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Congagement

Challenge to Nation State Power and Influence	Gap in Global Standard of Living	U.S. Economic Competitiveness	Perception of Serious Threat to U.S. Security and/or Quality of Life
High	Decreasing	Strong	High



Summary

2030 is a world in which political and economic power increasingly are organized regionally, rather than globally. This is a dynamic, tense, and highly competitive world with multiple points of friction. The emerging regional blocs revolve around three major power centers – the U.S., the EU, and China. Each of these is increasingly sharing power with regional authorities. The power blocs are not monolithic, however. The other major players – Brazil, Russia, and India – shift among them opportunistically to varying extents. The remaining nations in Africa, the Middle East, and Central Asia with resources and/or major markets are the objects of energetic competition, while those nations with few resources or markets are neglected. Among the U.S. population, there is a new focus on the Americas.

Remaining U.S. troops in South Korea are increasingly unwelcome even as Venezuela has invited Chinese troops into their country. The Middle East is unsettled. Energy access is so important that all parties tacitly agree to allow unimpeded shipments, even as global investment patterns have shifted to reflect a distinct regionalism of major trade flows. Oilrigs are appearing everywhere, including in the Arctic region. The global commons are in jeopardy as there are few effective mechanisms for managing global issues. Trade, commerce, and capital flows still benefit from a legacy global architecture, but new investments follow the strong new intra-regional economic and political relationships. These dynamics create a continually shifting mixture of both tension and trade, both confrontation and engagement, or ‘congagement’.

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In 2030, to celebrate the first three decades of the 21st Century, the United Nations commissioned a global history of these years to be authored by leading scholars from across the globe and published in 27 languages by the UN Press in the spring of 2030. Even though some of the submissions were somewhat strident in their tone, it was decided that the UN Press editorial staff would offer only grammatical and not substantive corrections. What follows are excerpts from this book, A History of the World 2000-2030. (Geneva: UN Press, planned for March 2031, English language edition.)

From A History of the World 2000-2030, selection from “Chapter 5: International Trade and Economics”

By Professors M. Mitchell and N. Redding, London School of Economics

Among economists there are at least two schools of thought regarding the development of the international economic system since 2000. The first school, termed *The Globalists*, extols the successes of the extensive international economic infrastructure that arose after the Second World War. It regrets the recent tendency to move away from this foundation and toward the existence of three parallel regional economies and their attendant institutions and mechanisms that have evolved to overtake the earlier model. These three regions, of course, revolve around the focal points of the U.S, Western Europe, and China, and have solidified into ‘AFTA’, the ‘EU’, and ‘Greater Asia’, respectively. The result: three parallel but not entirely coordinated economies that, due to the barriers that arose between them, are unable to maximize the productivity of the world’s economy as could a true global free-trade system, which was the original vision of the authors of the post-World War II structure. It should be stated at this point that the authors of this article, and the institution in which they teach, are firm adherents to this point of view.

The second school of economic thought, not surprisingly called *The New Path*, often portrays the Globalists as atavistic holdovers from an era where the ‘West’ was acknowledged as the global leader and ‘Western’ ideas were naturally assumed to be superior. Borrowing heavily from Marxist and Socialist thought, as well as such philosophical strands as ‘Liberation Theology’, the New Path celebrates the ongoing replacement of the post-War Western economic order with a new and dynamic process that more readily acknowledges the view that market economics – and democratic and liberal politics as well – is not a single rigid concept that can be equally applied everywhere with equally successful results. It also held that regional approaches avoided some of the worst social inequities and cultural effacement of globalization. Indeed, the world is seen as too varied and too complex for any single simplistic model to succeed.

Instead, the New Path contends that it is both appropriate and preferable for the peoples of the globe to seek out their own value systems, alliances, and institutions to maximize their own potentials regardless of the variety or complexity that may arise as a result. The underlying philosophy has formed the basis for the evolution of the current international trade and financial system, which has infiltrated and superseded rather than totally dissolved the old order. While the keystone old institutions – such as the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, and the

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World Trade Organization – have survived these challenges, their operations and decision making are increasingly the product of intense negotiations among the three major regions. Thus, inter-regional competition has frequently replaced global collaboration as the determinant of international economic policies and practices.

Given the events of the first part of this century, however, it is not surprising that the New Path would gain the popularity that it did, especially among non-Westerners. The alacrity with which European, American, and Japanese executives and investors seemed to abandon and isolate Asia during the pandemics of 2013-2016, and the resentment and anger that abrupt exodus engendered among the Asian peoples, can be seen as the primary motivating factor behind the pronounced regionalization of the global economy over the past decade.

This is a somewhat simplistic caricature of what actually happened. What Western businesses saw as a diversification of investment and rebalancing of their supply chains, many Asians perceived as abandonment. A number of Western companies with long-standing and/or deep ties with Asia – including such giants as Daimler Benz, General Electric, IBM, and Microsoft – did remain in place throughout these years and continue to maintain a substantial presence there to this day. Further, some large global firms have decentralized their holdings to a regional control model, and do their best, under increasingly difficult circumstances, to plan and operate globally. India, of course, was less impacted by this trend than was China, partly due to the lower level of Western investment in India at that time. However, trade is much less free between regions than it was two decades ago. The concept of a shared ‘global economic vision’, particularly between Asia and the West, has been significantly weakened – some would say destroyed.

The ratification of the EU constitution and the creation of both the Americas Free Trade Alliance (AFTA) and Greater Asia (in the Treaty of Hanoi) occurred in rapid succession. Ironically, it was the lack of progress in several WTO meetings in the early 2010s that led the U.S. to revive the concept of the Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA) in a somewhat different form as AFTA. As part of this regionalization, international and inter-regional trade and investment patterns began a long-term shift that is still noticeable today. Trade among the three regions did dip substantially in the mid-2010s, but then regained an equilibrium level by the late-2020s, where it has remained to this day. It is not surprising that a key portion of this trade consists of strategic necessities that are only available from one or a few sources, along with well-established and popular global brands.¹

In contrast, trade *within* each region has exploded. During and especially after the pandemics, new factories were constructed outside of Asia, particularly in Latin America,

¹ For example, Coca-Cola and Pepsi-Cola are still the soft drink leaders and together control nearly 70 percent of the global market. Microsoft’s three operating systems – each of which is managed by a regional subsidiary – are found on roughly 75 percent of the world’s personal computer devices.

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Eastern Europe, and the former Soviet Union, along with a re-industrialization of the American heartland. These factories supplied many of the goods to European and North American markets that had previously come from Asia. Meanwhile, after a hiatus as China struggled to respond to disease threats on the heels of their recession ailment earlier in the decade, the Asian factories abandoned by Western interests came back on line and allowed Asia to compete vigorously with the new non-Asian factories outside of Asia. Asia also saw booming sales from a growing internal market. The evolution of a mixed reserve currency system in which the dollar, euro, and Asian yuan are freely convertible and nearly universally accepted, as they are today, also facilitated the return to a highly competitive global trading environment.

Within a few years, each region had developed sufficiently unified institutions to speak with nearly one voice and become the prime negotiators for their regions within the traditional international fora. One might have thought that those nations outside the member lists of these three regions would have suffered under this arrangement. In fact, the picture has been mixed. Resource-rich nations – particularly in oil and natural gas – and/or large markets were heavily courted by the regions and often benefited by taking advantage of this intense competition. In general, the oil-producing nations, primarily OPEC members plus Russia, Canada, and Norway, have benefited greatly. On the other hand, many of the nonaligned nations that lacked the attractiveness of desirable exports or large markets have languished, and many have fallen even further behind the rest of the world in both economic growth and quality of life. Public development assistance and private charities have attempted to fill these gaps, but the magnitude of the problem eludes a comprehensive solution.

In summary, the past quarter century has seen a new trade system emerge from a series of public health crises. This new system is structurally different from the global vision that emerged after World War II and dominated the world for so many decades. It is less free and less flexible, and more decidedly regional in focus. From a classical economic perspective, it is a “second best” system that provides noticeably fewer net benefits. Nevertheless, for now, at least, it is a stable and reasonably predictable system to which the markets have adjusted. Although the promise of the post-World War II institutions has not been fulfilled, it has not yet been forgotten either. Hope remains even among the Globalists that the continual improvement and evolution of the current system will move in the direction of maximizing the benefits of the global economy for the largest number of its inhabitants.

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From *A History of the World 2000-2030*, selection from “Chapter 9: An Islamic Perspective”

By Professor Reza Tabrizi, Department of Modern History, University of Teheran

Most people alive in the year 2000 A.D.² probably would not have thought that the world of 2030 would look quite like it does. The Christian calendar’s “Millennium” was a year of much hope and promise for the future, with many talking of technology solving mankind’s problems, the “End of History,” world peace and, in general, much optimism. That spirit did not last long. After the events of September 11, 2001, remembered in America as “9/11,” that mood was transformed utterly. The sense of optimism was replaced with a feeling of confrontation, at first between the “Believers” and the “Infidels,” or as others called it, “Islam” and the “West.” However, as events transpired, old alliances (once thought immutable) were disrupted and new alliances (once thought impossible) formed, both between people and between nations.

“Terrorism” became both the major focus of, and the justification for, Western government actions, particularly in the United States of America. The unwarranted invasion and occupation of Afghanistan and Iraq followed, which did little to stop terrorism and much to anger the rest of the world over American aggression. Many in Europe began to draw away from America at this point, repulsed by what they saw as a dangerous unilateralism on the part of their then-ally. Meanwhile, many of the emerging economies within the fast growing “developing world,” i.e., those not already “Westernized,” were steadily chipping away at the long-standing disparity with the more slowly growing Western economies.

The next turning point came in the early 2010s as the Chinese economy passed through a series of shocks. In 2012 urban real estate prices in China fell, which set off a cascade of loan defaults that temporarily shut down a number of Chinese banks. The effects of these shocks were felt throughout Asia and, to some extent, globally. Unfortunately, this was soon followed by a series of major flu-like pandemics that spread from East Asia throughout the world between 2013 and 2016. Although the death toll was not as high as the most dire predictions, reaching perhaps three to four million worldwide, it did put fear into people and governments about what could have happened.

The response to this threat came primarily from three sources: the U.S., which responded first and most aggressively, the EU, and China, which was delayed in implementing a solution by the chaos in which it found itself. Each took on the burden of helping its own region deal with the disease because that was the only way of bringing the pandemic under control. The global health organizations were not able to meet the global scale of the challenge. The U.S. led the response of the Western hemisphere, notably by placing draconian limitations on travel to and from Asia for an extended period of time. China (with the aid of the Indian pharmaceutical industry) supported Asia’s response, and the EU helped Russia and, to a more limited extent, Africa. The cooperation that began with these actions was the foundation for increased regional cooperation

² For the benefit of the general reader, the Christian calendar will be used.

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on other issues afterwards, starting with the establishment of the three regional public health organizations that still exist – the Americas Public Health and Safety Authority (APHS), EuroHealth, and Pan-Asian Disease Control. Since the pandemic was a global problem, this regional response was not optimal and certainly resulted in unnecessary loss of life, but it was sufficient to stem the tide of the pandemic.

One of the immediate responses to the Asian economic slowdown and especially the pandemics was that foreign investors and businessmen became concerned that the continent would suffer a huge economic setback and be a very unhealthy place in which to live or travel. Suddenly it seemed that they might have concentrated too much investment and infrastructure in one region – a region now showing itself to be politically unstable and literally dangerous. Some foreign investors in China and Southeast Asia were predicting the decimation of entire factory workforces and the loss of vital components and high-demand consumer goods. In what seemed like irrational panic, many U.S., European, and Japanese companies removed their expatriate managers and began the process of redirecting many of their activities away from the Asian mainland, sometimes selling factories at bargain prices to local buyers or the government. In China, the arrangements that many companies had made with the government made it impossible to remove manufacturing infrastructure. In these cases, the companies found themselves trying to manage facilities remotely under very dire circumstances. Thus, these companies began to invest instead in less-threatened regions in North and South America, Eastern Europe, and Russia. Certainly new investment dollars during this period were directed outside of Asia. New factories sprang up within these regions, and new workforces were hurriedly recruited, trained, and put on the assembly lines. As these new facilities became viable over the coming years, the West started to focus more regionally, rather than globally or on Asia. The irony was that after leading the late 20th Century drive to “globalize,” the West looked like it was abandoning one-half of the world’s people out of fear and greed.

Non-Western peoples did not take well to this turn of events. Some nations, such as the Islamic Republic of Iran and the other OPEC states, remained important and continued to be courted due to their vast oil reserves. The informal but influential annual meetings of representatives of the major energy-producing and -consuming countries that started in the late-2010s has provided a useful forum for resolving some disagreements and disputes.³ However, the more recent meetings have often ended in disarray, especially due to anger at the expansion of oil drilling in the Arctic region in violation of several international agreements. Such selfish and illegal actions by ‘Western’ nations have only acted further to alienate many of the citizens of Asia, Africa, and the Middle East.

Other nations with little to offer economically were sadly neglected, despite the trickle of token aid. China, in retrospect, stabilized surprisingly quickly once the pandemics had ended, and their resentment of what many now considered their fair-weather Western friends was palpable. Many observers in the region contrasted what they saw as the Western values of individual advancement and material acquisition, along with the traditional Asian values with an emphasis

³ At the present time World Energy Forum attendees include the Americas Free Trade Alliance (AFTA), the EU, Greater Asia, Russia, India, Japan, Brazil, and the OPEC nations.

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on the prosperity and happiness of the family and the social group to which one belongs. China made a remarkable economic recovery in the years following the pandemics, and then took a leadership role toward greater regional political cooperation. Its recovery came to represent a successful Asian model that inspired neighboring nations to come increasingly together. Attempting to pick up on China's successful unmanned lunar expedition earlier in the century, China and India have even recently announced plans for a joint manned lunar base to be constructed by 2035.

Thus, three major regions seem to have emerged in the early 2020s. Based on the United States' successful response to the pandemics and the resulting business decisions to invest regionally in the Western Hemisphere, it led in the creation of the Americas Free Trade Alliance (or AFTA) in 2020. Other nations such as Japan and Australia often tend to join with AFTA initiatives, although several South American states such as Brazil and, to a much greater extent, Venezuela stand apart and criticize U.S. policies on occasion.

The European Union (EU), in existence since the late 20th Century, has now been formalized by the ratification of its Constitution. It has expanded to include Turkey and the Ukraine, but not the still rather unsettled Caucasus regions. Russia continues to act with considerable independence, in part harking back to their much more important global role as the USSR under Communism. There is a considerable Muslim presence within the EU, especially in the cities of Western Europe, as well as parts of southern Russia. Unfortunately, these communities have not fared as well as the native Europeans; many Muslims are subjected to second-class treatment even after living there for decades.

Finally, China is the acknowledged leader of a "Greater Asia" that took shape in the early 2020s after their remarkable economic turnabout. "Greater Asia" is now commonly defined as including Korea, Taiwan (which reunified with the mainland peacefully), and most of Southeast Asia. On certain issues of mutual concern, it expands to cover the Indian subcontinent as well. Growing bonds between China and such nations as Indonesia, Malaysia, Bangladesh, and Pakistan – along with the lucrative oil for manufactured goods trade – have smoothed Greater Asian relations with Muslim peoples.

Within the Middle East, the formation of a viable Palestinian state did help reduce tensions between Muslims and Israel. However, many still tolerate the status quo rather than accept it. True peace has not yet arrived, and may not for some time. The U.S. has decided for its own reasons to continue guaranteeing Israeli security. This guarantee – an unwarranted intrusion into the intergovernmental relations of the region – was a major motivating factor behind the creation of the United Islamic Alliance (UIA) by Pakistan, Afghanistan, and Iran in 2027. Two months after the formation of this bloc, the political party that won the Palestinian elections immediately announced its solidarity with the UIA and has begun to criticize the Israeli government for failing to fulfill at least 27 of the specific commitments it had made in the original Israel-Palestine Treaty of 2020. Since then, additional Islamic nations have petitioned for association with the UIA, an emergent fourth global region.

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Thus, the world remains much as it did when the “Millennium” began – not yet united, yet not at war either. Tensions remain, but so do opportunities, although most are of a regional focus. However, there has been one significant change over these years: now there is no monolithic self-proclaimed ‘leader’ of the world, nor any successful ‘hegemon’ straddling the globe. Each nation is free to disagree, and each can seek its own answers in its own way. May it stay so, by the Will of Allah.

From *A History of the World 2000-2030*, selection from “Chapter 12: Public Health”

**By Doctor Luisa Pires, Director, Brazilian Ministry of Public Health
and Administrator Emeritus, APHSA**

It took an imminent and potentially catastrophic threat to the health of hundreds of millions of people to loosen the bonds of national sovereignty that had restricted our geopolitical thinking since the Peace of Westphalia in the 1600s. Today, on the sixteenth anniversary of its founding, the Americas Public Health and Safety Authority (APHSA) is universally recognized as the highly successful precursor to the AFTA that now exists. Indeed, APHSA’s success was paralleled in the transnational health agencies that quickly arose soon afterwards in both the EU (EuroHealth) and Asia (Pan-Asian Disease Control) to cope with the flu pandemics of the mid-2010s. Those organizations also made a similar impact on the organizational foundation of their respective regions of the world, although each did so in ways that reflected the nature of its region.

In order for us to understand the significance of the APHSA model, it is important to remember back to the early days of the first pandemic in the winter of 2013-14. There had of course been considerable research and public speculation for several years previously over the possible recurrence of the Spanish influenza of 1918-19, which may have killed as many as 50 million people worldwide and represented the most deadly pandemic in recent history. Many had observed that the world had escaped such a virulent reoccurrence for perhaps more years than could have normally been expected, and that we may actually have been overdue for a similar event. Ironically, this speculation proved to be accurate.

The initial outbreaks of deadly avian flu occurred in Laos and Cambodia in the fall of 2013. Within a month, however, the disease had spread to Central and Western China and by January 2014 it had reached every continent. We now estimate that perhaps two to three million deaths and more than one hundred million hospitalizations or lengthy illnesses can be attributed to this flu. (In some ways more than the death toll, the media images of desperately overwhelmed medical facilities, and the enormous secondary impacts on other medical issues, are what caused such global fear and panic.) In many respects the most dramatic consequence of the outbreak, beyond the obvious human losses, was to cause American, European, and Japanese investors with large manufacturing operations in China and Southeast Asia to begin an urgent process of relocating their infrastructure and redirecting their investments to the maximum extent possible.

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Asia very suddenly seemed to be a very risky location for the core of any company's productive capabilities.

Many businesses panicked and began a steady stream of sell-offs of Asian factories and the hasty initiation of new manufacturing capacity in such regions as Latin America, Eastern Europe, and the former Soviet Union, as well as even a measure of re-industrialization within the United States and Europe. A second wave of disease – a particularly potent combination of Sudden Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) and a drug-resistant strain of tuberculosis – that arose within Southeast Asia two years later killed an additional one million people and further reinforced this pronounced shift in economic activity and caused APHSA to once again severely limit travel to and from Asia for a period of time.

Within Asia, the negative impact of these disinvestments and pullouts was fortunately mitigated by the fact that local companies readily took over these factories and thus inherited the workers, machines, and technologies, often at extremely reasonable prices. It also proved to be an easier task than anticipated to simply return the factories to production and find new and growing markets closer to home within Asia itself. In the long run, the true cost of the pandemics may prove to be the loss of trust between Asians and the West.

At the time, however, the concept that public health officials from foreign nations could be empowered to exercise decision-making authority in another country, even demanding that people be quarantined, livestock slaughtered, and contaminated property destroyed, struck most observers as either blatantly imperialistic or dangerously misguided, or both. Fortunately, the groundwork for this remarkably effective response had already been successfully laid. The Pan American Health Organization (PAHO) had already existed for several decades, and had rushed multinational emergency response teams to the first flu outbreak locations in ports along the Pacific coast of South America within a few days of the identification of the virus in January 2014. The World Health Organization's (WHO) new International Health Regulations (IHR), codified several years previously, provided for the voluntary and temporary acquiescence of national governments to such necessary interventions in cases of pandemic. Thus, when the Hemisphere's national health authorities that PAHO called to its Washington, D.C. headquarters met in the summer of 2014 for the emergency summit, they were already prepared to contemplate the necessary actions.

When the summit quickly agreed on the organization and authority of the APHSA concept, those response teams already in the field were immediately designated as APHSA's first operational units, and empowered to team with local law enforcement authorities to take whatever actions they deemed necessary to contain and then eliminate the virus. APHSA also quickly received substantial support of the Western Hemisphere's business community, partly as a means of ensuring that their new factory workforces would stay healthy and productive. The succession of events that culminated in the Organization of American States and PAHO assuming joint authority over APHSA, and these three organizations then becoming major advocates of the Americas Free Trade Alliance that emerged a mere six years later, is well known to all. The fact that so many public officials from all AFTA states spent considerable periods of time assigned to

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APHSA teams in other nations, often absorbing new languages and cultures, continues to act as a major unifying force within the Hemisphere.

We are indeed fortunate that APHSA, EuroHealth, and Pan-Asian Disease Control (once it finally solidified) succeeded in their missions, and that they have continued to monitor the health and safety of their member nations' populations and avoided further major pandemics. Indeed, the only two blemishes on this otherwise distinguished record are that the three organizations remain uncoordinated to the extent that they do, and that recent WHO meetings have shown a tendency to bog down in politicized polemics. Of course, it would also be a valuable improvement to convince the Venezuelan government to rejoin APHSA and allow for multinational teams to be assigned there when needed.

We can only hope that we do not face a truly global pandemic with the regional structures currently in place. Our next step, should resources ever become available, must be to extend medical coverage beyond the current regions to Africa and Central Asia.

From *A History of the World 2000-2030*, selection from "Chapter 14: Energy and the Environment"

**By Professor K. Prasad, Chairman, Department of Chemical Engineering,
Indian Institute of Technology**

It has indeed been fortunate, or perhaps just hardheaded realism, that since 2000 the major global producers and consumers of energy resources have been able to cooperate to the point where no region of the world has suffered acute energy shortages. In part, this has been a function of the continued strength of the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Nations (OPEC) over these years and its ability to speak for those nations that controlled the vast majority of energy exports. Russia has been the notable exception to this rule and has remained outside formal OPEC membership; however, even they often found it advantageous to align with the OPEC consensus. In part, too, this situation had been aided by the vigorous economic, ideological, and geopolitical competition among the three major world regions, as well as the multiplicity of smaller states that exist in the spaces between these three larger spheres. The fact that major states within each region – the U.S., Japan, China, India, and Western Europe – required significant amounts of energy imports meant that all parties came to consider continued access to energy to be a matter of vital national security. Thus, the ground was set for a forum such as the World Energy Forum, or the WEF, to play a major role in this drama.

Given the intense international competition and the mutual reliance on imported energy, it became apparent that conflicts over energy had the potential to spark even greater confrontations and possibly even war. In spite of the rearming underway, it was clear that such an escalation would be in no one's interests, as the consequences could not help but devastate large sections of the globe and destroy the very markets whose interests were being defended. Thus, the major nations and regions readily accepted the suggestion by the President of OPEC in 2017 that they

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schedule an informal annual meeting or ‘working group’ to provide a forum where issues of energy supply, prices, availability, and commerce could be raised, discussed, and settled before they had a chance to escalate to undesirably hostile levels.

The first annual meeting of the World Energy Forum was duly held at OPEC Headquarters in Vienna in 2018. Subsequent meetings have rotated around the globe. As of the writing of this chapter, the next meeting is scheduled to be held in Delhi in November 2030. Until recently, all substantial differences of opinion had been accommodated within the WEF meetings. In recent years, however, the expansion of oil drilling in the Arctic region by the EU and Russia has created extremely serious disagreements that the Forum has been unable to resolve. Given the seriousness of these issues, and the vehemence with which they have frequently been expressed, there is currently more than a little doubt that the WEF will be able to continue fulfilling its important role. This is a serious matter, given that many global issues beyond energy have been discussed at this forum over the years. Although those issues have rarely been resolved, having at least some forum for raising them has been highly valuable. World peace and economic growth need a functioning World Energy Forum.

The seriousness of this issue is plainly manifest in the recently released Diplomatic Note the Government of India sent to the invited attendees of the September 2030 World Energy Forum meeting in Delhi (Exhibit 1). It remains to be seen whether the Forum will be able to resolve this most serious dispute of its existence.

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From: The Government of India
 To: Fellow members of the World Energy Forum (WEF): the Governments of AFTA, Brazil, EU, Greater Asia, Japan, and Russia; and the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC)
 Re: Issue for the Agenda of the WEF Meeting in Delhi in November 2030
 Date: August 7, 2030

As a responsible citizen of the world, the Government of India can only heartily endorse the activities of the World Energy Forum. It has been a goal of the group from its inception in 2018 to provide each member nation and organization with an informal forum where it could raise important issues regarding access to the world's energy resources. That the Forum's good work has been able to resolve most of the major disputes that arose on this topic in a successful manner, even as tensions have been mounting in the past few years, is a testament both to its success and to its necessity.

However, it is with the deepest regret that the Government of India notes the inability of the Forum to reach an agreement on resolving the "commons crisis" at its previous meeting in Brussels last year. Both the EU and Russian claims to drilling rights in the Arctic, beyond those countries' respective continental shelves, have opened these pristine areas to activities that both destroy their natural beauty and reserve the economic gains to the nations that exploit these unjust claims.

The argument that all will benefit, even if indirectly, from more and cheaper fuels is specious at best, as all profits from these sales remain in the hands of the energy companies and the governments that are supporting this indignity. This is a tragedy that needs to be reversed as soon as possible for the benefit of both mankind and our planet. In addition, every active international agreement on this subject, from the Law of the Sea to the Antarctic treaties, specifically prohibits the exploitation of these regions in this manner.

It may, in fact, be time for the Forum to confront with a united rigor the true costs of our continued reliance on carbon-based fuels and the inequity with which the Earth's resources are shared. The most dire earlier predictions of global warming's catastrophic impact have not come to pass, due to the combination of advanced nuclear power generation, alternate fuels, new recycling and energy conservation technologies, and carbon trading markets. However, there is still sufficient evidence from the public health records and rising sea levels threatening several island nations that continued fossil fuel use might not be sustainable.

The Government of India is proud to be a leader in seeking an equitable resolution to this crisis, and that we have been joined in this endeavor by so many of our friends in Asia and Africa. However, we must not be deterred in continuing to seek justice. The Government of India hereby notifies recipients of this Note that it is placing the issue of ***the continued illegal exploitation of the resources of the global commons*** on the agenda of the November meeting in Delhi, and intends to pursue it with vigor.

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Characteristics Matrix

Scenario Chronology

- 2012 Chinese real estate bubble burst, resulting in loan defaults, bank collapses and recession.
- 2013: Series of U.S. political measures, referred to as the ‘Grand Compromise’ after the fact (tax increases, entitlement spending limits) are initiated, which later restores USG fiscal stability; U.S. trade and budget deficits begin to drop.
- 2013-14: Flu epidemic originating in Southeast Asia became a pandemic with several million deaths worldwide. Western nations restricted travel to and from Asia and redirected investments and trade away. Western Hemisphere creates *Americas Public Health and Safety Authority*, or *APHSA*, to deal with pandemic outbreaks. Asia and EU quickly developed similar organizations. Singapore, Hong Kong, and Taiwanese banks helped to bail out the Chinese banking system and reestablish financial order.
- 2015-16: About one million deaths were attributed to a second round of pandemics (SARS and drug-resistant TB) originating in Asia. Western and Japanese investors moved more operations out of Asian mainland.
- 2017: China led a successful pan-Asian intervention into a disease-ravaged North Korea and offered regional medical aid and economic support to other Asian nations. EU medical teams were sent to Russia and Africa.
- 2020: AFTA (Americas Free Trade Alliance) established in Western Hemisphere. NATO dissolved and U.S. troops left Europe. Palestinian state established with strong U.S. and EU encouragement.
- 2022: Greater Asia emerged when India signed the Treaty of Hanoi as a full ‘economic’ partner. Simultaneous bio-terror incidents (anthrax released) in Jerusalem, Mecca, and Rome by messianic African group protesting lack of concern for the world’s poor.
- 2024: Venezuela welcomed Chinese troops into the country. EU and Russia claimed mineral rights in the continental shelves. Polar oil exploration and drilling began.
- 2027: Iran, Afghanistan, and Pakistan created United Islamic Alliance (UIA).
- 2030: South Korean government – pursuing reunification - demanded immediate withdrawal of remaining U.S. troops. Confrontational government won Palestinian elections and began vocal criticism of Israel.

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Global Drivers

Level of Stability and Conflict in the World

The world really seemed to be on the steady track of globalization until the 2010s. The change was undeniably abrupt and it left a lasting imprint of uncertainty that affected stability worldwide. There was considerable flux, confusion, and uncertainty as regional organizations increasingly superseded national prerogatives. By the mid-2020s three regions had emerged, stimulated by the consequences of the redirection of much U.S., EU, and Japanese investment and trade from the Asian mainland following economic disturbances and two waves of pandemics that started in 2013 – and what many perceived as the too-severe U.S. travel restrictions that followed.

The three regions became the EU (including Turkey and the Ukraine), AFTA (Americas Free Trade Alliance – the U.S. and most of the Western Hemisphere), and ‘Greater Asia’ (dominated by China). Japan, Australia, and New Zealand stuck with AFTA on most issues, while the UK usually sided with the EU. India and Brazil were economically tied to their regions (Brazil with the U.S., India with Greater Asia), but still acted with considerable independence in military and diplomatic affairs. Russia was an independent player that normally sought its own self-interest. Venezuela was a notable maverick within the AFTA region that often chose to act contrary to the AFTA consensus. By 2027, a fourth smaller region has emerged: the United Islamic Alliance (UIA) made up of Pakistan, Iran, and Afghanistan (but with other nations expressing an interest in joining).

The world has evolved to resemble the Great Power-style stability of Europe in 1913 – a mixture of both confrontation and engagement, or *conagement*. The potential for real conflict has been growing over the years. There has been continual friction and disputes among the main three regions and the semi-independent secondary powers over access to resources and markets, and intense competition for both trade and commerce (as well as the ‘hearts and minds’) of nonaligned populations and governments.

By 2030 U.S. troops in Korea and Asian troops in Venezuela were seen as unwanted intrusions in their respective regions. However, the U.S. troops were being asked to leave by Korea, while the Venezuelans had just invited in the Chinese. A new and belligerent government, supported by an emerging alliance of Islamic nations, was elected in the Palestinian state. It continues to be highly critical of an Israel that still has U.S. security guarantees.

Central Asia and Africa have been experiencing low-intensity conflicts for many years now. These areas lie in ungoverned spaces, gray areas between regions, and outside the regional structures altogether. The conflicts are sometimes civil in nature and warring factions are fighting for political domination. In some cases

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cross-border wars are being fought over ancient animosities (often tribal in origin) or resource access – particularly water. In truth many of these wars seem to be fought this year because a war was fought last year – there is a never-ending quality to them. The danger is that many of these countries possess important natural resources or sit in geo-strategically important locations. Knowing an opportunity when they see one, many “warlords” have begun to play off the main regions against one another seeking material and political support. It is working, and some of the local conflicts are taking on global dimensions, as modern weapons and very few advisors are showing up on the battlefields. The qualities of some conflicts make them appear as proxy wars, possibly between some of the major regions, as regions look to safeguard against risks of strategic materials dependency by building up stockpiles. Accusations of Southern African nations serving as a remote dispute battleground for the major regions are beginning to be made in international governing forums.

South Africa has experienced tremendous pressure from impoverished inhabitants on neighboring nations crossing the national border seeking work and better life styles. Unfortunately, this occurred when the nation was in serious economic distress. Unable to care for more immigrants and concerned about the country’s destitute serving as hosts for pandemics, the South African national government has sought to push both recent immigrants and the descendants of previous immigrants to return to their countries of origin. This phenomenon has spilled into national/tribal/“warlord” conflicts over control of strategic mineral reserve sites, particularly in the border region of South Africa, Zimbabwe, and Mozambique. Chinese weapons have been found on the battlegrounds of these areas, and it is speculated that they are backing South African interests in return for a promised share of their strategic minerals.

Finally, cyberspace has become awash in threats and dangers as government and military sites are constantly hacked and attacked. There is no “film at eleven” for this war – no heroic charges, no medals, and no combat that is obvious to the citizenry. But there *is* a war being fought in 2030 and the winner of this war may not have to fight a conventional war.

Global stability rests on a fine edge in 2030. On the one hand, global trade is still necessary and all nations recognize that fact. Nations *cannot* do without trade and commerce from “competitor” regions. On the other hand, tension and military investment grow each year. The tension may spring from historic animosities, but find real substance in 2030 from diverging philosophies, competition for scarce resources, and the confrontational “logic” that is the natural outgrowth of four regions moving on different trajectories.

Business focus and military concerns in each bloc are starting to diverge.

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Businesses are focusing more internally within regions where business activities and the marketplace are more controllable, whereas military concerns tend to be centered more on extra-regional activities. However, businesses and militaries share a goal of intra-regional stability.

Global Security & Geopolitics

Distribution of military power

Military power has reemerged as a central global factor in power distribution. The world is divided into four political-economic regions. The regionalism we see in 2030 emerged from a combination of sensible, but urgent, regional responses to pandemics added to a host of business and economic decisions that initiated and solidified regional financial and economic structures. Those regional affiliations evolved into more identifiable political organizations over several years. (They even evolved from three to four regions.) The regions are still evolving and military establishments are becoming an important part of that picture as tensions, global political confrontations, and some surprisingly widespread popular distrust among the regions are emerging as significant elements in global affairs.

AFTA began with the most powerful military organization, since it emerged out of the last superpower standing. The U.S. armed forces are the core of the AFTA military. Admittedly, the term “AFTA military” is getting a bit ahead of the game – as of 2030, such an official organization does not exist. However, with the exceptions of Venezuela and Brazil, most of the Americas’ armed forces are, at some level, integrating with U.S. armed forces. A very large number of Americas’ officers are educated fully or partly in the U.S. Service academies. While all nations seem intent on maintaining their own military identities (including officer education), there is talk of establishing a regional War College system. The U.S. portions of **AFTA** military forces are the only ones capable of sustained global conventional force projection.

Venezuela has opted out of all political and military structures in AFTA. Indeed, it has invited Chinese air defense troops (aircraft and air defense missiles) into the country. Additionally, the Chinese have just begun to build naval port facilities (which seem to include facilities for non-nuclear submarines).

Brazil is a more complex matter. Brazil maintains its strict official independence from any AFTA military integration. However, Brazilian officers are in attendance at all meetings as observers. Brazilian forces always accept invitations for joint exercises and Brazilian defense firms are active bidders and partners in the ongoing military buildup. Australian, New Zealand, and Japanese forces regularly support AFTA joint exercises. Australia and Japan have maintained their mutual defense arrangements with the U.S.

Like AFTA, the **Greater Asian** military is mostly founded around one country – in

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this case China. Greater Asian military integration has not approached the AFTA level. Indeed, it seems as if the region prefers to maintain more distance among its members' militaries. There are no joint schools, few joint procurements, and only a moderate number of joint exercises. However, China does accept Greater Asian and non-aligned nation (e.g., Russia and Brazil) officers into its senior service schools. At the moment, it is not a well-balanced military. Aside from China and India, most members' forces resemble national guards. China is still army-heavy, although its air force is strong and they are investing heavily in new systems (many purchased from Europe). The navy is in a building stage and Chinese writing indicates that it is developing a sea denial force, not a sea control force. The Chinese are also investing in space systems and modernizing their nuclear forces. The Chinese military is far more integrated into its own society than the other regions. The military owns a vast number of factories and other facilities.

India and China talk a lot about military integration, but always seem to put things off. However, of all the Greater Asian members, China and India do the most joint exercising, both operational and staff. The Indian forces remain similar in content to those of the last few decades, including aircraft carriers, but like China they are modernizing across the board and growing.

The **European Defense Force (EDF)** is the most thoroughly integrated of all the regions. Of the "big three" regions, it is the smallest military, but its technology is excellent and they afford modernization by selling technology and systems to Greater Asia and the United Islamic Alliance. The United Kingdom is a bit of an anomaly in the EDF. While it is thoroughly integrated into the EDF, the UK services, nevertheless, maintain close ties with the U.S. (not AFTA) and participate in two-country joint exercises. This "vestige of NATO" and the historic special relationship seems to please everyone on both sides of the Atlantic.

The **UIA**, the most emergent and smallest region, has a very unbalanced set of military forces. Aside from nuclear weapons, the alliance is army-heavy. Iran and Pakistan have small air forces in need of modernization (which is just now underway) and coastal navies. There is no integration among the members, very few joint activities, and no attempt to rationalize force structures or weapons.

In addition, **Russia**, a bit of an odd man out, has retained a large military establishment, primarily geared to ground combat, air defense, and strategic deterrence. Defense spending has been rising over the past decade.

Global alliance structures (NATO, others)

NATO withered and was eventually dissolved in 2020 and U.S. troops left Europe. The older treaties were superseded by three regional entities: the EU, AFTA, and Greater Asia, and later the United Islamic Alliance (UIA). However, with the

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exception of the UIA, these have not emerged as monolithic blocs. Some members act as tightly bound to their alliance, but others exhibit plenty of independent actions across a variety of issues. The major “independent actors” – India, Brazil, Russia, and Venezuela – have been subjected to continual ‘wooing’ by others.

The regions all have separate personalities. The EU is highly integrated across all aspects of society, but not especially disciplined in terms of reaching and adhering to an agreed consensus. Greater Asia is the least integrated, but some would say the most disciplined. AFTA is the most raucous, but the most vibrant and optimistic. The UIA has the most opaque decision making, but is very disciplined.

European decision making tends to reside in the European Executive and Parliament. National governments have multiple mechanisms to avoid complicity in initiatives they do not support, but most of these are carried on informally behind the scenes. In AFTA the U.S. makes most decisions within an ongoing framework of mutual consultations. It soon became the expectation that the U.S. would normally act in a regional instead of a nationalistic manner on global issues. Some of the new AFTA organizations (in health, for example) are also empowered to require a U.S. response under certain conditions. In Greater Asia, China makes all key decisions. However, it has been clear that it does not “rule” like an autocrat, but rather engages in continuous networking and consultations. The UIA seems to be managed through a regular conference of secular and religious leaders of all three countries.

The four regions compete vigorously for needed resources and large markets, as well as prestige and friends, within the nonaligned areas of Africa, Central Asia (the ‘Stans’), and the Middle East. Depending upon the value of the developing countries, this competition takes the form of trade, aid, investment, loans, and military assistance.

WMD (proliferation, use, cooperation on, perceived threat from)

The Nonproliferation treaty is still in place. No region has any interest in seeing the wholesale expansion of nuclear powers outside their control. However, the reality is that there is no global enforcement mechanism. Therefore, the major power(s) within each bloc control proliferation internally; but ‘leakage’ still occurs. None of the regions has controlled borders to the extent that they would like. Smuggling takes place in and out of them all. This is a problem globally where many private corporations and criminal groups do not feel bound by non-proliferation treaties. For example, the original source of the anthrax used in the simultaneous releases in Rome, Jerusalem, and Mecca in 2023 was never definitely determined. Customs officials occasionally still find radioactive compounds and potential bioweapons substances during border inspections.

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Comparative military expenditures/
'security dilemma'

The security dilemma (arm for peace) is highly active in this world.

Rank ordering of current military capabilities: AFTA, Greater Asia, EU, UIA.

Rank ordering of current expenditures: Greater Asia and AFTA equal, then EU and UIA

All four regions have nuclear weapons, but the UIA's capability for global reach with those weapons is highly suspect.

There are a number of unaligned strong militaries such as Russia and South Africa. Venezuela is emerging as a regional security concern, but it is unclear whether this is internally driven or as a Chinese proxy.

See the Global Security and Geopolitics cell above.

Willingness for collective action

Collective action has become an institutionalized activity *within* regions, but very low and grudging between regions. However, all three regions tacitly have agreed on maintaining an active trade in 'mutual necessities' and highly popular consumer goods. The dire consequences of seriously interfering with a region's energy imports have been well understood by all. Unhampered trade in energy resources is guaranteed by a new international organization, the World Energy Forum.

Aid and health activities tend to be regional – although Greater Asia, AFTA, and the EU have all recognized that they cannot ignore the plight of the developing world entirely. They do not work together on these issues, nor do they hinder the efforts of others.

National Defense Strategy threats and challenges

Traditional Increasing – increasing likelihood (between the regional blocs), and increasing consequences

Irregular Steady State – increasing likelihood, with decreasing consequences

Catastrophic Increasing – increasing in likelihood and consequences

Disruptive Increasing – increasing likelihood and consequences

Definitions of the threat types above:

- *Traditional* – Traditional challenges posed by states employing legacy and advanced military forces in long-established, well-known forms of military competition and conflict.

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- *Irregular* – Irregular challenges from the adoption or employment by non-state and state actors to counter stronger state opponents – terrorism, insurgency, civil war, etc.
- *Catastrophic* – Catastrophic challenges including the surreptitious acquisition, possession, and possible terrorist or rogue employment of WMD or methods producing WMD-like effects.
- *Disruptive* – Disruptive future challenges emanating from competitors developing, possessing, and employing breakthrough technological capabilities intended to supplant our advantages in particular operational domains.

Multilateralism

Multilateralism within each region was ‘part of the deal’ that everyone cut when they joined, partly to assure security against outside threats. When dealing with internal regional issues the key issue has always been, will the “great power” go along with the consensus? Both the U.S. and China want their regions to succeed and remain reasonably integrated. To that end, both nations frequently have found it expedient to bow to multilateral decisions *within* their regions. For example, AFTA established an organization to regulate migration and population movements within the hemisphere in order to maximize beneficial economic activities.

Regions tended to reach a consensus on a position before global negotiations with other regions commenced. There was, however, no guarantee that every nation in a region would continue to adhere to the consensus throughout the entire process.

Intelligence/ counterintelligence (technology, sharing)

Intelligence activity and spending continues to be very high across all the regions. There is no form of intelligence activity *not* employed, and they range from human to sensor swarms to space assets, to cyber and methods we cannot discuss. Intelligence targets are other regions’ political, military, technological and economic activities in all possible venues (air, land, sea, space, cyber, biological). Targets also include the search for new resources and activities in developing countries and ungoverned spaces. The strong economic competition combined with geopolitical frictions has also put a premium on industrial espionage. All of this intelligence activity creates a very high demand for regionally focused counter-intelligence capabilities and activities in both the public and private sector.

Intelligence information tends to stay within each bloc. There is little incentive to share information or systems with part-time alliance members or those who play the middle in the regional power game. However, this means different things in different regions. The EU and Greater Asia, for example, share a significant amount of their political, technological, and economic intelligence with their own region’s businesses (understanding that this may lead to leakage), while this does not happen as often in AFTA. The U.S., on the other hand, quietly shares

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intelligence with the UK.

World Economic System

Levels of stability and dynamism

China’s economic recession that began prior to the onset of the pandemics created ripple effects throughout Asia, and indeed globally. Shortly thereafter, much U.S./EU/Japanese investment began to be directed out of the Asian mainland starting in 2013 due to the perceived increased levels of risk exposure from political instability and disease. In some cases, this became a panicked withdrawal very quickly and might not have made a lot of economic sense in hindsight. However, within a few years the die was cast. Much (but not all) new production after that date was built in the Western Hemisphere and Europe. The EU redirected much of its investment internally. Many Asians resented the AFTA/EU economic withdrawals from Asia.

When the world settled back down, much of the original global trade resumed. However, the default for new investments went hard over to regional preferences. Three primary economic regions arose; they still found products of mutual necessity and high popularity that could be traded with one another.

U.S. interest rates spiked early due to Asian instability (early 2010s), but later stabilized as the economy improved. All regional economies now are doing fairly well, but the global economy as a whole is not as strong as it might have been if the regional disruptions had not occurred. In terms of productivity and efficiency, the global economy is still paying a price for regionalization. Many industries continue to feel the effects from a shrunken pool of talent, and a reduced access to global financial services.

Reserve currencies

Each region has a lead currency that is used for inter-regional transactions – the dollar, euro, and Asian yuan. OPEC sets its price on a ‘basket’ of the three regional currencies. Currency markets are frequently targeted by cyber-crime and cyber-warfare and much effort continues to be spent on cyber-security.

International financial institutions

The international financial institutions of the past tend to be the place where inter-regional negotiations take place. They have little or no independent decision-making authority. Regional central banks are the critical financial institutions of the world – they are where the money and power are located. However, the three key regions and their major businesses continue to have a great interest in maintaining international financial stability. Therefore, when the regional central banks meet with one another in the World Bank/IMF or elsewhere, the negotiations become the de facto international financial decision-making body. There is a continuous threat of two regions uniting to thwart the region they see as most

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dangerous to their interests. The threat of this sort of alliance keeps each region “honest,” i.e., unlikely to drive as harsh an economic bargain as it might otherwise. It also helps to keep international trade on a steadier, “fairer” basis. Regional business and banking coalitions meet regularly to develop commonly held positions on international financial issues prior to trans-regional negotiations.

Dominant players, regions, centers of innovation

Dominant players continue to be the regions and the institutions they established. More specifically, each region has lead nations (U.S., China, France/Germany/UK/Italy, and Iran/Pakistan). These nations and the regional institutions they support continue to play leading roles in innovation in several focused topics such as public health, technology, business, and finance. The regions tend to focus on similar areas: biogenetics, energy systems, aerospace and defense, sensors, IT, and materials.

Other important actors include a few of the “nonaligned” such as Brazil, Russia, and India, who have important roles as ‘semi-independent’ players and became centers of innovations in a number of areas that help maintain their independence such as information technology, consumer products, energy systems, and defense systems.

Role/structure of transnational business and business organizations

The world has moved to an increasingly regional business structure. Investments are regional, incentives tend to favor regional activities, and legal and banking structures favor regional investments. However, the world still values and needs global trade. Transnational companies are the “short circuit” that connects the globe. These businesses and regional banking consortia play key roles in keeping the global trading system alive. Regional business associations often represented their area of the world in wider negotiations. The old multinational companies tended to divide into affiliated regional subsidiaries, but some decision making is still coordinated globally. The level of centralized control varied widely among these companies. Some Western companies with long-standing and/or substantial ties with Greater Asia, for example, retained a significant presence there even after the pandemics (Coca-Cola, Pepsi-Cola, Daimler Benz, General Electric, IBM, Microsoft, etc.), and have a substantial leg up on regionally limited competitors.

There are also less-than-completely ethical avenues to global connectivity. There continue to be a number of extremely wealthy ‘rogue businessmen’ with shady ties to various businesses such as the arms trade, Web gambling, entertainment, designer drugs, etc. They tend to spend much time in places like Russia and the ‘Stans’. These people often become middlemen/facilitators/trade expeditors for arranging the trade in ‘mutual necessities’ between regions.

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Unhampered trade in energy resources is guaranteed by a new international organization, the World Energy Forum.

Dynamics of international debt

When the yuan deflated in 2012-13, the U.S. favorably renegotiated its debt. China continued to hold dollar debts, as dumping them would have resulted in a far worse outcome for them than holding them. Regional ownership of debt and regional investment patterns became the norm. The EU, as an accomplished middleman/honest broker, holds debts from all parts of the world.

Unemployment/ social fabric

The world experienced considerable uncertainties in the 2010s, but much of that has stabilized now. Through much of the world, especially in the four regions, *a sense of regional identity* is emerging. A new social fabric is being woven – it is incomplete, of course, and perhaps always will be, but each region is beginning to redefine itself. Since economic conditions are good and employment is strong and getting strong in the major regions, this is a positive experience for most.

While the standard of living within the regions is improving nicely, not all is perfect. There are pockets of extreme poverty found in nonaligned countries or ungoverned spaces with few resources or market potential. Desperate conditions in some of these impoverished areas, given only tentative and limited attention by regional blocs, often spill over into civil unrest, insurrection, and terrorist incidents, such as the simultaneous anthrax releases in Jerusalem, Mecca, and Rome in 2023.

While the regions continued to experience business cycles, unemployment within the major regions has rarely risen to politically unacceptable levels after the early 2020s.

Globalization

Globalization has given way to regionalization – not completely, of course. But the sense that the world once had that its collective future lay with integrated global markets and worldwide connectivity has been supplanted by successful regional growth models and a renewed tension among nations. By the early 2010s the institutional basis for globalization (Doha Round, international organizations) began to be superseded by a sub-global structure with regional organizations promoting more localized interests. This trend was exacerbated by the reaction to the pandemics, and both trade and investment shifted to a more regional focus. Regionalism and the regional citizen generally replaced globalization and the global citizen.

International Trade

Trade among the regions has remained strong and important and guided by a

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relatively stable and predictable set of trading rules. The regions all need one another – acknowledging that none can go it alone despite their regional preferences. Care has been taken not to disrupt or threaten any region’s vital energy imports, unless one was courting a serious confrontation. Informal annual meetings of leading energy producers (represented by OPEC) and consumers offered a forum for resolving disagreements.

Trade within each of the three major regions, however, has exploded. The U.S. moved away from the WTO concept and toward regional unity, i.e., free trade/economic union with the Western Hemisphere and other AFTA partners. The EU was already mostly there and Asia did the same.

The early 2010s was the WTO’s high water mark. After that, regional standards and policies replaced global ones, but the regions still retained major interest in maintaining global trade.

Governance/ Quality of Governance

Predominant ideology

Governance, formerly strongest at the nation-state and international organization levels, has migrated both upward (from the nation-state to the region) and downward (from the international organization level to that of the regional organizations). Nation-states are still powerful, but their inability to achieve outcomes without regional cooperation has caused them to cede real power to the regional blocs: the EU has passed its Constitution; the U.S., though still dominating its region, has ceded power to its own hemispheric regional bodies, most notably on health; and China has led its region toward greater integration.

Democracy is becoming more widespread, although not universally so. The EU requires a functioning modern democracy as a prerequisite for entering and remaining within the organization. The leading role of the U.S. along with Canada, Australia, and Japan within AFTA also carries the assumption that member states will accept the importance of economic and legal transparency, the rule of law, and free and fair elections.

The Chinese government carefully projects the veneer of modern democracy in order to encourage her smaller neighbors to feel comfortable aligning within Greater Asia. Even the larger nations of the Middle East (Iran, Pakistan, Egypt, etc.) are either elected democracies or populist theocracies. There are democracies scattered elsewhere, such as South Africa. However, many of the remaining governments are authoritarian, unstable, or barely functioning.

Ideologically, the primary competition has been between the U.S. and Asian outlooks. The U.S. system was touted as based on individual rights and achievement, and the Asian system extolled the importance of family and

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communal values, although several nations such as India sought their own blends of these two strains. Europe sought to retain a more neutral position so it could act as an ‘honest broker’ and maximize access to markets and resources. There has been a tendency for the U.S. and the EU to drift further apart on ‘values’ issues.

Role/influence of non-governmental/ supra-governmental organizations, e.g., UN, regional political blocs, I/Os, private NGOs

Each region developed a supranational governance organization to coordinate relations with the rest of the world, evolving out of or building on the EU, OAS, and ASEAN. These organizations by necessity took over some aspects of ‘sovereignty’ from the associated nations, and were particularly active in areas such as public health and finance.

The UN, the new World Energy Forum, and other traditional international organizations (e.g., WHO and IMO) have a significant role to play on issues in which the regions share a mutual interest, such as international standards and international trade. The decision-making dynamics in these organizations revolve around region-to-region negotiation. There is no established global mechanism to coordinate solutions to inter-regional environmental problems, however.

The formal structure of the United Nations is unchanged from the early 2000s, with a security council and general assembly. However, since security issues now revolve around regional negotiation, these bodies have lost some of their relevance.

See also “Global Alliance Structures.”

Presence/absence of an architecture for global issues management

There is some organized global issues management. Where there is agreement between regions on the need to act, international organizations are used as vehicles. In other cases, it is done on an ad hoc basis through inter-regional negotiation, if done at all. The four regions handle most issues internal to themselves, and each has a regional organization that can negotiate with its counterparts in the other three regions on global issues such as public health, trade, and finances. However, many global commons-related issues are not resolved at all, and some are approaching crisis.



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*Failed states/
Balkanization/
ungoverned spaces/
mutual separation*

The nonaligned regions (Central Asia, Middle East, Africa, Pacific island states) still contain ungoverned spaces that have always encouraged illicit/illegal activities. These tend to include countries without key resources or large markets. Life in many of these regions continues to be truly desperate. These are also potential flashpoints for regional confrontations and proxy wars, especially over economic and resource issues, as well as perennial border disputes.

*Non-traditional actors –
new forms of influence,
new affinity associations*

There are new actors on the scene and they are slowly competing with nation-states for power and influence. Interestingly, these competing actors were originally set up by the very nation-states they might someday supplant. New regional associations (defense, health care, banking, trade, etc.) and business organizations have expanded roles working with each other and with the nations in each region, but at varying levels of integration depending on the region and the topic. This process began with the emergency work done by regional health-care organizations to stem deadly pandemics. This was followed quickly by regional business, investment, and banking institutions to facilitate regional economic integration and growth. Over time, in all regions (most advanced in Europe, least advanced in Greater Asia and UIA) nation-state sovereignty is slowly giving way to regional decision making.

For example, in AFTA a region-wide labor/ethnic/religious movement has been gathering coherence and political voice, with the goal of increasing attention on poverty and development issues. (“Poverty is a sin and governments and individuals fail when it exists.”) This movement leads to little growth in charitable work outside of the region. In the U.S. this trend paralleled and was beginning to merge with both a similar Hemispheric ‘Fusion’ cultural movement and a major grassroots political movement that had begun to see growing electoral success.

Aside from these more legitimate actors, a class of professional “gray area” middlemen (and “middle-nations”) has grown up to facilitate business and criminal enterprise across ostensibly closed borders (physical and legal). Russia, Vietnam, some Central Asian and African countries, Venezuela, and Indian, Chinese, and other ethnic diasporas are examples.

*Borders: nature
and permeability*

This is a world of borders, both national and regional, and tight ones, where possible. Originally, the regional borders were medical borders designed to manage the inflow of viruses through people and cargo. As regional investment and businesses emerged, the borders became financial – excluding competing sources of investment, preventing black market arbitrage, etc. Then the borders became more subtle to defend nascent manufacturing – unique standards, for example. Finally, the borders became national/regional-security in nature as world tensions arose and

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spying and theft of secrets became a problem. These borders are physical and cyber. They include human elements and technological ones. In many cases they are integrated with intelligence systems. Of course the regions are huge and in a world with regional trade preferences, there is a profitable market for *informal* cross-regional trading. Exactly because borders are so tight, global smuggling of all sorts (e.g., weapons, precision machine tools, human organs, Gap jeans, medicine, intellectual property, computer chips, people) is big business in 2030 and the people who live in the seams of the world and who expedite this trade are powerful.

In theory the borders within regions should be much more permeable. That certainly has been the plan in all the regions – the more permeable the intra-regional borders, the easier the flow of goods and services. (The tearing down of the U.S.-Mexico Security Fence in 2021 was a powerful statement of U.S. good faith in hemispheric unity. Of course, the borders that AFTA cares about most in 2030 are maritime.) However, the relative impossibility of securing entire regional borders has meant that nations' borders remain under control. Regional passports and favored trader designations can speed things up, but never eliminate the controls entirely.

The borders include regional firewalls for regional intranets. All regions have independent internet networks and they communicate outside the region (officially) only through designated portals.

*Charismatic leadership
(source of)*

This is a world of business, and regional and national government organizations. Globally charismatic leaders have not emerged. However, some local leaders have developed followings for resisting regional consolidation.

Terrorism

The U.S. withdrawal from Iraq/Afghanistan and the establishment of a Palestinian state had initially eased Middle-East tensions somewhat, but it has not ended the threat of terrorism. There are anti-central government insurgencies of varying strengths in parts of India, China, Latin America, and Russia as well as the nonaligned regions. There were occasional incidents often linked with the poorest regions of the world, such as the 2023 simultaneous anthrax releases in the three religious 'capitals' (Rome, Jerusalem, and Mecca) by an African group protesting the world's neglect of their region.

However, while some resentments still foster extremist movements, U.S. border controls and surveillance technologies of 2030, the wealth of easier targets for extremist rage, and the defusing of the Palestinian issue have prevented most terrorist operations against the U.S. Europe has not been quite so lucky. European

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treatment of immigrant groups from the Middle East has not improved much in 30 years. Those groups are already resident in Europe – often with work visas. They have caused some incidents over the years, but the Europeans cannot do without the labor they provide.

Some scattered regional backlash groups that feared the loss of U.S. sovereignty and resented the Latinization of culture emerged in the U.S. They were seen as vociferous, but not particularly dangerous or disruptive.

International Arms Trade

Within all regions (and across some, e.g., F-22EFs sold to the UK), traditional aerospace and defense industries are offering a full range of products and services to the marketplace. There is an inevitable leakage from smuggling associated with this growth industry. Additionally, there are a number of arms-dealing countries (e.g., Russia) that are willing to sell anything, anytime, to anyone – “Cash, Comrade, no credit.”

The international arms trade is big, big business. First the Europeans fund their own weapons development in part with foreign sales. They provide high-technology weapons to Greater Asia, Venezuela, the UIA, and to both sides in the civil and border wars in central Asia and Africa. Second, all the members of the regions sell weapons within their regions. Third, there is a very lucrative black market in arms. It tends to reside in ungoverned spaces and in the warring factions of Africa and central Asia. However, the trade expeditors of the world deal profitably in arms and, if their business connections are traced back thoroughly, it often appears that very “legitimate” firms are engaged in the illegal gun running.

AFTA is slowly converting to all-U.S.-based arms; the U.S. is still a major arm supplier globally, as are, now, Argentina and Brazil.

International Crime/Illicit Economy

Like international trade, international crime is big business. However, some things are better than they were in the past. A mixture of partial legalization and development of new designer drugs has diminished drug smuggling and wrecked the economics of many drug cartels. In AFTA, a shift of Asian jobs to Latin America has provided additional alternatives to the drug trade. Both supply and demand of smuggled drugs have declined. A security- and health-conscious world has sensors everywhere and common street crime has fallen considerably.

However, with tight borders, regional preferences, and global trade still important, there is a high premium put on “businessmen” who can get things *shipped*. These people live and work in the seams of the world and if they are legitimate expeditors today, they may have another black market agenda tomorrow. These are very

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powerful figures, but not frequently tied to any specific traded or smuggled item: knowledge, money, drugs, minerals, chips, people – they will deliver whatever is demanded. They use whatever venues are available – air, land, water, cyber – and often take advantage of high-arbitrage traffic to mask their activities. These expeditors often reside in Russia and Central Asia, which have become crime centers.

Illegal migration pressure is coming mainly from Africa and Central Asia. Reasons range from employment to health care. They tend to flow to portions of regions that have the weakest border protection, then move internally to other regional countries. False passports and medical certificates are a big business, as is electronic/biometric identification spoofing equipment. Theft of intellectual property is rampant across regional borders.

The Global Commons

The commons have rapidly emerged as a flashpoint issue in 2030.

Back in the early 21st century, a series of agreements was reached with respect to claims on polar resources. In 2030, however, some countries are attempting to make claims on Arctic resources that are not consistent with these agreements. This is building into a real international crisis.

Surging regional economic growth and a regional desire to control vital supplies have produced resource shortages and high prices, setting off races to exploit the ‘commons’ regions (polar regions, oceans, space). The EU and Russia have recently claimed offshore Arctic mineral rights extending beyond their continental shelves. Intense opposition has arisen to their polar oil drilling from the rest of the world, based on a previous international agreement to safeguard these areas against unilateral exploitation. Ocean-fishing disputes have increased as catch volumes decline while the human population rises. There are numerous large fishing fleets scouring what’s left of the oceans; if there isn’t a cop around, they swoop in and grab whatever they can. Many major fish stocks have collapsed, and these fleets are taking what’s left. Without regional agreements on pelagic fish, migratory fish stocks appear doomed. Armed confrontations over fish are more common than ever.

An expansion of oil drilling in the Arctic Region is precipitating concern that deep seabed mining exploitation of the commons might soon follow. However, there is no hard evidence such activity is underway.

Cross-border inter-regional pollution is also becoming a serious issue. Asia is particularly resented as the largest remaining polluter – though the resentment is primarily toward Asia’s emission of particulate matter, and the resulting consequences upon health. In this context, issues such as these quickly become

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potential flashpoints.

The U.S. and China are involved in a space-arms technology race. While space has been militarized, no one has yet acknowledged that it has been weaponized. India and China are planning to establish a moon base, leveraging China's unmanned lunar trip experience prior to their economic crash. The U.S. is scrambling to mount a moon mission of its own.

Energy

The energy situation is confused and complicated. As the various regions turned inward and re-invested in their economic infrastructures, it would have been smart, at that moment, to take a system-of-systems approach to a holistic energy program.

In some cases, a very few cases, it was done. However, for the most part, the regional businessmen and government leaders were so anxious to get their new factories and attendant infrastructures up and running and get the economies moving again, that they paid only marginal attention to smart energy policies.

Oil: The world economy still needs huge volumes of oil. Oil rose to \$75-80/barrel in the late-2010s/early 2020s with a peak of more than \$100/barrel at the height of the Palestinian treaty negotiations. The U.S./AFTA developed a regional oil supply strategy focused on Western Hemisphere/West African sources, plus some from the Middle East. The EU focused on Russian/North African sources. Asia focused on Asian/Middle East/Venezuelan sources. An annual meeting of energy suppliers and purchasers – the World Energy Forum – began in the early-2020s to resolve disagreements. It succeeded in this role until the late 2020s; now, however, many disputes remained unresolved.

Alternatives: The high price of oil has driven the search for alternatives. As is always that case, there have been successes and failures, but no silver bullet solution. The biggest disappointment has been hydrogen, but the problem was economic, not technological. The investment required for a hydrogen infrastructure was simply beyond the resources of regions already struggling to get their economies moving again in the late 2010s. Ethanol has been a big success, on the other hand. However in this case the success was due as much to giving Brazil incentives to stay in AFTA as the utility of the alternative. Clean coal technology has been a boon to the U.S., including as a money-making technology sale to China. Liquid fuels from coal gasification, shale oil, and oil sands are starting to enter the market in significant volumes, but not sufficient to lower prices much. Solar and wind power also are contributing, as are various approaches to energy efficiency, particularly in transmission.

The success story going forward in alternatives seems to be fourth-generation

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nuclear power. The technology is well in hand and quite safe. The reactors are simpler and scalable. It has the added advantage of being an “AFTA technology” since both the Brazilian and Argentine nuclear energy industries are participating fully. The first of these plants, however, are just now coming on line.

Europe has embraced nuclear technology with a passion and intends to sell it to China. This turn of events is fine with the U.S., since it will reduce the pollution created by the Chinese coal-fire generation.

Agriculture/Food/ Aquaculture/ Fisheries

Food industries, distribution, and regulation became regionalized as the three major regions created internal free-trade markets in food products. As a result, while a global market in agricultural products is still around, the large agricultural exports from AFTA to Asia during the pandemics declined somewhat over time as Asia recovered after the late-2010s. There are significant differences among the regions in the health of their traditional agriculture (available land and water), as a result of droughts, with Greater Asia and Africa suffering the greatest challenges. However, a significant biotech revolution has emerged, based in the U.S., Brazil, Korea, China, and India. Currently, it is stabilizing agriculture in those regions that are experiencing droughts. Europe and Africa have remained reluctant to adopt biogenetic products, based at least in part on signs that there will be unintended negative consequences to the advances in biogenetics.

There are numerous large fishing fleets scouring what’s left of the oceans; if there isn’t a cop around, they swoop in and grab whatever they can. Many major fish stocks have collapsed, and these fleets are taking what’s left. Without regional agreements on pelagic fish, migratory fish stocks appear doomed. Armed confrontations over fish are more common than ever.

Regional regulations control aquaculture practices. There are significant regional differences, globally, in approaches to aquaculture regulations. AFTA focused on managing and rebuilding natural fish stocks with some aquaculture that is environmentally and genetically friendly in its approach. Greater Asia focuses on mass-production-style aquaculture with little attention to genetic or environmental issues. In Europe there are isolated efforts at aquaculture in northern waters. However, European tastes do not run toward fish that can be farmed. So, instead, they trade their cultivated stocks on the open market.

Water, Minerals, Other Critical Resources

The Middle East, China, India, and parts of Central Asia, Southeast Asia, and North Africa continue to face critical water problems. In Central Asia and Africa these shortages have sparked cross-border conflicts that have increased the burdens posed by environmental refugees.

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Among the three major regions, but especially AFTA and Greater Asia, there is a growing tendency to want to secure long-term control of natural resources. The emergence of national security considerations within regions has made primary actors unwilling to trust long-term security to a global natural resources marketplace. Therefore, while access to critical materials is still available in Africa, Russia, and AFTA, there is a growing sense that the regions need to secure long-term access to resources needed for national security/self reliance. Ironically, this has led to a sense of global resource shortages based on threat assessments, rather than on actual market dynamics.

The qualities of some African conflicts make them appear as proxy wars, possibly between some of the major regions, as regions look to safeguard against risks of strategic materials dependency by building up stockpiles. Accusations of Southern African nations serving as a remote dispute battleground for the major regions are beginning to be made in international governing forums.

An expansion of oil drilling in the Arctic Region is precipitating concern that deep seabed mining exploitation of the commons might soon follow. However, there is no hard evidence such activity is underway.

Global Health

After the panic and fear of the mid-2010s, it would be nice to say that there is a global health regime. There is not, but the three primary *regions* have established their own health regimes. The distinction is important. Regional responses to pandemics laid the foundation for today's political structures and regional activism on health issues is the common world approach.

Looking back, the world was fortunate that it had some preparation for pandemics. Concerns over Asian pandemics back in the early 2000s spurred regional talks about public health measures, which were facilitated by the WHO acceptance of new International Health Regulations (IHR). As a result, The Pan-American Health Organization (PAHO) took the lead in the Western Hemispheric response to the pandemic.

In the 2010s common public health protocols and standards were adopted in each region. Each region developed a successful multinational public health authority – APHSA, EuroHealth, and pan-Asian Disease Control – to deter further pandemics, which did not occur. Upper respiratory diseases from air pollution remain an unsolved problem. Unlike much of global politics, these organizations still coordinate globally, although they operate regionally.

These organizations face a dilemma: in the public's mind the very success of these

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health organizations in the 2010s was defensive. Except in the case of Asia, they succeeded to a large extent in keeping out the worst ravages of disease. That mindset has made it hard for regional health organizations to argue for the resources needed to cure diseases and public health problems in Africa and Central Asia. Unfortunately, some of the traditional killers such as TB, malaria, dysentery, and diphtheria are making comebacks in those areas. On top of that, HIV/AIDS remains a growing problem in all regions, but is especially devastating in Africa. The expansion of the African HIV/AIDS pandemic feared in the early 2010s has continued.

Environment

While there is no global mechanism to coordinate solutions to inter-regional environmental problems or to take concerted action, each region has developed its own approaches to address air and water pollution. Global warming/climate change never became the serious social or economic issue many had projected.

AFTA and the EU established carbon-trading markets and joined AFTA in turning to cleaner alternative fuels and developing new recycling and 'clean manufacturing' technologies. Much of the world is building 'generation 4' nuclear power plants. Asia has been less successful in remediation and is resented as the largest remaining polluter. Particulate plumes continue to cross the Pacific to AFTA, engendering much resentment.

Environmental degradation turned out to be less severe than had been predicted several decades previous – the forecasted warming trend actually flattened out. Polar ice has stabilized. It is unknown whether the better than expected environmental conditions are due to the limited steps to ameliorate environmental degradation, or if historical projections of degradation were overzealous. But, as this topic is overshadowed by prevailing concerns of reestablishing manufacturing infrastructure, safeguarding the health of the populous and rising tensions between global regions, it is not in the foreground of social and political discord and is not frequently debated. Consequently, some environmental challenges still exist. Public anger over polar oil drilling (blamed on the EU and Russia) and unhealthy air quality (blamed on Asia), however, may yet change this situation.

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Global Climate Change/Natural Disasters

Climate change developed much more slowly than had been predicted in the early 2000s. As of late, the warming trend has flattened out. This has led to a very limited sea rise, periodic droughts, and somewhat more intense tropical storms. Weather-related natural disasters have not increased in frequency.

Demographics/Migration

World and regional population statistics are not far from what might have been forecast in the early 2000s. The exception to that is in Africa. Today's numbers are where they were forecast to be, but growth rates are falling faster than anticipated as unresolved HIV/AIDS death rates are compounded by a rash of other untreated diseases and the collapse of public health. However, the other key regions, with solid and growing economies and regional health organizations, have good population growth.

A modest reindustrialization of the U.S. occurred in the mid-late 2010s as U.S. businesses moved their manufacturing capability out of Asia and back to the Western Hemisphere. This provoked labor shortages in the U.S., which led to encouraging immigration of skilled and educated workers from Latin America. Meanwhile, many Americans moved south to retire or get involved in Latin American business operations.

Illegal migration pressure is coming mainly from Africa and Central Asia. Reasons range from employment to health care. They tend to flow to portions of regions that have the weakest border protection, then move internally to other regional countries. False passports and medical certificates are a big business, as is electronic/biometric identification spoofing equipment. Theft of intellectual property is rampant across regional borders.

Middle Eastern immigration into Europe has met labor needs. Russian and Japanese populations continue to decline, and the societies now face an extremely imbalanced worker-to-retiree ratio. China is starting to face similar problems, while India's population continues to grow.

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Science and Technology

Leading sectors

The leading S&T sectors include health care (pharmaceuticals, vaccinations, public health, genomics); agricultural biotechnology; energy; waste management; remote sensing and diagnostics; IT-telecommunications integration; cyber-security; robotics (particularly Japan and Europe); nanotechnology; and aerospace and defense. The three main regions have pursued reasonably balanced portfolios in all areas. In AFTA there is a particular push in dual-use (civilian-military) projects and applications.

Government and private funding

Regional governments are seeding R&D funding, with emphasis on defense and aerospace, energy, and economic infrastructure.

Leading nations/regions

The three main regions pursue technology and science innovation equally. Each has modest areas of greater expertise, but all feel the need to be self-sufficient. The UIA has no discernable S&T policy. India and Brazil are dynamic innovators who act a bit separately, and excel with the U.S. and Korea in biotech and genomics.

S&T development is a regional phenomenon and there is much sharing of S&T within regions, along with suspicion over other regions regarding industrial espionage, cyber-threats, and IP violations.

Technological transformation

AFTA developed a fusion of technologies (bio-, nano-, IT-) for greener manufacturing and recycling, and that is beginning to have transformative effect (a new way of thinking about manufacturing).

Attitudes, ethics, values due to science and technology investments

Each region has its own ethics/values associated with S&T, which has led them to slightly different emphases and attitudes towards innovations. For example, Asia has been more willing to engage in cutting-edge experimental biotech/genomics. AFTA has tended to favor dual-use military-civilian technologies. The EU was more willing to sell their S&T knowledge for a profit to other regions.

Global Education/ Distribution of Knowledge

Education and knowledge have emerged as region-focused and are seen as bringing valuable comparative advantages. On-line learning, home schooling, telecommuting, and telemedicine (“e-health”) have become extremely popular in all three main regions.

Knowledge is bought and sold within regions, but even then most knowledge owners remained somewhat reluctant to sell knowledge to potential competitors. There are very high barriers to disseminating defense technology except from the

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EU and Russia, who sell it regularly.

Each region has a regional Intranet within the restricted but still-global Internet, which primarily supports trade and finance. IP theft, industrial sabotage, and cyber-crime are extensive. Russian entrepreneurs have set up a ‘come one, come all’ Internet ‘wild, wild, west’.

Global Media

Entertainment and news organizations have developed along regional lines, with obvious ‘slants’ toward particular viewpoints. In the past the mainstream media was disciplined by governments for pandemic reporting inaccuracies that led to incidents of hysteria. People wanted accuracy in major public issues, and the media responded by striving to become more responsible and accurate.

Pandemic fear also spurred the media to heavy investments in enhanced cyber-services as people ‘cocooned’ in the mid-2010s and learned to like the convenience afterwards. On-line learning, home schooling, telecommuting, and telemedicine (“e-health”) have become extremely popular in all three main regions.

Regional Intranets (Webs) developed ‘under’ the global (primarily business) Internet, with major media outlets in each region and special regional channels for health, business, travel, etc. Governments control the connections between the regional Webs and frequently intervene to enforce their policy goals.

Religion

In AFTA a region-wide labor/ethnic/religious movement gathered coherence and political influence, noticeably in the U.S. and among the growing Latin American middle class, with the goal of increasing attention on poverty and development issues. (“Poverty is a sin and governments and individuals fail when it exists.”) Asian working conditions were vilified as repugnant. The group was highly networked with its own media voices. This movement paralleled the new Hemispheric ‘fusion’ culture and pro-Latin American U.S. politicians.

A religious powder keg is developing in Europe, as more Muslim immigrants enter the region, and the secular portion of the region holds political decision making.

Christianity continues to grow in China, despite official suppression. A Wahabist (Salafist) revival in the Middle East influenced Saudi Arabia and several other governments – among them Egypt and Pakistan – into becoming more fundamentalist.

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Global Transportation

During the pandemics, security trumped efficiency and the volume of travel and freight fell. All wanted trade to continue, however. Soon after the second pandemic, trade started growing again as new health security features were introduced into supply-chain business models. The shippers that solved the security-efficiency tradeoff most successfully gained huge competitive advantages.

By the late-2010s, trade was growing faster within rather than between regions. Container and bulk cargo volume grew. Regionally, it is a very vibrant maritime transportation environment. Much investment was made in improving infrastructure within each region.

While long-distance South American road and railroads grew, transportation improvements within AFTA mostly took the form of increased maritime transportation, including short-sea shipping that led to the expansion of seaports. Maritime shipping vessels are more automated, with regionally based maritime shipping vessels being generally smaller. There is an increase of integrated tug-barge vessels within AFTA. There are very sophisticated regional maritime transportation systems, particularly in the Gulf of Mexico, Caribbean, and the Straits of Malacca. Supply-chain efficiency became a key concern, partly to offset the higher costs of organizing regionally. Regional transport industries became smoothly integrated into the regional public health networks. The airline industry suffered severe shocks during the pandemics, then restructured on a regional basis and slowly returned to viability.

The regions reached agreement on the free flow of energy supplies globally, although there is vigorous economic competition to lock in energy supplies under long-term contracts.

Leisure boating is on the rise in AFTA, including a large increase activity in Central and South America as a larger middle class emerges. Cruise ship activity is high, using north-south routes, and increased excursions to the Arctic.

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Infrastructure

*(maritime, industrial/
manufacturing,
energy, undersea,
transportation,
space-based)*

There is an ncrease in offshore infrastructure, floating offshore inspection facilities, and quarantine anchorages.

Offshore and underwater drilling infrastructure is pervasive in the Gulf of Mexico, the Arctic, and the South American coast. Pipelines and cables are used to support intra-regional economics. Regional electrical grids have been strengthened and extended from their previous nation-based forms.

There is a resurgence of manufacturing in the U.S. and a significant growth in Central and South America. Oftentimes new manufacturing infrastructure incorporated energy-efficient designs and, to a lesser extent, drew upon sustainable energy sources.

An infrastructure for the Northern Sea Route is being established.

Each region is developing its own space infrastructure, with some increase in sea-based launches.

Strength/Weakness of Maritime Legal Regime

Post-pandemics, a health security regime was established by the IMO. While there is good cooperation with health security and other areas of clear common interest, efforts to implement and enforce a viable legal regime for the global commons have not been successful. In areas where there are no common interests, regions are developing their own regimes and standards.

Global Culture

To a significant extent, global culture is evolving along lines that parallel the dynamics in international trade and political events. In the Americas, there is a pronounced fusion of U.S., Latin, and Caribbean influences, with effects on popular music, dance, theatre, cinema, and even literature. China is the center of a blossoming Pan-Asia cultural movement, but it is not the only pole; India is projecting a powerful influence as well in many areas, especially music and cinema. Europe still prides itself as the protector of classical Western civilization, but just as much as the breeding ground for new cultural forms blending modern European, South Asian, and Middle Eastern and African influences.

Poverty & Development

The pandemics encouraged regional leaders to focus on economic development of the poorer parts of their own regions: better workers and bigger markets meant more profits. If you are an average worker in one of the key regions, life is looking better all the time. Demagoguery proved to be helpless in the face of pandemics; as a result, help from regional leaders such as the U.S. was welcomed. The poverty gap started to diminish.

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Living conditions in nonaligned areas of little economic interest, however, have remained harsh and engendered significant political instability in those regions and some scattered terrorism worldwide. Part of the reaction to the pandemic was a drop in developed world humanitarian relief aid to the poorest regions, which set off a lively debate on what type of aid, if any, to send to these areas.

Telecommunications/ “Virtuality”

Regions invested heavily in ‘network’ capabilities and regional Internets; it helped keep Japan and Australia with AFTA. Regional networks continue to be very important for facilitating intra-regional growth. Governments control connections between the regional Webs and are not loath to apply controls on extra-regional communications when it meets their political needs.

Pandemic concerns helped drive more toward IT-based business practices. On-line learning, home schooling, telecommuting, and telemedicine (“e-health”) have become extremely popular in all regions.

Virtual technology has a place in entertainment and for business meetings between geographically disparate parties, but does not experience widespread use in place of in-person office settings.

U.S. Drivers

U.S. National Security Position

NDS: U.S. goal is to have an AFTA two MCO capability (but currently we have one+), anywhere in the world, PLUS defending the hemisphere (AFTA); slowly integrating hemispheric military.

Roles and Missions:

- **Navy:** huge, numerous carrier groups, hemispheric task forces (but not multi-national crews), sea control and force projection, high-end SSNs and SSBNs
- **Army:** heavily armed, specialty divisions, light divisions, mechanized divisions, back in ballistic missile defense business
- **Marines:** heavier than in early 2000s, more tanks and artillery, more into high-intensity conflict, less into low-intensity conflict
- **Air Force:** aero-space force, missiliers back en vogue, unmanned fighters and strike are strong
- **National Guard:** employed more at a hemispheric level (allows for 2 MCO strategy)
- **Reserves:** traditional and large
- **SOCOM:** huge, surrogate warfare
- **Cyber:** at war 24x7

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- **Other:** NORAD is back with its mission

Global Posture: Small groups distributed globally protecting critical infrastructure (e.g., communications); back in Panama (at their request), large forces in Hawaii and Alaska, Guam, Diego Garcia, Israel, Japan, and South Korea.

Security/Defense Organization Structure: AMERICOM, going from joint-US to combined Americas, AFTA defense center in Central America?

Funding Support: USG – increasing regional tensions yield enough public support; AFTA member countries; funding is not a “gimmie” – USG fiscal compromises in other areas yields citizens’ expectations for military funding compromises.

HLD/HLS Investment Priority: HLS second only to DOD. Spirit of HLD and HLS includes all of AFTA, with reality and capabilities trying to catch up.

Posse Comitatus

No change, relative to 2000s.

Global Perception of the U.S.

In general the U.S. is perceived negatively in Asia and parts of Africa/Middle East; neutrally or opportunistically in the EU; ambivalently in India; and mostly positively within AFTA, with the exception of Venezuela and, to some extent, Brazil.

U.S. Economy

*GDP growth;
key growth sectors*

The U.S. Congress implemented a series of fiscal reforms, collectively viewed as the ‘Grand Compromise’ post-hoc. These measures, involving tax increases and entitlement spending limits, were implemented over a period of roughly five years and ultimately restored USG fiscal stability.

The initial bumpiness of the ‘Grand Compromise’ and pandemic years in the late mid-2010s was replaced by sustained growth in later years spurred on by the opportunities for regional cooperation and growth. The U.S. has exported many services and people (managers, engineers, etc.) into AFTA to help them grow. The U.S.’s AFTA partners have increasingly become knowledge-based economies, while there is much more manufacturing occurring within the region (including the U.S.). Universities have become strong S&T/R&D drivers of local growth, spurring investment in advanced ‘green’ and small-scale manufacturing using new technologies.

A critical factor in the growth success of the U.S. economy (and all of AFTA) was

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that, after the dip of the pandemic years, profitable global trade was not abandoned; trade was never treated by any region as a zero-sum game. Indeed, measured against history, global trade continues to do just fine. However, the significant growth is occurring in the regional markets.

Key growth sectors include: agriculture (biogenetics); aerospace and defense; materials; medicine; IT and technology; light and heavy manufacturing; and transportation and infrastructure development.

Government economic policy/business regulation

There has been real regulatory/legal reform throughout the Western Hemisphere, incentivized in part by concrete U.S. assistance. That laid the critical foundation for regional integration and stability based on transparency and private ownership of land. Regulatory harmonization across AFTA is a goal far from being achieved yet, however. The U.S. approach of a light regulatory hand stands in contrast to many Latin American practices. Of course, that is not always the case, since U.S. health and safety regulations and environmental regulations are much stricter than Latin American ones. For the moment, however, U.S. enterprise zones in Latin America cater to U.S. regulatory approaches. The fundamentals are in place and regional progress is being made on this issue, but it is slow and time-consuming and does hamper the potential for growth.

Availability of capital/investment climate

The stable, though not perfect, U.S. government fiscal situation allowed for private investment capital to be available. Significant global capital (especially from OPEC) also migrated to the U.S./AFTA as the most stable region with the best business infrastructure. In comparison, the EU is growing more slowly and Asian finances were not as transparent as the U.S., which also hampers investment.

Employment

By the early-2020s U.S. employment is robust. Labor shortages in the U.S. created concern over funding for social services, which led to a regional organization to facilitate legal immigration of skilled workers from Latin America.

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U.S. infrastructure (maritime, industrial/ manufacturing, energy, undersea, transportation, space-based)

Offshore infrastructure, floating offshore inspection facilities, and quarantine anchorages increase.

There is a pervasive offshore and underwater drilling infrastructure in the Gulf of Mexico and Alaska. New pipelines (including new North Slope natural gas pipeline) and cables support the intra-regional economy. The regional electrical grid has been strengthened and extended from its previous nation-based form.

There is a resurgence of manufacturing in the U.S. Oftentimes the new manufacturing infrastructure incorporated energy-efficient designs and, to a lesser extent, drew upon sustainable energy sources.

The AFTA region is developing its own space infrastructure, with some increase in sea-based launches.

Trade and investment (FDI) relationships

Oil-producing nations invested in the U.S./AFTA as a safe haven, while much U.S. FDI went to other AFTA nations, especially in Latin America. Trade relations are still global, with a continual shift to regional preferences after the pandemics. Supply chains are spreading out within AFTA.

China held onto U.S. debt through its crisis; the U.S. is no longer running a deficit with China, as most of its trade is intraregional; now its trade deficit is with the emerging export economies of Latin America. The U.S. is not investing much outside the region.

Fiscal and monetary policies and status

By the mid-2010s the U.S. had wound down from Iraq and reached a ‘Grand Compromise’ to reduce federal deficit (taxes up and spending down). By the late 2010s the changed U.S. policy allowed us to avoid major fiscal problems. U.S. interest rates did spike early due to Asian instability in the late 2010s, but then stabilized. Major foreign holders of U.S. debt continued to hold it and have not cashed in. The debt came down over the years (from economic growth and from a deliberate policy of buying it down). The U.S., at the moment, operates in modest deficit in most years, with government spending growing each year to fund infrastructure development, the military build-up, and retirement entitlements (which have been pushed back somewhat with age eligibility incentives).

Resource dependency

We are still using huge volumes of oil and there is intense regional competition for resources, including Middle East oil. Each region tries to lock in long-term agreements for energy and needed resources. Refining capacity was a problem in the past, but now the constraint is finding and securing new sources of crude oil.

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All regions are looking at the commons' resources, including oil, water, seabed, polar regions, space, etc.; it is starting to be viewed as a zero-sum game, with each region trying to control access to critical resources.

While the U.S. is in fairly good shape (except for the declining western aquifers that are the primary underground water source for several states), much of the world faces a water shortage.

The U.S. does not have guaranteed access to all of the strategic minerals it needs (chromium, rare earths, molybdenum, e.g.). It has to obtain many of these from Africa or Russia, and is also beginning to consider looking beyond its continental shelf.

U.S. Political Landscape

Political trends in U.S. (fragmentation, unity, third parties, civic engagement) and campaign finance reform

By the late 2010s the U.S. had reached a political 'Grand Compromise' to restore fiscal stability that both parties were willing to accept. It included: (1) drawdowns and limits on further overseas troop deployments; (2) tax increases sufficient to shrink the deficit; and (3) entitlement limits (pensions, Social Security, Medicare) via means testing and increased contributions and co-payments from recipients. Since nearly every sector of society felt equally hurt, the package managed to pass. In the following years, the U.S. trade and budget deficits dropped and confidence in the U.S. government rose. The successful response to the pandemics and the creation of AFTA further bolstered the image of government.

Starting in the late 2010s increasing numbers of 'pan-American' political leaders emerged in the U.S. They favored closer ties with Latin America, especially in light of vigorous economic competition from Asia. Business interests that had recently shifted their own investments into the region offered considerable support to these politicians. This political movement was merging with similar pan-Hemispheric cultural and ideological movements to create a significant bloc of public opinion that strongly supports the AFTA concept. On the other hand, there have been incidents of anti-AFTA and anti-Latinization behavior, including some riots and vandalism, and anti-AFTA candidates occasionally do win elections and speak out vigorously against the trend.

Within the U.S. electoral process, these issues of ideology and policy are intensely debated and are often the key factor in elections. As part of the 'Grand Compromise', public funding of candidates plus firm (but somewhat generous) limits on private contributions were put in place and proved to be popular.

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*Civil liberties
vs. security*

Much security-related intrusiveness is tolerated as the ‘price to pay’ for promoting regional public health and military strength, and averting industrial espionage, smuggling, and cyber-crime. There are perceived enemies of the U.S. and AFTA in 2030 and citizens generally believe that security is an unambiguous requirement. The loyalties of internal non-bloc communities (i.e., Asians living in the Western Hemisphere) are sometimes questioned.

*Balance between
federal/state/local/
private sector/
NGO’s and non-profit
organizations*

The successful response to the pandemics of the mid-2010s and the smooth formation of the AFTA organizational structure enhanced the reputation of the federal government and those NGOs and regional institutions (PAHO, OAS) that helped. Over time, however, the new regional institutions and business and banking consortia came to exercise semi-independent authority that, at times, even the federal government has difficulty ignoring or contradicting.

The general assumption dictates that the U.S. government will put the interests of AFTA on an equal footing with those of the U.S. itself, and that “what’s good for one is good for the other.” This concern in fact feeds growing resentment toward the additional burden that AFTA responsibilities have placed on the U.S. taxpayers and armed forces. For this reason, there are county and local governments in many areas of the U.S. and Canada that have publicly expressed significant opposition to AFTA and called for its dismantlement.

The default response in any public emergency is to go to the federal government for assistance first. However, they will not necessarily be able to respond because they are significantly stretched by the new obligations to the AFTA region. State and local governments are more active than previously in local issues such as education and infrastructure.

*Isolationism
vs. engagement
in the world*

The situation is complex and ambiguous. The U.S. is still diplomatically and economically engaged across the globe. However, the U.S. is the leader of a regional bloc (AFTA) and views its primary responsibilities to support its AFTA friends in the Western Hemisphere and Pacific Rim. The U.S. makes its primary connections for global issues at the regional level, and sometimes appears to outsiders as indifferent toward other parts of the globe. This image does occasionally put AFTA businesses at a competitive disadvantage in overseas markets.

Locus of political power

There is a tendency for the ‘locus of power’ to move away from national governments in the direction of supranational regional authorities, especially those that promote hemispheric public health and AFTA. The general public usually

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accepts this tendency, which the business community strongly supports, but there is a minority viewpoint that vocally opposes this trend.

U.S. Society

Public perception of military careers and of government

The government is normally trusted to assure personal and national security and public health. This is complemented by an emerging willingness to rely on regional structures and institutions. The USG is rising to the challenges of the time, and more people are willing to go into public service (including the military) to serve their society.

The Grand Compromise brought about a reduction in many federal government programs and services (including social services), but U.S. spending on defense and public health has been strong. As such, careers in the military are viewed favorably, as stable career tracks and a source of decent medical and retirement benefits. There is a renewed sense of patriotism that has led some young workers to feel a call to duty. The U.S. military can effectively compete for talent, though recruiting requires effort, given the shortage in the labor force. However, this is offset somewhat by the numbers of young Latin American men and women joining the U.S. armed services.

National loyalty and identifications

Loyalty to the U.S. has not been attenuated, and Americans are proud of the U.S. leadership in creating and strengthening AFTA.

Integration/ fragmentation of U.S. society & tendency toward violence

There is growing U.S. acceptance of Hispanic cultural influences, and more and more Americans study Spanish and Portuguese (while new immigrants learn English). Bilingualism is widespread. Anti-Asian sentiment crept in during the pandemics and later as tensions rose with other regions. There have been sporadic ‘anti-Latinization’ backlash activities from some in the U.S. who opposed the focus on Hemispheric unity.

Education

Educational performance across the U.S. continues to be uneven, with the federal government unwilling and in fact unable to even out disparities between richer and poorer school districts. Also, with limited state support, school districts are increasingly dependent on local tax revenue to cover their costs. (The good news here is that the improved U.S. demographic balance has helped bolster local tax bases, at least in the fast-growing regions.) This has led to increased taxpayer scrutiny over educational spending, and in many cases impatience with educational programs that are disconnected from the economic realities of the day. In some local districts, for example, there are heated debates over the merits of bilingual education. However, hardly anyone doubts the importance of more intensive and

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effective language training when the *lingua franca* of commerce in the Americas is more than ever distributed among English, Spanish, and Portuguese. Moreover, global trade trends continue to point to the importance of training in Mandarin, Hindi, and Arabic, though only the richest school districts have the capacity to offer these in primary or secondary schools.

Universities, meanwhile, are thoroughly integrated into the AFTA growth model, and are providing education across the full spectrum of income levels with new technologies and teaching models. Increased educational, technical, and cultural exchanges focused on new hemispheric relationships promise important political and economic benefits down the road.

Health care

Regional-wide protocols and standards for reporting and emergency care arose from response to the pandemics. Beyond those standards, health-care systems were considered to be national decisions. Medical visas were produced to allow easy hemispheric travel. They were based on a regional health-care database – “*El Hermano Grande*” (Big Brother) – that knew your DNA, predispositions to diseases, etc. Sensors scan travelers for infectious disease at borders.

Personal and public attention to health and health-care issues has increased substantially. Generally, America is becoming a healthier society.

The U.S. instituted a national health-care plan in 2015, largely in response to both the fears and the successes in the pandemic years. The plan gives adequate coverage to all citizens, and to those with guest worker visas, and allows anyone to opt for full private insurance, or additional coverage insurance as they choose. The U.S. military is part of the system, but improved coverage is provided given the nature of the profession.

Aging population of U.S.; societal and political effects

Increased legal immigration from Latin American helped correct what would otherwise have been a badly lopsided population pyramid. The elderly population is still large, and they are required to work longer for retirement benefits as the baby boomers reach their 70s and 80s. While entitlements have been reformed a bit, they have been fair enough to be accepted and new immigrants are feeding the pot well enough to keep the system solvent. The baby-boom generation is not voting for excessively high entitlements.

Religious or cultural affinities

Generally across the regions you can see a tendency for emerging regional cultures, with Europe being more integrated in this regard, with AFTA making only modest strides in integration. Greater Asia is the least advanced. There are countervailing

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movements in each region.

In AFTA a region-wide labor/ethnic/religious movement gathered coherence and political influence, noticeably in the U.S. and among the growing Latin American middle class, with the goal of increasing attention on poverty and development issues. (“Poverty is a sin and governments and individuals fail when it exists.”) Asian working conditions were vilified as repugnant. The group was highly networked with its own media voices. This movement paralleled the new Hemispheric ‘fusion’ culture and pro-Latin American U.S. politicians. Numerous anti-Latinization movements have sprung up locally in the U.S.

Leisure activities/ tourism

Leisure boating is on the rise in AFTA, including a large increase in activity in Central and South America as a larger middle class emerges. Cruise ship activity is high, using north-south routes, and increased excursions to the Arctic.

The tendency to travel locally is on the rise – an increase in recreational traffic at national parks and coastal and inland waterways. A lot of recreation activity tends to be focused on where the money is, which includes very healthy retirees. There is a boom of Central and South American retirement enclaves. There is an increase in ranks of retired volunteers.

Regions and Key Countries

Canada

Canada is part of AFTA and has prospered from the export of energy, food, and natural resources, especially to Asia. Many Canadians continue to maintain close ties to families and friends in China, the UK, and France, which gives Canada the reputation of being the most ‘global’ nation in the hemisphere. (“He is ‘AFTA-Euro’ or she is ‘AFTA-Asia’.”) Canada’s oil production moved steadily north, and they are now operating in the Arctic.

Mexico

Mexico is a key part of AFTA, with a rapidly growing economy, and a rapidly growing middle class. Much manufacturing moving back from Asia has set up shop in Mexico, which generated an economic boom that drew other Latin American countries to accept AFTA.

Mexicans and Panamanians joke that they seem to have gotten the job of “explaining what the Americans really mean” to other Latins in business.

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Central America & Caribbean

All of the region is in AFTA. Much manufacturing moved here and to South America from Asia in around 2013 as investors sought safer havens for their new investments. The economic benefits the U.S. offered also enticed more interest in union. The leading role of the U.S. along with Canada, Australia, and Japan within AFTA also carries the assumption that member states will accept the importance of economic and legal transparency, the rule of law, and free and fair elections.

Ironically, the strength of the first pandemic in 2013-14 in Latin America led directly to the creation of AFTA. Many of the businesses and investors that were shifting their activities from Asia to the region were so concerned by the pandemic's potential impact on Latin America that they became instrumental in the creation of the Americas Public Health and Safety Authority, or APHSA. They offered significant assistance to the Authority's public health teams and helped to fund the successful effort to control the outbreak. Both PAHO (Pan American Health Organization) and the OAS (Organization of American States) joined with these businesses and the national governments to form APHSA and, several years later, to create AFTA itself and the institutional structure that enabled the hemisphere's public and business policies to be so closely coordinated.

Mexico, Panama, and Costa Rica are the seeds for economic development in Central America. All Central American countries are benefiting from the repatriation of businesses out of Asia. Middle classes are growing, which in turn is driving legal reforms (e.g., land) and fairer treatment of indigenous populations.

In response to the pandemics, the U.S. gave no-strings-attached medicines to Cuba, and the Cubans offer public health advisory assistance to neighboring countries. The next generation of Cuban leadership emerged at the same time that lessened the strain between Cuba and the U.S. Cuba joined in AFTA in 2022, and quickly became a part of the regional economy bolstered by oil resources on the Cuban continental shelf in the Gulf of Mexico. Cuba continues to be a popular destination for European and Canadian tourists, and that linkage gives them economic independence from the U.S. influence.

There is a strong program in regional aid assistance targeted at indigenous populations and Caribbean nations, with a particular focus on resolving Haiti's continuing problems. However, Haiti would still be classified as a failed state, and migration pressure from Haiti is one of the region's standing problems. While the assistance is economic and political, the real incentive is public health. No one in the region wants the source vectors of future diseases to sprout within the region. As a result, the most devastated economies of the regions are beginning to revive. Those with the best pre-2010s infrastructure, of course, are doing the best.

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South America

Most of the region is in AFTA, with a few notable exceptions. Much manufacturing moved here and to Central America from Asia in around 2013 as investors sought safer havens for their new investments. The economic benefits the U.S. offered also enticed more interest in union. The leading role of the U.S. along with Canada, Australia, and Japan within AFTA also carries the assumption that member states will accept the importance of economic and legal transparency, the rule of law and free and fair elections.

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As the economics in South America have improved, revolutionary movements have subsided (including narcotics cartels). The nations with the weakest borders have become the entry point into the Americas for gray-area economic activity, and outright smuggling. Generally across the continent middle classes are growing, legal reforms like banking transparency and land reform are slowly taking hold, and infrastructure investment is transforming the appearance of the countries. A burgeoning regional trade has led to improvements in the entire maritime economic infrastructure. Progress is not always steady, with occasional steps backwards, as some former political elites and criminal elements do what they can to keep the "bad old days" alive.

There is AFTA-wide military integration with U.S. leadership that is focused primarily on defense missions and hemispheric security, including for regional oceans and resources. However, as tensions develop around the world, there are discussions underway concerning a more integrated expeditionary capability for the hemisphere.

The region is slowly working toward a set of labor and environmental standards that are slowly bringing South America up to U.S. standards in these areas. This effort has included the establishment of a hemispheric carbon trading market.

Venezuela exploited its huge energy reserves to remain outside AFTA and maintain very close ties with Asia. They kept selling the U.S. oil but liked to play the 'wild

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card' in the hemisphere. They are the AFTA 'maverick'. The Venezuelan government invited a Chinese military presence into the country in 2024 (air defense forces – aircraft and missiles, and the beginnings of a naval port that apparently is being designed for submarine deployments) to secure their independent reputation.

Brazil aligned economically with AFTA but retained significant non-economic independence. Brazil is not formally part of the AFTA military structure, but regularly attends meetings and exercises. The U.S. increasingly turns to Brazil to replace India in some R&D and manufacturing (pharmaceuticals, biotechnology, alternative fuels) activities. As multi-ethnic democracies, the U.S. and Brazil offered local models for other countries to follow. The U.S. and Brazil also collaborate in agriculture exports.

North Africa & Middle East

The EU and U.S. cooperated over many years (some would say strong-armed Israel) to establish a Palestinian state in the late-2010s. Ironically, this was the last major joint diplomatic effort the two regions performed as NATO was being dissolved around the same time. The Palestinian state initially eased regional tensions, but not completely. Israel, still feeling somewhat beleaguered, demanded and received an explicit guarantee of security from the U.S. as their price for agreeing to the new Palestinian state. Palestine demanded European economic support as their price for the agreement.

The neighboring Muslim states tolerated but did not welcome Israel's existence. In 2030 the Palestinians elected a militantly belligerent anti-Israeli party to power, which immediately started criticizing Israel for renegeing on a number of promises. A growing number of Arab and Muslim nations sided with the Palestinians.

U.S. withdrawal from Iraq removed another irritant. Iraq became a stable, Shi'ite-dominated non-democracy that gravitated towards Iran. Iran had nuclear knowledge and several new nuclear power plants, but no known nuclear weapons as of 2030.

Egypt and Saudi Arabia were increasingly Wahabist (fundamentalist) in outlook, which added to growing tensions with Israel. Iran, Afghanistan, and Pakistan formed an emerging fourth global region, the United Islamic Alliance (UIA), in 2027 and asserted a clearly Islamic foreign policy. It vocally supported the new Palestinian government's criticisms of Israel. Other Islamic nations in the region requested 'associate' status with the UIA. Most of the nations in this region are either democracies or populist theocracies, with a scattering of authoritarian regimes.

The Middle East/Persian Gulf was a source for oil to all comers, but each region also pursued its own energy strategy. Much but not all of the region's oil was

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bought by Greater Asia. In fact, there was growing warmth and increasing ties between China and numerous Islamic nations, which tended to follow Greater Asia's lead on many global issues.

The U.S. maintains a significant military presence in Israel and Diego Garcia.

Sub-Saharan Africa

Ravaged by pandemics and initially abandoned by the developed world in the late 2010s, Africa is a place of intense contrasts. The public health missions the EU mounted in the late-2010s eventually stabilized the pandemics, and won not a small number of local pro-EU admirers. Unfortunately, the HIV/AIDS pandemic continued to grow, and the expansion of the African HIV/AIDS pandemic feared in the early 2010s has continued. Those areas with natural resources and/or large markets tended to draw the attention of the rest of the world and thus have more stable governments and better economies. Living conditions in the other areas of the subcontinent, however, were among the most desperate in the world.

South Africa and, to a lesser extent, the West African coastal region from Senegal to Nigeria had the most robust economies and acted as magnets for population migrations. In particular, South Africa became the center for much manufacturing investment and new factories. Unfortunately, neighbors of these countries resented this success and complained that they were not sufficiently sharing their modest wealth with the rest of the continent. As these tensions rise, AFTA, the EU, and Greater Asia are starting to interfere in these emerging conflicts as each region seeks an advantage. The qualities of some African conflicts make them appear as proxy wars, possibly between some of the major regions, as regions look to safeguard against risks of strategic materials dependency by building up stockpiles. Accusations of Southern African nations serving as a remote dispute battleground for the major regions are beginning to be made in international governing forums.

South Africa has experienced tremendous pressure from impoverished inhabitants on neighboring nations crossing the national border seeking work and better life styles. Unfortunately, this occurred when the nation was in serious economic distress. Unable to care for more immigrants and concerned about the country's destitute serving as hosts for pandemics, the South African national government has sought to push both recent immigrants and the descendants of previous immigrants to return to their countries of origin. This phenomenon has spilled into national/tribal/"warlord" conflicts over control of strategic mineral reserve sites, particularly in the border region of South Africa, Zimbabwe, and Mozambique. Chinese weapons have been found on the battlegrounds of these areas, and it is speculated that they are backing South African interests in return for a promised share of their strategic minerals.

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By 2030, Africa was taking advantage of its non-aligned status and its scattered economic resources wherever and however possible. AFTA, EU, and Greater Asia vied for public opinion by starting economic development projects that frequently competed with one another and sometimes had prestige instead of development as a primary goal. Sporadic terrorist groups emerged and often disappeared after one or two incidents. Civil unrest and coups were frequent, especially in the neglected regions. A messianic movement that emerged from Central Africa set off anthrax releases in Rome, Jerusalem, and Mecca in 2023 to protest the world's lack of concern for the plight of the neediest. It continued to be tied to additional scattered terrorist-type incidents after that event.

Europe

NATO has dissolved and the U.S. security umbrella had been withdrawn from Europe around the time that AFTA was formed in 2020. However, U.S.-European ties had been loosening for some time before that point as the two sides grew increasingly apart in outlook, interests, and values.

The EU Constitution was ratified by all member states in 2021. The EU requires a functioning modern democracy as a prerequisite for entering and remaining within the organization. The EU economy was not as dynamic as Asia but the region still remained prosperous. Europe had successfully integrated Turkey into the EU, enhancing their role as a 'middleman/ honest broker'. This reputation was somewhat diminished, however, by continued social friction with the substantial Muslim immigrant communities in many European cities.

The EU has been taking advantage of 'middle-man' status between Asia and AFTA by looking for opportunities for trade everywhere. Their ability to do so was enhanced by their reputation for being less confrontational and less ideologically driven than the other two regions. European arms trade is strong with Africa/Middle East, and extremely strong with Greater Asia, which generated considerable AFTA criticism. EU-Russia trade was also extremely strong as EU sent high-tech goods to Russia for oil and natural gas.

The UK managed to retain some lower visibility strategic ties with the U.S., Canada, and Australia, including selected intelligence sharing and joint operations with U.S. military. This has been to everyone's satisfaction since the UK often acts as a middleman between the EU and AFTA on a variety of diplomatic and economic issues. Spain and, to a lesser extent, Portugal play similar roles *vis-à-vis* Latin America for the EU. However, by 2030 the EU and U.S. have in general managed to drift farther apart than at any time since World War II.

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Former Soviet Union

Russia has retained diplomatic and military independence, and often harkens back nostalgically to the ‘heyday’ of the USSR. A Russian government that is fundamentally an oligarchy has consolidated power in the traditional Russian heartland, and is looking to a future when it can exert control over Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS). Trade with the EU and Asia continues to grow, even as frictions along the border with China and unrest in Central Asia spurred disputes over resource access. The EU is a huge buyer of Russian oil and natural gas. Russia retains a respectable military capability, including a substantial ground and air force and a nuclear deterrent. It sells its weapons across the globe to anyone with cash. In many ways reminiscent of 1920s Chicago or ‘Vegas’, Russia is a hotbed of shady activities from cyber-crime and Internet gambling to arms trade and smuggling.

While much of the Russian economy has a shady character, the legitimate side of the economy is fairly strong, based not only on energy extraction, but also on the fact there are newly available natural resources as a result of the opening of the Northern Sea Route. Russia continues a very aggressive protectionist policy of their EEZ. However, there is increasing global concern over Russia’s lack of commitment to safeguard the polar environmental region.

Belarus threw in its lot with the Motherland. The Baltic States are fully integrated into the EU. The Ukraine is the latest EU member and also a confusing half-European, half-Russian mixture with frequent government changes. Politically they are the Italy of the 21st Century.

Central Asia and the Caucasus are part of the ‘outlying’ areas and usually neglected and rife with unrest (occasionally war), except for the Caspian Sea oil fields. A few states retain authoritarian strongmen rulers and sleazy reputations. Kazakhstan remained a source of constant unrest combined with intense competition for their oil exports.

China (including Taiwan, Hong Kong, etc.)

China stumbled through a real estate bust/recession and pandemics in the early-to-mid-2010s. A number of U.S., EU, and Japanese businesses and investors began to redirect their focus away from the Asian mainland, partly over fear of widespread decimation of factory workers by the pandemics. The real estate bust had revealed the inherent weaknesses in the Chinese banking structure, which relied too heavily on high-risk property speculation. Fortunately, Singapore, Hong Kong, and Taiwan banks quickly stepped in to help restore financial stability. China was then able to restart its economic growth, which was facilitated by the purchase of large numbers of functioning factories from Western companies at bargain prices during the pandemic years. But, while bringing previously Western-owned manufacturing infrastructure back online proved to be less costly and more expeditious than many

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Congagement

would have guessed, China's economic recovery was not an overnight phenomenon. The sourcing of latent demand and investment intra-regionally, to replace the partial void left by Western economic withdrawal, was measured in years, not months.

Internally, in the times following their economic struggles and pandemic threats, China's central government ruled with rather unforgiving power in efforts to retain control across the nation. At times this included very unpleasant suppressions of peasant uprisings. The populace's desperate perceived need for both security from further disease and economic opportunity, and the belief that the central government was the only realistic provider, prevented these uprisings from becoming groundswells.

China went on to resolve many old geopolitical problems by restoring a stable pro-Chinese government in North Korea and brilliantly managing a peaceful and popular reunification with Taiwan. With its enhanced prestige, China became the focal point of an increasingly dynamic 'Greater Asia' regional association that drew in South Korea and the ASEAN nations and won friends in South Asia and the Middle East. India aligned economically with Greater Asia and began numerous joint activities with China, including plans for a manned Moon base by 2030.

Greater Asia was drawn together by the Chinese example of sustained growth and economic success, as well as by resentment against the restrictions put on travel, trade, and investment by many EU, American, and Japanese companies and governments during the two pandemics of the 2010s. Greater Asia used ASEAN as the starting point for developing a new regional politically unifying institution. The Chinese government carefully projects the veneer of modern democracy in order to encourage her smaller neighbors to feel comfortable aligning within Greater Asia.

There was considerable public anger within AFTA at the continued arrival of Asian air pollution blown across the Pacific.

China leads the Greater Asian region with an activist global foreign policy supporting its interests in access to natural resources and containment of AFTA. This includes a policy on projecting naval power globally, as evidenced in its initiatives in Venezuela and its presence in the Persian Gulf in concert with the Indian Navy.



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South Asia (India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka)

South Asia mostly allied with China within Greater Asia, although India retained significant independence of action. Chinese influence helped India and neighbors (Pakistan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka) reach accommodations with one another. South Asia was both a hotbed of technological innovation and a somewhat shady source of contraband. In 2030, a radicalized Islamic government won the elections in Pakistan, which quickly joined with Iran and Afghanistan to form the United Islamic Alliance, or UIA. Other Islamic nations later requested ‘associate’ status with the new UIA. This event, and the notable Indian absence from the Venezuelan ‘adventure’, set off intense rumors about the supposed initiation of secret U.S.-India defense discussions.

Indian public policy often reflected a deep ambivalence between adopting the Greater Asian or the Western viewpoint on many issues. Growing U.S. concern over losing more white-collar jobs to India, IP protection problems, and regional loyalties led some U.S. businesses to shift their focus from India to Brazil. Again, this only further fueled Asian resentment toward the ‘West’.

North Asia (Japan, Korea)

Japan generally aligns with AFTA interests, and its proximity to Greater Asia generates both concern and tensions. Japan also sealed its borders and withdrew investments in Asia as initial reactions to the pandemics, which further alienated them from other Asians. There is frequent dialogue regarding significant rearmament within the Diet, and a nationalist feeling within Japan has been on the rise. Japan will on occasion act independently from U.S./AFTA, but rarely on key issues. Japan’s aged population and sealed borders led Japan to “buying” labor from outside the country. However, the prevailing strong nationalistic culture and lingering concerns about disease results in immigrants being subject to very rigorous screening prior to admittance into the country.

In 2017, China led a pan-Asian intervention, including medical teams, into a disease-ravaged, collapsing North Korea and restored a stable, pro-Chinese government. South Korea’s offers to help were politely declined, but a regular Chinese-South Korean governmental consultation begins. At around the same time, the U.S. withdrew a majority of its Army forces from South Korea, partly to protect the troops and their families from pandemics. These actions set off a realignment of South Korean sentiment towards China and away from the U.S. By 2030, the South Korean government has firmly aligned with China and Greater Asia and is seriously pursuing reunification. It also resented the earlier abandonment of the region by the U.S., EU, and Japan, and suffered some negative economic consequences as a result. By 2030 it was insisting that the remaining U.S. troops leave, which makes Japan very uneasy.

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Southeast Asia, Australia, New Zealand

Southeast Asia aligned economically with Greater Asia, while Australia and New Zealand stayed with AFTA. Southeast Asia – especially Indonesia, Vietnam, and Thailand – were prospering within the Greater Asian economic sphere after a sharp short-term recession during the pandemic years. Singapore is a much-envied world-class city.

Australia sealed its border for first two years of the pandemic but then jumped back into strong connections with the Greater Asian economy. It balances a continual fine line between following the AFTA lead while trying not to alienate its Southeast Asian neighbors. Rising ocean levels were beginning to threaten the viability of many small Pacific island states.

Oceania (Australia, New Zealand, and the islands north of Papua New Guinea) EEZs are under pressure from Greater Asia fishing fleets pursuing the remaining fish stocks, and other attempts at obtaining other natural resources. Some of these nations cut deals with Greater Asia, while others looked to AFTA from EEZ protection. Other illicit activities are also occurring on the islands (e.g., illegal migrant staging, narcotic production).

Arctic/Antarctic

Surging regional economic growth and a regional desire to control vital supplies have produced global resource shortages and high prices, setting off races to exploit the ‘commons’ regions (polar regions, oceans, space). The EU and Russia have recently claimed offshore Arctic mineral rights extending beyond their continental shelves. Intense opposition has arisen to their polar oil drilling from the rest of the world, based on a previous international agreement to safeguard these areas against unilateral exploitation. Polar oil exploration and drilling began, and is now expanding. Canada’s oil production moved steadily north, and they are now operating in the Arctic.

Polar ice levels have stabilized. An expansion of oil drilling in the Arctic Region is precipitating concern that deep seabed mining exploitation of the commons might soon follow. However, there is no hard evidence such activity is underway.

Cruise ship activity is high with increased excursions to the Arctic and Antarctic.

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