

NEO-SURVIVALISM

In America, questions are being asked that have never been asked before. Realities are being faced that have never been faced before. With polls showing that only 29 percent of US voters think the country is heading in the right direction, there is a pervasive sense that the good old days are over; that the future will be bleaker than the present.

How will America deal with a set of problems that have no modern precedent? A crumbling infrastructure; an unredeemable national debt calculated in previously inconceivable numbers; unrelenting, treasury-depleting, un-resolvable foreign wars; falling wages; rising taxes; intractable unemployment ... foreclosures, bankruptcies, vanishing "Hope" and lost confidence in "Change We Can Believe In."

The American Dream of perpetual prosperity and growth, unfettered consumerism and endless credit has been shattered. The curtain is coming down on America's half century of global dominance, and the policies currently being pursued will hasten its fall.

Though the cultural breakdown will be global, America's sheltered, insular populace will finally be forced to grow up and get real ... survive or succumb.

Many will lose. Many will go down in defeat. Those who accept the doomsday scenario, believing the future is pre-ordained or outside their control, will take no action.

Others – sensing danger but refusing to heed the warning signals, lacking the confidence to think for themselves and trust their own instincts – will follow their leaders to predictable denouement.

However painful and protracted the unraveling of Empire America will be, no other country possesses quite the same combination of possibilities the US has to not only make the best of a bad situation, but to alchemize it into "gold." With its fertile, wide-open spaces, America is geographically unique. No other nation has the mix of professional skills, residual pioneer spirit and melting-pot makeup to foment the "Neo-Survivalism" trend so powerfully. Although other nations have resilient populations that know how to do more with less and will create their own viable versions of the trend, few, if any, will come out of the tough times better than when they went in.

Publisher's Note: In poor third world countries, bare survival is already the focus of life for impoverished majorities. Boom times or bust, each and every day is a fight for survival.

SURVIVAL OF THE FIT

The concept of survivalism is not new to America. Back in the Cold War days, it meant outlasting nuclear fallout in a bomb shelter.

In the Jimmy Carter years, with inflation soaring, Iran raging, and gold and oil prices skyrocketing, survival meant cashing out of paper money and heading for the hills to wait out the economic and political storms.

Fearing a computer Armageddon at the stroke of 2000 – believing the infrastructure would break down, the world would go dark and bedlam would ensue – Y2K survivalists barricaded themselves in their homes with enough food to feed an army and enough guns and ammo to fight off hordes of hungry mobs.

Each new scare attracts a new and different group of the survival-minded, broadening the range from its paramilitary stereotype to include concerned citizens of every socioeconomic level.

In 2010, The Trends Research Institute predicts, survivalism will go mainstream. Folks from all walks of life who once believed in the "System," but now, having lived through its battering, have lost the faith. They are creating a new breed of survivalist that will take many forms and measures appropriate to specific needs.

At one extreme, survivalism means a determination not to go under or live on the street when the economic bottom falls out. At another, it means being prepared to act intelligently in the event of a major terrorist attack.

In either event, Neo-Survivalists know that anything can happen at anytime, and plan for a gamut of eventualities. The new Survivalism will take many forms, each designed to cope with a particular set of circumstances.

CITY MOUSE COUNTRY MOUSE

What might work well in a rural setting (becoming food self-sufficient for example, with access to pri-

vate clean water supplies and a local pool of skilled craftspeople) will need judicious rethinking for a suburban application.

And what about the cities, where currently about half the world's population live? In a worst-case urban scenario, if an extended power grid failure or terror attack brings the city to a standstill, the urban survivalist has plans to beat an orderly retreat to someplace outside the immediate emergency zone.

Regardless of situation, city or country, terror strike or financial distress, a new mindset is taking over. Realistic survivalist sustainability calls for group action, a lot of work, and for most, a major rethinking of priorities once taken for granted. The long-ingrained "You can do it on your own" mentality, unquestioned in boom times, will morph into a "We're all in this together" reality in bust times. Having a common motivating interest that brings like-minded people together is a promising starting point. The ideal group is large enough to create a more or less self-supporting micro-culture, though that is especially difficult in an urban environment.

For example, a religious group, already united by doctrine, is perfectly positioned to carry out a survivalist agenda once the need is acknowledged. The most effective time to act is before there is a need to react.

What has to be done to make such a group work? How do the members help each other? On a basic level, it will mean providing food, offering work ... using any strategy to help the needy reduce their bills and earn enough to keep themselves sheltered.

To deal with extreme scenarios, the congregation, already in survival mode, will have plans in place for who to call, where to meet, where to go, how to leave, what to take. It will have emergency provisions and cash on hand.

The Survivalist also knows that even the best laid plans may not work as planned in a wild card world. What if the phone lines are down? What if the escape route is blocked? Allowing for the unexpected is part of the survival plan. "Contingency preparedness" is the goal.

What applies to a congregation applies, in varying degrees, to any group bound by a common interest: yoga, martial arts, a philosophy, a branch of scholarship or science ... just about any walk of life that demands discipline from its adherents is a start-

ing point ... including the bowling league.

In general, any such group will include members possessing a variety of skills, specialties, crafts, trades and talents. The diversity of the group, with its brainpower concentrated and directed, produces answers to problems that seemed unsolvable to a single individual. Communal spirit intelligently deployed is the core value of Neo-Survivalism.

Trendpost: *While the strength of the community is essential, the strength of the individual is primary. Physical, emotional, and spiritual fitness is a prerequisite. As the Neo-Survivalism trend grows, the survival business will boom.*

Trend Watchers Beware: There will be businesses cashing in by providing a false sense of security. The untrained, knowing nothing about what it takes to defeat an attacker in real life, will be easy prey for self-defense "experts" and schools teaching "movie moves" that don't work on the street.

Anything that promotes physical fitness – yoga, dance, sports – has value. But it is only the combat martial arts that encompass emotional, psychological and spiritual realms that simultaneously develop a sustaining inner confidence in the face of extreme danger.

Publisher's Note: In 1983, I began my martial arts study with three years of Tai Chi. My focus then shifted to the more aggressive Okinawan Tae, which I practiced for seven years before being introduced to Close Combat fighting taught by John Perkins.

Trendpost: *What does the average Joe or Jane do – personally or collectively – if the lights go out, the banks close down, gas dries up, food gets scarce and crime increases substantially?*

It can happen and has happened, and valuable lessons can be learned by accessing, via the Internet, vivid personal accounts of what people have done to survive under such circumstances. Argentina, crippled by a financial crisis, and the war-torn Balkans provide two examples from the recent past.

Currently, the survival-minded should be following blogs emanating from Greece, Ireland, Spain, Iceland, Hungary, the Ukraine and the Baltic Nations, all in desperate financial straits, to see how people cope.