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*“Well the one thing I would say – and I say this to people – I never realized how big it was. Everything’s so (unintelligible) like, you know the orders are so massive.... This is involving death and life and so many things. ... So it’s far more responsibility. (unintelligible) .... The financial cost of everything is so massive, every agency. This is thousands of times bigger, the United States, than the biggest company in the world. The second-largest company in the world is the Defense Department. The third-largest company in the world is Social Security. The fourth-largest – you know, you go down the list.... It’s massive. And every agency is, like, bigger than any company. So you know, I really just see the bigness of it all, but also the responsibility. And the human responsibility. You know, the human life that’s involved in some of the decisions.”*

– Transcript of AP Interview with President Donald Trump, April 23, 2017 <sup>1</sup>

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**History:** Almost all of the major problems of early 21<sup>st</sup> Century United States trace back to the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century. Although that should be obvious by now, it is always worth thinking about the ripple effects of history and unintended consequences.

The Prohibition on Alcohol in the United States, by way of the 18<sup>th</sup> Amendment to the Constitution passed on December 3, 1917 (taking effect on January 16, 1920, repealed December 5, 1933), came about as a result of a late 19<sup>th</sup> Century religious revival that developed into a very vocal and determined minority who democratically stormed the legislatures. The Prohibition (and the minority behind it) clashed with established and deeply rooted Western male traditions of cigarette smoking and alcohol consumption. The result was the development of the heavily armed gangsters of the Prohibition; the Prohibition created the modern form of organized crime in America. When alcohol was no longer prohibited, the illegal drug trade took over.<sup>2</sup>

The stock market crash on Black Monday (October 29, 1929), the result of irresponsible lending practices by the banks and run-away speculation in the stock market, led to two different effects which are still with us today. To prevent any further market crashes of the same type, the government determined to regulate Wall Street and created the SEC and the brokerage industry has been forced to create a trade organization as well, to self-regulate (i.e. NASD/FINRA). Banks also needed regulation by the government. Today, Wall Street and bank regulation, as well as financial abuses and scandals, continue to be regular news and a hot item for debate separating conservatives and liberals.

The other effect of Black Monday was the destroy the American myth of economic independence; millions of workers, living payday to payday, suddenly became unemployed and sunk to poverty as a result of actions and events of which they never knew and had no control. Charities, the traditional safety net, were overwhelmed. The government therefore, decided that it would henceforth provide social safety nets, taxpayer funded, and this is the origin of public welfare programs, Social Security Benefits, and most of the ‘entitlements’ that consume a large part of the Federal Budget. Once the safety nets were installed, they could not be removed even in prosperity, in fact, they were expanded by later politicians, and costs have spiraled upward. In early 21<sup>st</sup> Century, across the world, and especially in the United States, the social safety net, entitlements, remain one of the most contentious and paralyzing policy debates.

**Historical coincidences?:** In 1868 in Japan, the Meiji Restoration of the Emperor brought an end to the Shogunate and embraced Western technology after Commodore Perry's Expeditions (followed by the European powers) forced Japan to end two-and-a half centuries of isolation. In 1871, after defeating the French in the Franco-Prussian War, Wilhelm I declared himself Emperor of Germany, converting a federation of states into an Empire, creating the Second Reich. Both of these events, less than three years apart and half a globe away, were very important in the hindsight of WWII, and generally, of WWI and the early 20<sup>th</sup> Century. If China is (and should be) included, the defeat of China in the Second Opium War in 1860 (which was known in Japan) and the storming of Beijing is the third major 19<sup>th</sup> Century event of import to the early 20<sup>th</sup> Century.

The history of the first half of a century is set in motion in the middle-latter half of the previous century; what events of the late 20<sup>th</sup> Century will dictate the history of the millenniums? And so it will be in GGDM, every decision sets the history for many turns hence.

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*“The path that leads to Truth is littered with the bodies of the ignorant.”*

– Miyamoto Musashi

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<sup>1</sup> Citation: “Yet this style, if the underlying subject matter be not comprehended and mastered by the speaker, must inevitably be of no account or even become the sport of universal derision. For what so effectually proclaims the madman as the hollow thunder of words – be they never so choice and resplendent – which have no thought or knowledge behind them?” [Cicero reporting the words of Lucius Crassus as repeated to him by Gaius Cotta, meaning it might just as well be fiction, probably is, but the point is still worthy and well-made] – Marcus Tullius Cicero, *Of Oratory* (55 B.C.), Bk. 1 (trans. E. W. Sutton and H. Rackham) from Patricia Bizzell and Bruce Herzberg, The Rhetorical Tradition (1990), p. 207.

<sup>2</sup> Commentary: See for example, references to this in the original 1972 Godfather movie to the new wave of organized crime.