



Source: 'Golan is Syria's price for co-operation', *Sunday Times* in *The Australian* online, 20/11/06.

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After the Caliphate nuked DC...No, too obvious. And Christian Armageddon bombing the UN isn't much better, neither is Iran invading US Colonial Iraq...

After the millions of men in the Army of Jihad committed simultaneous mass suicide...No, too baroque...

After eighteen years bogged down in Iran, when the American army mutinied...No, too—what is it?—prosaic...?

In the new and shattered Europe, overrun by the high-tech horde of the Mongolian Stallion..., Relies too much on obscure demographics...

When Sudan Oil, Inc., blew up the Dome of the Rock in retaliation...Oh, please...

Run with the Sudanese oil bit, though. What about: When the Sino-Sudanese Pact collapsed and that all blew up (maybe something about the Darfur Brigade)...? No, no, it's like a cynical extrapolation from a cynical circumstance, it doesn't add much to what the newspapers say...

Okay, okay. Say the Taliban came back, got a lot of support in Pakistan—civil war there, the Taliban side launches something in Kashmir, finally, war with India, India wins, reintegrates Pakistan, ongoing talks with Bangladesh about autonomous regionhood, so you've got a vast secular democracy but constantly having to repress simmering fundamentalist factions and sympathies. Plus nuclear weapons, and it's all got to go wrong at some point...Promising backdrop, but too intricate, and anyway why didn't someone already use the nukes...?

Well...The Palestinian people rise up in Jordan, overthrowing the Palestinian Authority, Fatah, Hamas, all of them; the Jordanian royals flee to Saudi Arabia, the Saudis, very nervous, call for UN intervention (nice ironic touch), Israel and China oppose it, the US is caught over a barrel...Oil barrel? Ouch...but just to shift that situation out of two-sides...No?

Alright. Suppose the US keeps messing about in the middle east, supporting Israel, more covertly supporting the Saudis. The Saudis, and increasingly the Iranians, keep using the Israel/US nexus as ideological cover for the suppression of their own people. Meanwhile, back to the Sudan idea, the Chinese establish client relationships with the African oil countries—oh, yeah, and Venezuela—so that gradually the Arab states' oil income starts to slip, and middle east conflicts begin to pale in the face of Chinese hegemony. The middle eastern bloc starts to feel the heat from its own population, US and Iran begin talks...Don't know: Israel too much of a wild card...? What about Russia?

Here's the thing, need to drop nations out of it a bit—though that's where China might maintain an advantage...And it's got to be pushed further into the future, it needs to be post-everything: Caliphate versus Halliburton, whatever—and the apocalyptic after-effects...

Apocalypse: steel drums made from old oil cans. Soundtrack for a peak-oil theorist's vision: that usually imagines a US where the infrastructure has collapsed and the social fabric with it, a retreat into small-scale and prickly life, little towns defending themselves—but what if we set it in the middle east...? Wouldn't be different enough...they'd just be fighting over water instead of something else...Or, say, Nigeria...same thing, plus no one

would care...

Back to basics, then. It's the future, it's fucked up, ordinary people are eking out their survival, and there are bad guys. It's an unspecified, residually multicultural wasteland, and people have to come to Exxon Towns for supplies, clean water, etc., where they can easily and accidentally break unstated Draconian rules and find themselves in indentured labour, working off their terms...Too Mad Max?

What about leaving the whole ashen/desert thing, and going Antarctic? Drop the backstory altogether, do some scientific mumbo jumbo, set the grim battle for survival in a grungy camp cut into the ice in a frozen snow-blown wilderness...Too cramped, too existential, no penguins?

The whole North Korean nuclear scenario is just too stupid—but what about an Israel overtaken by the ultra-orthodox, going rogue? Seeing itself as abandoned by the US, wanting something back, launches a full-scale assault on a Hezbollah-run Lebanon: the US sends in high-tech hit squads to take out charismatic fundamentalist leaders on both sides...Sounds like a video game, and Israel's already seen as the bad guy?

What about a sort of double-take on the evil corporation? As backdrop, we've got the Caliphate, and the Christian States of America, which remain militarily powerful, and have come to a sort of fundamentalist accommodation, except in Africa, where they're both doing armoured Conversion Campaigns and intermittently skirmishing with one another. The Caliphate's probably got to extend into south east Asia, and the CSA has client states in Latin America. Caliphate and CSA are militarily powerful, but their economies are really shells because they've thrown out the multinationals, and they're on permanent war footing, but they form a closed trading bloc which is destabilizing the global economy. China is a vast, secular, corrupt sort of state-capitalist entity, but it's cut off from the fundamentalist bloc market, and western Europe, similarly denied a huge market, is a sort of besieged, post-nationalist bastion of technologically advanced late capitalism...Okay, gotta fix the Eurocentrism, but just take the idea, the positions: the fundamentalists are barbarians as far as human rights are concerned (Christian burkas, that ought to be good), and only becoming more backward. So, agents of a formerly global corporation that's been chased back to Europe (or however we want to handle that—Canada?), BP, whatever, are sent into Teheran and Cheyenne (through eastern Europe, or across the dangerous Canadian border), to put books into circulation—so you get the persecution of the new corporate missionaries—and start a kind of Underground Railroad, for women and unbelievers, especially. You'd come in in the middle of this slow, dangerous process of white-anting the fundamentalists...Better as a TV series? Oh, come on...Not enough apocalypse? Jesus...

Look, you've got your pick of environmental nightmares...various outcomes of climate change, no water, all water, no more fossil fuels, nuclear devastation and waste, pollutions of every kind, and you've got vicious nationalism, post-nationalism, religious fundamentalisms and evil corporations—this shouldn't be hard...

Wait, wait, I've got one...

*Adapted for performance by Barbara Campbell from a story by Frazer Ward.*