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Conclusion

citizen (n.)

c. 1300, citisein (fem. citeseine) 'inhabitant of a city or town,' from Anglo-French citesein, citezein 'city-dweller, town-dweller, citizen' (Old French citeien, 12c., Modern French citoyen), from cite (see city) + -ain (see -ian).[1]

—'Citizen', *Online Etymology Dictionary*

Cars helped drive huge change in the mid-20th century, including entirely unexpected knock-on effects such as the fact that 25% of the US's agricultural land, which had been used for rearing horses, was then freed up for human food production … City authorities are also playing a part as they introduce inducements to ditching cars … Most driverless vehicles will be more used than typical manual cars which typically spend 95% of their time parked up. As the need for parking space and potential bus lanes tails off, city authorities will find new public space to play with.[2]

—Kevin McCullagh, 'Cities are about to change forever'

Forget Washington—Cities will win or lose the future.[3]

—Benjamin R. Barber, *If Mayors Ruled the World*

1 Douglas R. Harper, 'Citizen', in *Online Etymology Dictionary*, 2001–22, available from: www.etymonline.com/word/citizen.

2 Kevin McCullagh, 'Cities are about to change forever: Here are three key decisions they must make', *Fast Company*, 5 May 2017, available from: www.fastcompany.com/90123848/cities-are-about-to-change-forever-here-are-3-key-decisions-they-must-make.

3 Barber, *If Mayors Ruled the World*.

Two recent undertakings help to reinforce several of the observations from previous pages. One is from Iraq in the early years of this century, the second from New York City.

The strikingly successful early 2003 military operation that defeated Iraq's armed forces in a matter of weeks will long stand in combination with the years that followed as an example of the dictum that one can win the war but lose the peace. Coalition military forces swept northward from Kuwait and Saudi Arabia into Baghdad and beyond, ousting Saddam Hussein from power and—for several months—taking control of the country. Preparations to bring about recovery from the social disaster of war were minimal, poorly and inconsistently organised and fundamentally flawed at the highest levels. The result was a series of insurgencies that continued to percolate two decades after the original combat assaults.

There are plenty of sources relating the details behind the failed preparations and flawed decisions for anyone who is unfamiliar. They include descriptions of US Government departments failing to take advantage of one another's capabilities, an apparent ignorance of history's lessons resulting in outright disbandment of Iraq's military structure and an unwillingness to recognise that battlefield success is only a table setting for the feast of challenges to come.

The experiences of then Major General James N. Mattis serve in microcosm to reveal the broader consequences of the inability to win the peace.[4] Recognising that a combat force eventually assumes responsibility for an occupied population, previous commander in chief of US Central Command, retired General Anthony C. Zinni, called Mattis and his fellow 1st Marine Division commanders together just before the 10 November 2002 Marine Corps ball, knowing they would be part of the coalition invading Iraq the following year. 'You'll go through the Iraqi Army within the first six weeks,' he told the assembled group, 'Then the real work begins.' At the same time, the US Army's chief of staff, General Eric K. Shinseki, was making it clear that it would probably take more military personnel to occupy Iraq than to win the fight to defeat its armed forces. Both men would be proven right.

The first weeks of the occupation seemed to signal that concerns about violence during the occupation were overblown. Soldiers walked city streets with little worry of being attacked. The leadership of 1st Marine

4 Material in this vignette is supported by that from Mattis, Interview.

Division was meeting with members of the Iraqi Army, working through the initial awkwardness of victor and defeated, Westerner and Iraqi. The men shared coffee. Relations improved to the point that they shared a professional education seminar during which the Iraqis discussed the differences between fighting Iranians and fighting Americans. Additional Iraqi military personnel were called in and paid as the Marines sought to continually improve the working relationship (casting doubt on senior US political leaders who claimed the Iraqi Army had disbanded itself and their formal order directing that action was simply recognising an established reality). In the meantime, Mattis requested that the senior US organisation in Iraq, the Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA), send civilian experts to help re-establish control in his division's urban areas. The CPA refused, claiming they were unable to spare any of their 240 personnel. Fortunately, UK Government representative Cheryl Plumridge in southern Iraq's Basra, part of the United Kingdom's occupation zone, offered two individuals for each city Mattis felt could benefit. Plumridge's response to his initial request for just one: 'No, no. I think you need two in each city because if I call one back I don't want to leave you uncovered.'[5] Plumridge had 13 people in her organisation at the time.

Ensuing weeks saw the formal disbanding of the Iraqi Army. Occupation policies were largely ad hoc. US Department of Defense leaders chose to ignore Department of State post-combat plans and offers of expertise. Far from bringing the Iraqi people and its military onside as part of a comprehensive approach to recovery, internal US Government squabbles strained even US intragovernmental relationships. Opportunities to win the peace were lost in no small part because urban security could not be guaranteed. British General Graham Lamb observed: 'There are only two kinds of people here: reconcilable and irreconcilable.'[6] Lacking the cooperation from many of Iraq's soldiers, police and population, it was virtually impossible to discern who was who until they started attacking coalition personnel and fellow Iraqis. Mattis drew on his knowledge of history in concluding his discussion of the frustrations he felt regarding the lack of US efforts to successfully occupy Iraq. 'Great empires don't go out with a bang,' he observed, 'They go out with a whimper.' The same is true of great nations.

5 The words are Mattis's recollection of the conversation.
6 Again, the words are as recollected by Mattis.

We have already touched on our second example. It is one offering a more encouraging response while unfortunately reflecting the fact that government squabbles continue to plague disaster reaction. New York City was hit particularly hard by Covid-19 in the opening months of 2020. By April, more than 700 of its residents were dying every day. The state of the city's health system and inability to manage the bodies of the dead led to what were then extraordinary actions: public properties converted into temporary hospitals, freezer vans parked outside medical facilities to store the deceased before burial or cremation and calls for federal assistance—some of which was forthcoming, some of which was not. By far the hardest hit location in the United States at the time, the number of dead would exceed 21,000 in a little more than 14 weeks after the city's first diagnosis on 29 February 2020.[7] Both New York City's mayor and the state's governor struggled with a lack of accurate and consistent federal guidance and Washington's decision to be a competitor for dangerously short supplies of equipment such as personal protective gear. There were notable successes despite the lack of support. Many listened and took the precautions advised. Photos showed Hollywood-like post-apocalyptic streets vacant of vehicles and people. Online offerings featured a ghostly quiet Manhattan devoid of car horns, vehicle sirens and its normal 24/7 hum of activity. By mid-August 2020, six and a half months after detection of the city's first cases, more than 27 per cent of the five boroughs' population tested positive for the Covid-19 antibody.[8] Infectious disease epidemiologist Dr Maureen Miller at once described the situation and revealed New Yorkers' underlying distress:

> They stopped all businesses. They insisted that there be no social gatherings. They had shelter-in-place laws in place and enforced by fear … We had watched what had happened in Europe and then suddenly it's happening in New York City, our home.[9]

7 Wan Yang, Sasikiran Kandula, Mary Huynh, Sharon K. Greene, Gretchen Van Wye, Wenhui Li, Hiu Tai Chan, Emily McGibbon, Alice Yeung, Don Olson, Anne Fine and Jeffrey Shaman, 'Estimating the infection-fatality risk of SARS-CoV-2 in New York City during the spring 2020 pandemic wave: A model-based analysis', *The Lancet* 21(2) (February 2021): 203–12, at 203, doi.org/10.1016/S1473-3099(20)30769-6; and NYC Health, 'Trends and totals', *COVID-19 Data*, City of New York, 11 March 2021, [Updated 2022], available from: www1.nyc.gov/site/doh/covid/covid-19-data-totals.page.

8 Joseph Goldstein, '1.5 million antibody tests show what parts of N.Y.C. were hit hardest', *The New York Times*, 20 August 2020, available from: www.nytimes.com/2020/08/19/nyregion/new-york-city-antibody-test.html.

9 Quoted in Amy Jamieson, 'How New York City got control of COVID-19—and where it goes from here', *Healthline*, 20 July 2020, available from: www.healthline.com/health-news/how-new-york-city-got-control-of-covid19.

It was a healthy fear, or at least a fear in the service of staying healthy. The residents of America's largest megacity—aside from the foolish few—toed the line, thereby playing a major role benefiting their personal welfare, that of their neighbours and, by extension, a quicker return to work for the many suddenly unemployed. It was a struggle, nonetheless. More than half of those residing in (ironically) the Corona, Queens, zip code tested positive at one point, this from a population in which for many, every dollar was critical to meeting essentials (much of the Corona area's population relies on construction or restaurant service work—jobs requiring close contact with others and often lengthy travel to places of work).[10] The next hardest hit community was one consisting principally of Hasidic Jews, where large and multigenerational households are common and some resisted both social distancing and wearing masks.[11]

Federal help in the form of military medical and other personnel arrived to assist those in need. The publicly owned Jacob K. Javits Center became a medical facility in four days thanks to US Army Corps of Engineers modifications and the infusion of armed forces nurses, lab technicians, pharmacists and doctors. Elsewhere, newly erected tents sheltered medical procedures and patients. A crash initiative converted 'portable on demand storage' containers into surgical facilities.[12] Partnership for New York City, a nonprofit organisation that brings the private sector and government together, supported the public information campaign and encouraged support for struggling businesses. It lent assistance to the vulnerable, first responders and healthcare personnel while at the same time arranging for essential support from businesses, linking the local population with federal help in another step towards a comprehensive approach in combating the virus's spread.[13] Companies suspended demands for payment from residents who could not afford internet or other services, which was particularly critical as schools instituted distance learning and adults increasingly worked from home. Groups voluntarily provided food, other goods and assistance to benefit megacity area residents.

10 Amanda Rosa, 'What N.Y.C.'s antibody test results show us', *The New York Times*, 20 August 2020, available from: www.nytimes.com/2020/08/20/nyregion/nyc-coronavirus-antibody-testing.html.
11 ibid.
12 Paige Williams, 'Urgent care from the Army Corps of Engineers', *The New Yorker*, 27 July 2020, available from: www.newyorker.com/magazine/2020/08/03/urgent-care-from-the-army-corps-of-engineers.
13 For a similar example of services provided by New York City, see City of New York, 'COVID-19 guidance for business owners and FAQs', [Online], New York City Small Business Services, n.d., available from: www1.nyc.gov/site/sbs/businesses/covid19-business-tips-faqs.page.

The New York megacity response reflected the good and bad and the opportunities and challenges that catastrophe brings to the world's biggest, most connected and hyper-influential urban areas. Basic functions continued—at times constrained but continuous nevertheless—softening the impact for those domestic and international residents who depended on the city for critical functions. Orchestration involving high-level government officials, commercial enterprises, volunteers and cooperation by the men, women and children who live in the city was key to containing the first wave of Covid-19 as lessons were relearned.

Calamity capitalises on the vulnerability of those in particular economic, cultural, ethnic or other conditions, putting them at greater risk. Consistent, frequent, high-quality and accessible guidance makes responses and recovery more effective. It is a shield deflecting rumour, misinformation and disinformation—and, by extension, panic. Insights available from New York's battle with Covid-19 join the many from other crises described in these pages and offer fodder for megacity preparations worldwide. So will disasters yet to come.

We have made some generalities in the preceding chapters even as we recognise that each megacity is unique. These urban areas individually trend in different directions. In many cases, the direction of that trend depends on whether the megalopolis is part of the developing or the developed world. Growing wealth in the former means residents can increasingly afford automobiles even as others rely on more traditional forms of transportation. Congestion increases such that some cities—Bangkok among them—are among the most traffic-intense on the planet, as cars compete with scooters, motorcycles, bicycles, pedestrians and, sometimes, oxcarts, rickshaws or horse carriages. Industrialisation is often the trigger. Factories bring wealth, wealth brings automobiles, automobiles and industry bring pollution at levels not seen since executives in early industrial Pittsburgh had to change shirts over lunch, their morning white turning grey before noon. Residents of Mumbai and Beijing today are among those who can relate.

Meanwhile, the developed world's megacities look towards a not-too-distant decade in which self-driving cars diminish the number of vehicles on which residents rely. Relying on others for intra-urban area transit (for example, Uber, Lyft, traditional taxis and public transportation), costly automobile insurance and congestion charges and limited and expensive workplace parking are among the factors reversing the trends of early industrial urbanisation. Populations age. Megacities shrink, barring

sufficient immigration. A pandemic makes working from home the norm for many. Those long commutes in heavy traffic and too little time with family are happily avoided for some even as others pine for the vibrancy of in-person exchanges with office colleagues, the variety of lunch options and the higher RPM of megacity living compared with the idling pace of the 'burbs.

What such trends and choices mean in readying for future megacity disasters is yet to receive much scrutiny. Recent working from home trends notwithstanding, developing and developed-world megacity residents alike could find themselves sympathising with our Haruki Akamatsu as he sat traffic-bound in this book's opening pages: too many cars and lingering danger as the population attempts to flee. As time moves on, developed-world cities' evacuees will instead deal with the slim pickings among driverless rides or public transport thanks to disrupted service should disaster strike. A positive note: the costs of living closer to megacity commercial cores are likely to remain prohibitive for first responders, meaning there will be a yin for the yang as those aid providers responding to disaster bring driverless vehicles to areas from which others are trying to escape. How desperate the transport shortage will be will depend considerably on the when of a catastrophe. We remember that many of Tokyo's 20 million workday commuters were hard pressed to get home after the earthquake of 11 March 2011.

Traditional federal–local government partnerships are less likely to find solutions to these challenges than cooperatives of a new ilk. Urban areas have discovered richer relationships among the innovative and youthful within their jurisdictions. Cutting-edge companies, universities, imaginative and publicly oriented nonprofits, fellow urban governments and citizens' groups offer expertise, passion and—sometimes—money. The more than 100 cities in California's Bay Area range from north of San Francisco to south beyond San Jose and east well distant from saltwater. Depending on who is defining (and therefore counting), it is home to between 6.5 and nearly 10 million people. Many of those cities have agreements to provide mutual assistance in times of need, understanding that while all may suffer somewhat, some will suffer more than others. Those authorities are not unique in this regard either within the United States or beyond, combining as they do private as well as government partners in their readying for future catastrophes. The previous pages make it clear that grassroots intermegacity relationships have much to offer in the way of best-practice exchanges and helping one

another close capability gaps. Tokyo's citizen-level preparations put it in an elite class. New York's interorganisational ties within the megacity and beyond complement its intelligence competencies to similarly guarantee it a premier position when it comes to providing vital information. Both megacities have much to offer each other and those elsewhere given these complementary proficiencies. Such bilateral or multilateral links could see the world's most influential urban areas conducting a series of future exercises, each offering participants a promise of better readiness when calamity next visits. One wonders how the tragic mishandling of Mumbai's 2008 terrorist attack might have gone differently had that city's officials seized the opportunity to learn from other, better-prepared megacities and their law enforcement organisations. Paris's response to a similar multilocation attack in 2015 demonstrates the value of learning from disasters elsewhere.

Little wonder that citizens of the world's wealthier urban areas seek more say over their fates by declaring themselves sanctuaries from what are for them detrimental immigration, environmental, social or other federally, state or provincially dictated policies. Nearly two-thirds of residents from the City of Los Angeles—the core of the United States' second megacity—are first or second-generation immigrants. Support for wiser policies regarding those wishing to come to the United States makes economic sense. As observed by former Chicago mayor Rahm Emanuel, half of the US tech companies valued at $1 billion or more in 2020 were founded by recent arrivals from other countries (44 of 87).[14] Toronto, Canada, has capitalised on the lesson; some federal officials in the United States seem set on not doing so.

If the lady on Liberty Island is to be believed, her 'beacon hand glows world-wide welcome' to those 'huddled masses yearning to breathe free'—many of whom continue to bring genius, ambition, wealth and, thus far, eternal youth to America's megacities, other urban areas and the country at large. Imperfect though they may be, cities in the United States remain melting pots for races, genders, cultures, religions, politics and economic status. Urban values are the ones evolving in line with the tolerance and acceptance long treasured (if not always practised) as signature American traits. US cities in the twenty-first century represent a more welcoming, broader-minded set of values better in keeping with the nation's Constitution.

14 Emanuel, *The Nation City*, 90.

The growth of the world's collective mind is elsewhere similarly reliant on its urban citizens. Recent efforts to impose narrowmindedness on Türkiye's citizenry—the antithesis of Kemal Atatürk's ambitions for his people—suffered a blow when the country's megacity of Istanbul had partners in four of its five other largest cities in voting against the ruling Justice and Development Party.[15] Demonstrations in the world's most influential cities are the ones that draw our attention. Beijing, Hong Kong, Moscow, Jakarta and Lagos are among them—despite repressive national regimes in some.

No few of our planet's most influential urban areas were losing population even before the Covid-19 pandemic. The causes were varied. Intolerable crime was the problem in some, too much congestion and too little open space the problems elsewhere. For parents, it was the cost of raising children—a cost on top of the already punishing prices of rent and essential needs. For the youngish but getting older, the call of a place of one's own rather than continued sharing to make ends meet motivates flight. Often that flight is internal; while the core city that gives its name to a megacity might see numbers diminish, the larger whole simply experiences a shift in numbers among its parts. Lewis Mumford considered the transition to America's larger urban areas the third of the country's great migrations, the first being expansion west to the Pacific and the second a shift from agrarian living to small towns. Despite the opportunities offered by remote working thanks to internet technologies and the pressure to flee when earthquake, virus or another of the four horsemen visits (or one or more of their recently emerged cronies), megacities will for decades and likely centuries remain disproportionate sources of wealth, innovation, youth, power and coolness. It is increasingly accepted that we are now living in an era best tagged with the label 'Anthropocene'. Never before has the world's environment been so influenced by a single species. That species is predominantly an urban one and, for better or for ill, the largest and most influential of those urban areas are the ones that have the greatest impact on our planet's population. That it is for the better remains a goal still inadequately addressed. We have yet to show we possess the wisdom to learn from the lessons offered us by megacity disasters.

15 'Revolt of the cities: Turkey's local elections', *The Economist*, [London], 6 April 2019, 41.

Within weeks of the 2018 Camp Fire—the deadliest and most destructive wildfire in the history of California—the County of Los Angeles approved a 19,000-home development in areas designated by the state's fire agency as being particularly vulnerable to fires.[16] 'We see the impacts of fires, then turn around and rebuild largely in the same way and the same place, but expect things to go differently next time,' says David Shew, a former staff chief at the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection. 'That's the definition of insanity.'[17]

16 Alice Hill and Leonardo Martinez-Diaz, 'Adapt or perish: Preparing for the inescapable effects of climate change', *Foreign Affairs* 99(1) (January–February 2020): 107–17, at 110. A similar self-inflicted wound exists in the flood insurance arena where 'the National Flood Insurance Program … has kept flood insurance prices artificially low for almost three generations', meaning homeowners are incentivised to buy (and, more importantly, real estate developers are incentivised to build) where flood damage is likely. The problem is made worse by FEMA's flood maps being optimistic in terms of current threats and short-sighted in that they fail to account for sea-level rise. Ariza, *Disposable City*, 86, 93.

17 Quoted in 'Learning to live with it: Natural disasters', *The Economist*, [London], 12 September 2020, 67–68, at 68.

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