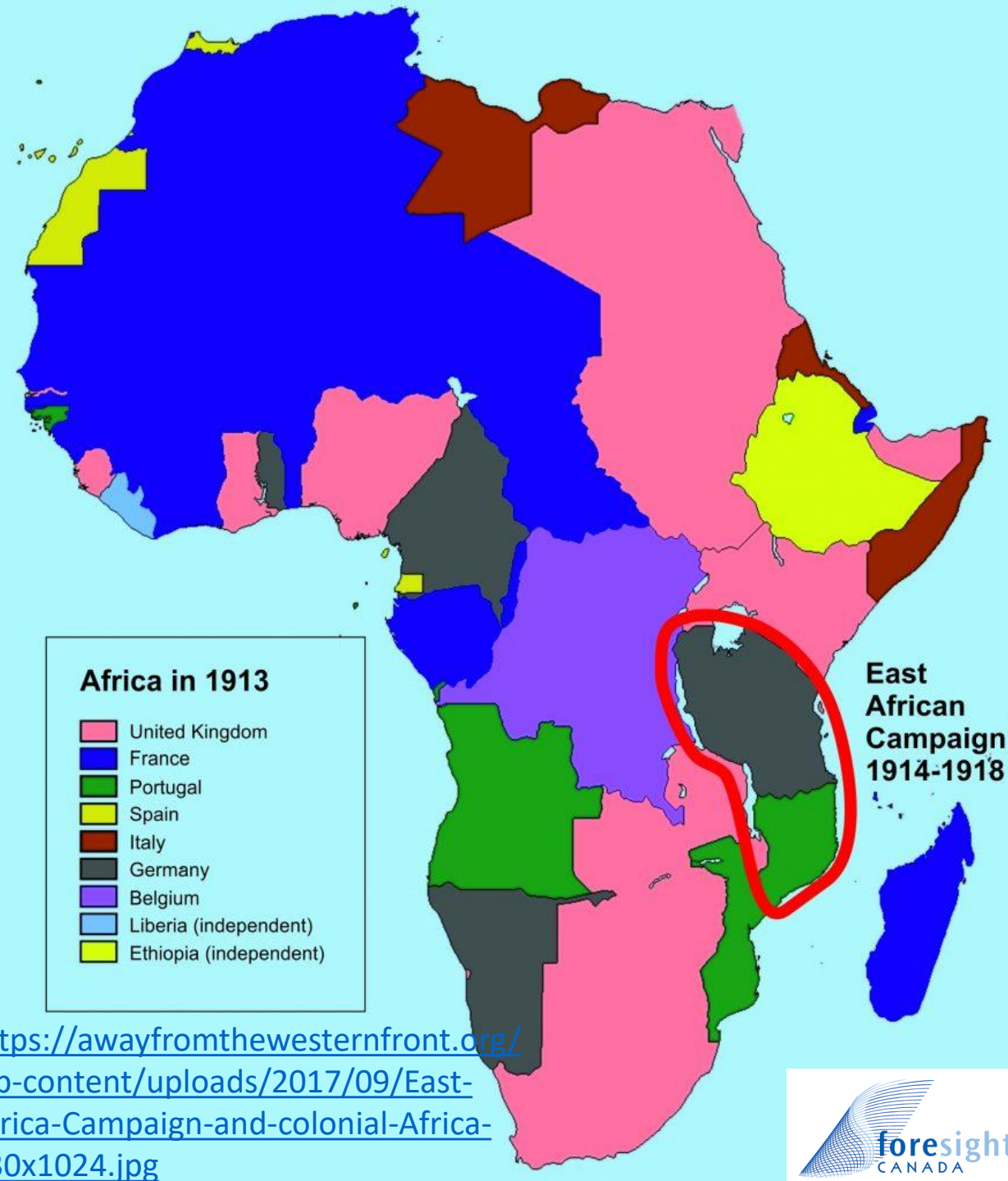
French Empire (extent from 1919 to 1939)



Wikimedia.org



<https://cdn.britannica.com/70/64870-050-1F6747E9/Areas-control-Nazi-Germany-March-1939.jpg>

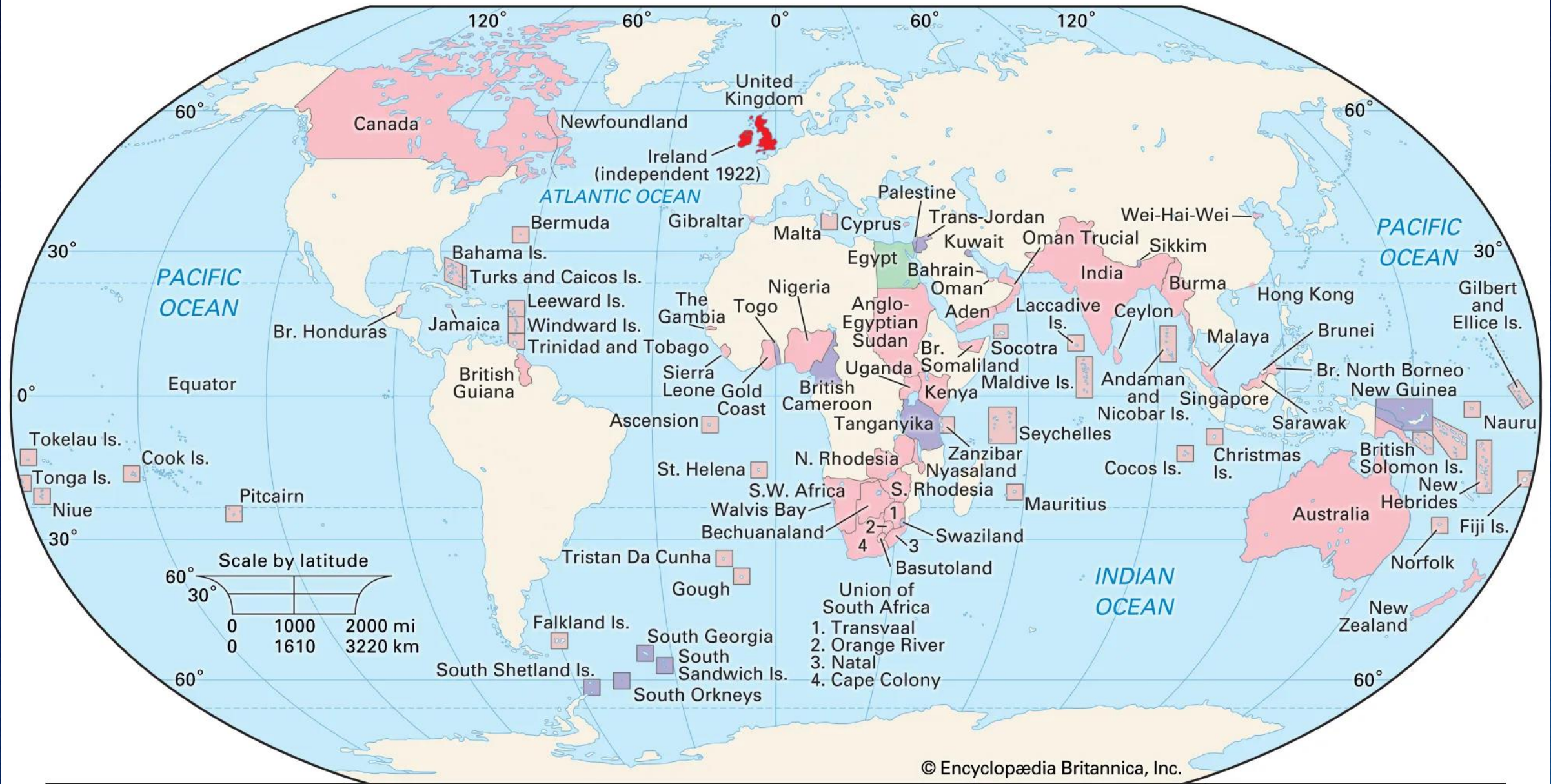


Africa in 1913

- United Kingdom
- France
- Portugal
- Spain
- Italy
- Germany
- Belgium
- Liberia (independent)
- Ethiopia (independent)

East African Campaign
1914-1918

<https://awayfromthewesternfront.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/09/East-Africa-Campaign-and-colonial-Africa-930x1024.jpg>



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THE GREATEST EXTENT OF THE BRITISH EMPIRE



United Kingdom



British Empire 1901
(includes dominions)



Left British Empire before 1939



Additions to Empire 1901-1939

Status of Globalization in 1939

Globalization₁ as a Phenomenological Reality

- For almost everyone life is a local/regional affair.
- Most persons live/die within 500 kms of their birth place.
- For almost all to travel 1,000 kms is a “once in a lifetime” trip.
- There are many places where MTI persons have not yet travelled, many Indigenous cultures we have not yet “discovered.”

Globalization₂ as a MTI Project

- Most trade is local/regional/national. The Depression nurtured economic nationalism.
- European – North American trade outstrips all others.
- League of Nations failed.
- Hitler and Churchill talked of MTI empires lasting 1,000 years.

Life as lived in 1939 in MTI Cultures

- A hierarchical sensibility, and deference to “one’s betters” is normal, reflecting reality.
- The normal pace of life for most persons is still walking speed – 2.5 to 3 mph.
- A deep sense of community develops almost everywhere, like it or not.
 - Informal female led networks looked after many in need.
 - Informal male leaders provided guidance and even direction.
 - Owners of businesses were often paternalistic, for good and ill.
- Christianity is practiced as normal, even as an established practice in many countries.
- Shops closed on Sunday’s and Wednesday afternoons in many places.
- Those who were noticeably different were marginalized at best, often treated badly.
- Neighbours, strangers and institutions were trusted, given the benefit of the doubt.
- Advertizing was still informative.
- The assumption ran deep that we would overcome difficulties and progress forever.

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These conditions,
while they lasted,
buffered the worse
impulses of MTI cultures.

MTI World from 1945 to 2025 in NA

From 1945 to 1975 in NA

- We experienced three decades in which it appeared that the MTI ways of being and living were the cat's meow; that to believe and commit to MTI ways was right and sane.
 - In 1979, Francis Fukuyama blurted out that we were “the end of history.”
 - The elites of MTI cultures cheered him and leapt on board.
 - Bretton Woods, Marshall Plan, UN and its many agencies, GDP grew X2 to X4.
 - For three decades we invested an increasing amount of the GDP in wages.
 - Single income families could own a house, even if a small one.
 - The demographics meant that my generation was smaller than the demand created by growing and new institutions driven by the “baby boom.”
 - In Canada, only 6% of my generation went to university. For us, job offers were plentiful. Jobs had real salaries and benefits. Promotions came easily.
 - It was easy for us to become unconscious co-conspirators with those who fell in love with money and moved it to the High Alter of MTI cultures.

Worth Pondering I

- From the mid 19th Century, new ways of perceiving, exploring, understanding and knowing reality began to emerge in MTI cultures among a small percentage of selected elites, e.g. evolutionary thinking, contextual thinking (hermeneutics and ecology), quantum mechanics, systems thinking, network thinking, futures thinking, integral thinking, complexity thinking. ...
- All of these insights initially emerged at the margins of MTI cultures with virtually no impact on any MTI culture.
- Given the long lag time between the initial emergence of truly new ways of seeing, imagining and thinking and their routine use in daily life, up to now little has changed in the dominant patterns of perception, thought and action in MTI cultures, other than the decline of formal modern religion.
- This will change over the next generation.

Worth Pondering II

- The turmoil of the 1960s and 1970s was:
 - Primarily in: UK, France, Italy, Germany, Spain, USA, Canada, Brazil.
 - Primarily experienced among university students and those to be drafted.
 - Exceptions: where minorities demanded to be seen/treated equally.
- Overwhelmingly, the struggle was for a better MTI culture, one that was far more open, fair minded, relevant, inclusive with softened hierarchies and moderated privileges.
- What was being overthrown was not MTI culture per se, and certainly not the MTI way of grasping and responding to reality.
- Rather it was against an MTI culture seen as too closed, hierarchical and exclusive.
- There was no sense then that the foundations of MTI cultures were insecure.

From 1975 to 2025

- We experienced five decades during which the raw reality of the MTI way of grasping and responding to reality has slowly been laid bare.
- My thesis is that without understanding what we were doing, our elites and those of us who had access to them, pursued the logic of the MTI ways of being, in the illusory hope that what it promised would come to be – **persons fit to live with in societies fit to live in.**
 - We allowed the economy to be financialized. Derivatives of derivatives exploded.
 - Manufacturing of real goods was offshored, the tools and skills abandoned.
 - Corporations stripped themselves down to core functions. Real jobs vanished.
 - Taxes were reduced, we opened 24/7 and gave serious money “certainty” in the vain hope that we could return to 3% growth and a reasonably humane culture.
 - Teaching skills the economy needed replaced the education of real persons.
 - We also began to notice and include many who were marginalized.

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 - Job skills the economy needed replaced the education of real persons.
 - We also began to notice and include many who were marginalized.

Unconsciously, we destroyed
much which had buffered us
from the raw realities of
the MTI grasp on Reality.

This Picture DOES NOT Capture Our Intentions

I get it, that the picture I have painted does not capture the human side of our struggle – where our heart was in all of this. We had good intentions. We never intended any of this to happen.

As persons and citizens the vast majority of us are good people who just wanted to follow the Prime Directive: Improve and extend the MTI ways of being and living!

The Lesson

Good intentions are not enough!

Good intentions must be anchored in a non-trivial understanding of Reality.

This requires a community of persons who are deeply committed to:

- A relentlessly reflexive and meta-reflexive ways of being/living.
- A relentless willingness to be grasped, held and taught by Reality, to experience Reality as it most deeply and authentically is.
- Allowing such experiences to guide the way we present ourselves to Reality, as we seek to know it and respond to it.
- Cooperating with our own evolution as we seek to experience, understand, know and respond to Reality more authentically.
- **“Becoming a whole person in an integral community” that is consciously outgrowing/transcending our initial formation as MTI persons.**

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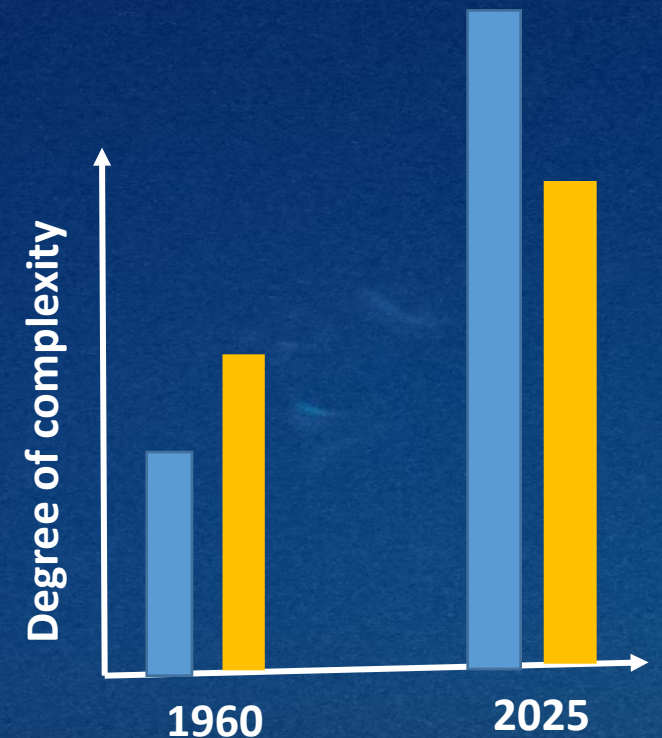
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- Cooperating with our own evolution as we seek to experience, understand, know and respond to Reality more authentically.
- **“Becoming a whole person in an integral community” that is consciously outgrowing/transcending our initial formation.**

**This is not yet understood
widely enough in MTI
cultures to make practical
differences today.**

Where are We Now?

Our Anxiety is Growing

- Technological innovations.
- Inequality.
- Complexity, systems, polycrisis, meta-crisis.
- Distractions and misdirection of our attention.
- Pressures on our time.
- Loss of real community.
- Loss of a sense of personal and communal agency.
- Loss of a sense that “they” can be trusted.
- Ecological Overshoot, climate change, expensive energy, ...

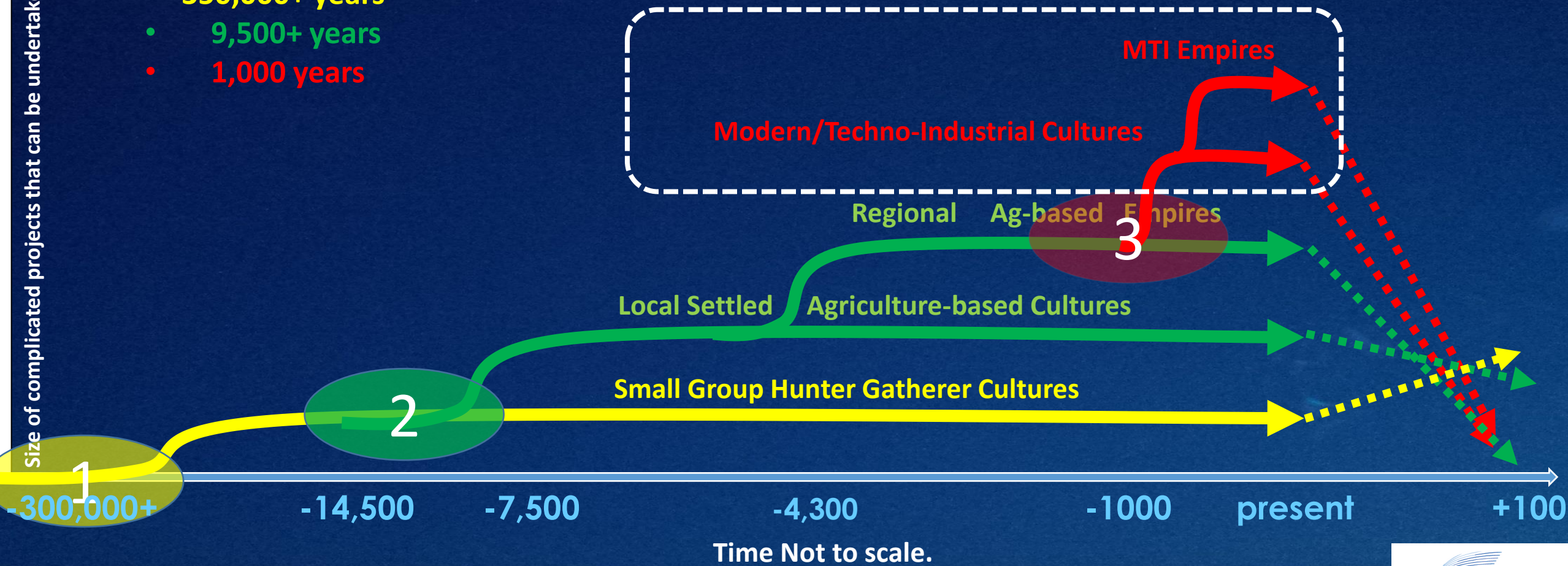


Emerging Reports from the Margins – Disintegration

Size of complicated projects that can be undertaken.

Longevity of Each Phase:

- 350,000+ years
- 9,500+ years
- 1,000 years



Emerging Reports from the Margins – Our Dilemma

"The ecologically necessary is politically infeasible,
but the politically feasible is ecologically ineffective,
when not disastrous."

Dr. William Rees's
Tag Line
2025

Peter Turchin Can Help Us

Peter Turchin's work shows that these three conditions are commonly found in cultures heading for disintegration (collapse).

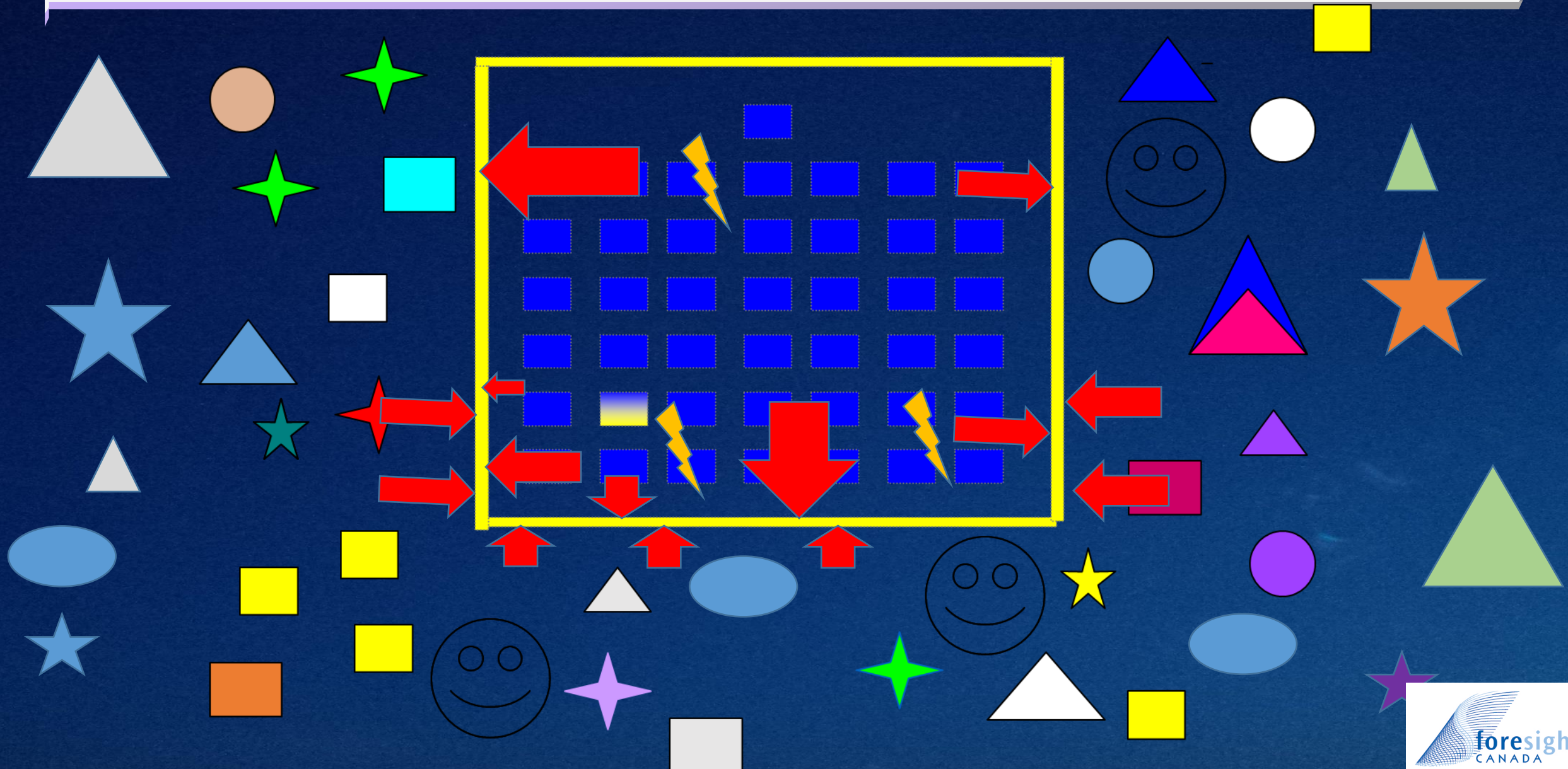
1. Immiseration of the lower classes.
2. A surplus of those who feel entitled to be among the elites.
3. The capacity of both groups to organize resistance to the then established elites.

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MTI Under Increasing Stresses, Deepening Insecurity



What has NOT Changed

^{MTI}
This map
is not
working!



1st Enlightenment insights
cannot make reliable sense of
living complex emergent
realities.

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The Really Bad News

The **MTI “take” on reality** is sufficiently faulty that it cannot nurture a reliable sense of the Earth and life on Earth, including that of humans and other life.

The key is that MTI **cannot require** that reflexivity becomes a routine practice of persons and cultures.

MTI **CANNOT** make reliable sense of Reality

MTI requires us to be:

- Logical
- Empirical
- Rational
- Critical
- **Reflexive**
- **Meta-reflexive**



“Nothing
good ever
came out of
a blind
spot.”

Louise Penny
Kingdom of the Blind
2018

MTI Under Increasing Stresses, Deepening Insecurity

Our elites, both established
and would be, are still
committed to the Prime
Directive of MTI cultures.

MTI Under Increasing Stresses, Deepening Insecurity

Our elites, both established and would be, are still committed to the Prime Directive of MTI cultures.

As are the vast majority of MTI citizens.

What has Changed?

Condition of the Conditions in which We Live Today

There is no historical precedent for:

1. Human caused Ecological Overshoot on a global scale.
The conditions for a future human civilization may not exist.
2. Civilizational Overshoot of the MTI ways of grasping/responding to reality.
We DO NOT face just another collapse of yet another culture.
We face the 1st disintegration (collapse) of a whole form of civilization.
And this is in only 8 generations (1850 to 2050).
3. The cockamamie behaviour of citizens, especially MTI citizens.
When a critical mass of them come to understand the unique historical conditions they face and their inability to reign the behaviour of super rich largely white males who have extensive agency.

We Who are MTI are SLOWLY becoming Aware:

1. We are “Reality blind.”
2. We are “Culture Trapped”
3. Congenitally unreflexive.
4. Deeply committed to an illusory understanding of reality.
5. We do not yet understand any of this well enough to respond.
6. We cannot know as long as we cling to our MTI ways of being.
7. We will not be able to make reliable sense of our own death.

In Sum

The Biggest Changes in my Life Time

The Really NEW Bad “Good News” News

We who are MTI persons in MTI cultures are slowly learning:

- The future we anticipate is not the future we will get.
- We are NOT “bad” people.
- We ARE well-intended, but ill-directed persons and cultures.
- We have all too willingly followed the elites of our MTI cultures when they prophesied to us “a lying vision, worthless divination, and the deceit of their own minds/hearts.” Their deceit became ours.
- Those hands at our throat are our own. “The enemy, he is us!”
- We must own up to our role in all of this and turn and be healed.



Over to YOU!

Our Future **is** in Our Hands, Minds, Hearts and Spirits

Thank You!

Some Resources for Deep Learning

1. Dr. William (Bill) Rees, UBC: [here](#), [here](#), [here](#),
2. Dr. Nate Hagens: ["The Great Simplification"](#)
3. [CACOR](#) and [CACOR Live webinars](#).
4. [Worldview Test](#)
5. Joanna Macy, [The Work that Reconnects](#)
6. Dr. Jem Bendell: [Deep Adaptation](#)
7. Dr. James Hansen: [Global Warming in the Pipeline](#)
8. Dr. Art Burman: [The Illusions of Energy](#)
9. A host of folks on [Medium](#)
10. Thomas Homer-Dixon, [Cascade Institute](#)