

9/1/2015



UNITED
STATES
COAST
GUARD

EVERGREEN IV SCENARIO: DEATH SPIRAL: EYES WIDE SHUT

Drivers

Environmental Change and Adaptation

Low: Rapid Failure. The most extreme predictions of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change came to fruition and exceeded efforts to adapt. Sea levels rose, and the frequency of super-storms increased. Adaptation has been ineffective. Global governments are struggling to keep pace with rapid environmental change.

National Stability and the Role of Government

Low: A Divided Nation. America's democratic process is fractured and only marginally effective. Political participation is at historic lows, although the regulatory and enforcement role of government continues. The exercise of governmental functions and extension of benefits is inconsistent and based on special interests that clearly select winners and losers. There is no common national vision, and society is increasingly fragmented.

Overview

The natural environment is unstable and weather conditions are increasingly severe. Extreme environmental changes displace many and impose daily hardships such as food scarcity and soaring prices. Alternative energy

Environmental change is outpacing adaptation.

Public health issues and pandemics are overwhelming the healthcare system.

The domestic food supply is severely distressed.

Government is heavily influenced by businesses and the wealthy.

There is conflict among communities and economic strata.

The lower classes are deeply dissatisfied.

Businesses and local governments take on responsibilities traditionally held by the federal government.



technologies are advancing, but they produce no apparent impact on the deteriorating climate, particularly in the face of continued high carbon emissions from developing nations. After decades of environmental agnosticism, polarized public opinion, and political paralysis, the U.S. government is hopelessly behind and has no strategy or policy to address climate change.

This is a plausible future scenario, part of a composite set designed to form planning space for foresight efforts. It is not intended to be predictive, nor does it represent the U.S. Coast Guard's assessment of the future.

The federal government is in a perpetual state of partisan deadlock, fueled by deeply divided views on entitlements, education, infrastructure, and the economy. Grassroots efforts to improve programs and policy are for naught, and citizens don't trust their representatives. Participation in the national political process is at an all-time low. Remaining functional governance is found at the state and local levels.

The government maintains a semblance of checks and balances and manages some regulatory authority and enforcement. However, the Old Boys' Club of lobbyists and the wealthy influences legislation to the benefit of a handful of corporations and interests. The gap between the wealthy and the poor is broad and growing wider, and the middle class is shrinking.

Concurrent with drastic reductions in entitlements, citizens no longer depend on or expect government to provide solutions or equitable treatment. Family and community compose the new safety net.

The American economy has also suffered from political gridlock. The U.S. is no longer the world's preeminent market. The nation's international power and influence have also diminished. Remaining international relationships are trade-based and confined to the Western Hemisphere.

Violence and crime have increased with growing desperation. Law enforcement officers work hard to maintain their legitimacy prevent complete chaos. Government enforcement efforts are sporadic and random, characterized by short-duration crackdowns interspersed with long periods of apathy. Transnational criminal organizations (TCOs) and terrorist groups increasingly focus on cyber crime. Much of this activity is intellectual property theft.

Loss of arable land has made the world more dependent on the oceans and waterways for food, water, and commerce. The maritime environment is increasingly stressed by increasing sea levels, temperatures, and pollution. Piracy has increased and targets scarce living and mineral resources.

Vignette

No Port in a Storm

The gigantic factory trawler lumbered down the Savannah River. To the east, the skies were dark, and the wind was picking up. Choppy waves were forming, even ten miles from the coast. Abilio Gale watched the landscape pass slowly, inexorably, as he leaned on the gunwale. He enjoyed the smooth ride after the rough trip from Atlanta down I-20. The highways were in such terrible condition, and the company van, loaded with twelve sailors, didn't have the best suspension. He was still sore from the trip.

- Yesterday -

“D*****! That’s twice! I want some butts!!” The driver had swerved valiantly to avoid a pothole, but slammed into another. Walt’s shirt was now soaked in scalding coffee. He regularly resorted to classic movie lines when upset.

“I wish I had a butt.” Abilio’s tailbone ached.

“I could use a whole new spine.” Phil grimaced in pain. The van ploughed through yet another one of I-20’s legendary potholes. The pavement was veritable Swiss cheese. Abilio glanced at Phil.

“Speaking of which, any luck on that front?”

“Not so much. The usual red tape and excuses.” Phil had dealt with back problems for years. He had yet to convince an insurance company to pay for surgery. He certainly wouldn’t be able to bankroll it.

“Why are you here? Didn’t you reinjure yourself last trip?”

“Yeah. I usually do. Can’t afford to stay home.” As Phil pulled out his trusty bottle of painkillers, Walt ripped off his shirt, stuffed it in his backpack, and pulled out a clean one.

“And I can’t afford new shirts every trip.”

“But you can obviously afford a new tat every trip!” The snide comment came from somewhere in the back of the van. Walt turned around and glared at everyone.

“Hey, it’s my culture, okay?!”

“So, your culture is Pacific Islander slash drunk sailor slash cartoon enthusiast slash inmate?”

“Shut up. I hate all of you.” Abilio reviewed his news app. As usual, the news was generally bad. The Army Corps had finally given up on keeping New Orleans dry. The sections below sea level were inundated, and no more could be done. According to one report, bull sharks had checked into some nice hotels, and were doing what people should have been doing in those nice hotels. New York’s subway system was likely to be the next loss. Phil glanced at the screen.

“Why do you do that to yourself?”

“I like to know what’s going on.”

“I can tell you what’s going on. Uncle Sugar is screwing us over at every opportunity. And the world is losing its mind.”

- Today -

The river was shoaling in for lack of dredging. CARGILL DESTINY had to steam slowly to keep from squatting. He doubted most of the crew knew that. He also doubted the captain knew that Abilio held a 1,600 ton master's license. He deeply inhaled the aroma of his coffee, and appreciated its warmth in his hands. He closed his eyes and imagined he was back aboard his own boat, DIAMANTINA. His dear DIAMOND had been lost in a gale, reminding him of the irony of his surname. Abilio's family always seemed to find themselves amid storms, fighting them and steered by them.

- Ten Years Earlier -

"Dad, why do you have to keep correcting me?"

"Abilio, it is pronounced 'gahl-lay,' not 'gale.' You must not abandon your heritage," Benedito Gale told his son.

"I know dad, but..."

"No 'buts.' When you were five, right after your mother's death, God rest her soul, we emigrated from Cape Verde to America. I sacrificed everything to bring you here for a better life. You don't remember, but I sold our home and my boat on the day my work permit was approved. We Gales fight, and we never give in. Don't forget who you are."

- Today -

A work permit was by no means equivalent to citizenship. Benedito's gesture of cutting all ties was a commitment akin to Cortez's burning of his own ships. It was a symbol of his determination to build a new life for himself and his son. Things had been rough in the islands, continually pounded by storms and tormented by ever-decreasing numbers of fish and tourists. While the years that followed in America proved nearly more than father and son could handle, they eventually scraped together something that resembled success: their own fishing boat, U.S. citizenship, and gradually solidifying finances.

Benedito and Abilio succeeded by doing what others would not. They sailed farther offshore to pursue the fish, stayed out longer, braved rougher seas, worked longer hours, and hired the criminals who could not find work elsewhere (and were cheaper to employ). It was not just hard work that paid off; Benedito had a flair for marketing. He sold directly to fish markets and fine restaurants, underscoring the higher quality of catch from cleaner water farther offshore, the selectivity and careful handling that could only come from a small operation, and the whole and unadulterated condition of the fish. They were a dramatic departure from the canned and flash-frozen renditions that came from the big factory trawlers. They never had a problem selling the entire haul, and frequently found themselves backordered and selling futures. When Benedito retired to their little bungalow in Savannah, Abilio sustained and built their business. He learned how to rapidly refit DIAMANTINA for different fisheries to maximize the haul and the profits. He invested in higher quality weather monitoring equipment and operated right around the storms, wasting not a day of fishing time. It was shortly after he took over the family business that Abilio met his wife.

- Eight Years Earlier. -

Abilio blinked and wondered if he had brought his delivery to the wrong restaurant. The kitchen of Toro Negro had transformed. It had gone from passably hygienic to sterile clean. It was blindingly illuminated by a phalanx of new LED lights. The chefs and dishwashers moved like dogs were snapping at their heels. The whole operation reeked of military efficiency.

“Marcus! Take over for me! I have to deal with the fishmonger.” Abilio was offended. He was a fisherman. Not a fishmonger. The commanding alto came from a dark-skinned woman in crisp chef whites. Her hair was pulled back severely in a perfect bun beneath her toque. As she approached, green eyes flashing in annoyance at the interruption, he could read the words embroidered on her jacket. Cecilia Silva. Sous Chef. She wasted no time on niceties.

“Thirty dollars per pound.”

“What?! We normally get forty!”

“You normally work with an idiot, whom I tossed out.” Abilio was dismayed. Here was the definition of “tough customer.”

“This is the highest quality you can get. It’s worth at least forty-five.” She looked at the fish for the first time. Her eyes widened. Cecilia was clearly not accustomed to the top-end catch the Gales hauled in.

“Where did you find them?”

“Trade secret. We leverage cutting-edge technology.” He couldn’t hide his grin. She couldn’t miss his facetious tone.

“Did you steal them?”

“Hurricanes. They cause massive upwelling. We follow the storms.” Cecilia actually appeared impressed. Abilio sensed that wasn’t a common expression for her.

“Alright. That’s worth forty.”

- Today -

Upwelling: a prime consideration.



With the same restless energy that brought her family from Brazil before she was born, Cecilia put herself through graduate school, studying political science. She funded her own education, never accepting a penny in loans. Her culinary skill, ambition, and natural command caught Abilio’s eye. His work ethic, business flair, and mindful attention to detail caught hers.

Abilio and Cecilia Gale were a formidable team. They constantly faced down challenges together, and never lost their faith in each other. Not when Cecilia was perpetually stonewalled from politics due to her lack of connections or wealth. Not when DIAMANTINA was lost in the storm that surprised everyone. Not even when the Gales lost their third child to Sudden Infant Death Syndrome.

They had become accustomed to making tough choices, always guided by the quest to put their children on better footing. So they decided to invest the insurance payout for DIAMANTINA into a college fund. The weather wasn't getting any better, and it was a miracle that Abilio hadn't been killed. With Cecilia working full time as neighborhood watch captain and their children's educator vis-à-vis the dismal public education system, Abilio's survival and a steady paycheck were critical. So he had gone to work for Cargill, aboard the same type of floating monstrosity he had lamented as part of his sales pitch. Benedito sold his little house in Savannah while there was still something to sell. He wasn't sure it would survive another flood. He moved in with his children and grandchildren and used his considerable carpentry skills to improve their little apartment. Benedito's handy work found favor throughout the complex and brought in extra income.

Cecilia was exceptionally resourceful. She started indoor gardening years back after produce became prohibitively expensive. With a few seeds purchased from a genetic engineering lab, cast-off pots found in dumpsters behind fancy hotels and condominiums, and soil literally scraped together from parks during several midnight runs, Cecilia had more than halved the family grocery bill. She and Benedito designed and built frames for tower gardens that enabled her to multiply production without taking up additional space.

Abilio resented that the world outside their suburban Atlanta complex didn't recognize Cecilia's talent. She was a master of communicating, connecting, and organizing people. When the young family first arrived, the residents of mostly European descent, were suspicious and confused. They didn't know what to make of the men with dark African skin, light brown hair, and alarmingly bright blue eyes, or the bronze Brazilian woman with opaline green ones. The Gales still laughed at how their mixed ancestry had confused the would-be racists. But their neighbors eventually realized that the dark and very proud family would not be moving to the African Quarter in the sprawling township. Then Cecilia succeeded in establishing a farmers' market, internet cooperative, and improved security measures when all other attempts had failed. Benedito's carpentry more than offset the landlord's apathy. Within a few months, their neighbors decided that the Gales were indispensable.

Cecilia left a trail of construction in her wake. There was hardly an apartment without a tower garden, and people from outside the complex came to shop the community's monthly Home Farmers' Market for produce. Shares of fruit and vegetables were held back as bribes for the police to provide extra patrols and fast responses, and Cecilia's home school now educated fifteen children in addition to her own, all with access to satellite internet for their research. What a mayor she would have made. Better yet, governor. With Cecilia on his side, Abilio knew he would succeed. Coffee finished, he broke out of his reverie. It was time to round up his division and review their work schedule for this trip. Last time, they ran the canning line.

This time, they would be on security. He really hoped the trawler didn't encounter any pirates. Cargill's standing orders were "shoot on sight." Said orders were executed three times over the past six months. Those pirates were just starving people who didn't have the good fortune to live in the same apartment complex as Cecilia Gale.

As he turned to open the door into the superstructure, Abilio had a clear view to the east, where the ocean was now visible. It was an eerie green under a slate gray sky, whitecaps growing larger as they rolled and crashed their way to the horizon. Into another storm.

Dimensions

Technology

Technological education and skills are mostly sourced outside the U.S. Consequently, the nation suffers chronic shortages in the high tech workforce. This compromises America's ability to compete in the technological innovation field.

Government is a non-contributor in the fight against climate change. Concerned citizens, grassroots organizations, and corporations undertake their own efforts and leverage new technology. Genetically modified crops increase resilience and food production. Satellite systems map the sea floor and track fish and other resources. Ships and buildings are modified to withstand severe weather conditions.

Computers, tablets, and smart phones are ubiquitous. Cost of these devices is low, and frequent new model releases make theft unprofitable. Internet access is commonplace, and people are dependent on it for communication, entertainment, and information in their daily lives.

Only the wealthy have access to advanced technology that enhances daily life, such as drones, robotics, and automation. This field includes innovations that reduced the impact of storms and enable people to maintain normalcy during severe weather. In essence, they have risen above the climate. This has further widened the gap between classes and created more tension.

Robotics, unmanned systems, and advanced computing are becoming ever more critical in a variety of military, public safety, and commercial applications. The U.S. armed forces have downsized as human operators are replaced with robots. Deliveries, structural maintenance and inspections, and security operations are now the domain of drones. Businesses utilize intelligence-gathering technology and big data analysis to optimize marketing. Police leverage predictive crime algorithms to focus limited resources.

Maritime safety and search and rescue operations are heavily augmented by advanced technology. Demand for accurate weather forecasting drives advances in modeling. Navigation technologies grow more precise and are widely distributed. Rescue missions are well targeted and efficient, with innovation in tracking and detection.

Cyber

Lack of qualified personnel or sufficient resources compromises government cyber security, and its systems remain at risk. Authorities and policymakers have given up on competing with rapidly advancing adversaries and dedicate their limited resources elsewhere. TCOs take advantage of America's unfocused policy and fragmented bureaucracy to target the nation's cyber infrastructure.

The armed forces are the exception to this rule. Department of Defense systems are at the forefront of network security and have not suffered a breach in years. The DOD provides shared services to a handful of civil agencies in need of reliable cyber infrastructure.

The private sector has invested in cyber security, but still suffers some attacks. Those corporations that can afford heavy investment in security experience the fewest breaches.

TCOs are ubiquitous in their use of technology and computers. Hackers in their employ launch intellectual theft attacks, particularly toward businesses developing resource solutions and profitable technology.

The government and businesses monitor cyber space vigilantly; social media, in particular. This does not stop individuals and organizations from planning and orchestrating criminal activity online after the style of the Arab Spring uprisings.

Maritime Environment

All nations are highly dependent on the Marine Transportation System (MTS) for moving basic goods such as food and water. The MTS is increasingly stressed by decaying infrastructure, crime, and environmental changes. It requires constant repair. The shipping footprint has expanded as the warming global climate opens up new trade routes in the Arctic. China and Russia use their icebreaker fleets to maintain the northern routes year round. Private corporations spearhead sea floor mapping on new routes.

Advances in automation enable many ships to be navigated from afar. Robotics, surveillance systems, and automated locks provide precision and security to shipping. Still, the industry has become more hazardous. Climate change is making tides and currents less predictable, and new construction such as oil rigs, wind farms, and offshore port facilities present hazards to navigation on some legacy routes. The latter have produced environmental consequences as industrial facilities and their pollution are forced on the oceans.

Smuggling and piracy surge on domestic and international waters, rendering vessels of all kinds increasingly vulnerable to attacks and theft by TCOs, pirates, and the desperate. Even so, the maritime domain is a primary mode of transportation for people displaced by severe weather. They are willing to travel long distances and brave weather and criminals to find work and better living conditions.

The workload for maritime law enforcement organizations has increased significantly. They monitor waterways for criminal activity and concentrate their limited resources against TCOs, pirates, and smugglers. Shipping companies and private vessels disregard International Maritime Organization regulations against armed crews and take their own security measures.

Increased crime has rendered maritime recreational travel almost nonexistent. Cruise ships have become an endangered species. Boating on inland rivers and lakes has significantly dwindled. It is now restricted to the wealthy, who boat for recreation, and those who scrape together a living on the water.

The maritime environment is heavily polluted due to increased traffic, debris, and contaminated runoff from coastal and inland pollutants. Increased storms have particularly driven the latter. Pollution enforcement is sporadic, and repercussions for perpetrators are insufficient for true accountability or deterrence. There are technological advances designed to combat marine pollution, but they cannot keep up with the rate of contamination.

Fish migration patterns are moving farther offshore with increasing ocean temperatures, acidification, and pollution. Stocks are diminishing with overexploitation and becoming less suitable for food as they absorb toxins. Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) management stresses agencies at the local, regional, and national levels. Federal and some state forces focus on the offshore regions, while municipalities and private sector entities protect the nearshore zones.

Climate Resiliency

Environmental regulation enforcement is publicized as the government's highest priority, but lack of action undermines the message and encourages deviations. Policy tends to benefit a handful of corporations vice the environment, and disagreement over approaches and solutions creates gridlock. Eco-terrorism and environmental activism become more common.

The occasional policy change or government response is outpaced by environmental change. Rapidly rising sea levels, extended droughts, and weather-related food and water shortages are the most significant destabilizing factors today. Agrarian societies are impacted most deeply.

Historically calm regions now regularly experience severe weather. There are extended droughts in the heartland, tornadoes in the littoral South, typhoons in the Pacific Northwest, and significant portions of coastal cities such as New Orleans, Miami, and New York are inundated. Populations are shifting inland. Coastal areas are depopulating, but cities such as Lexington, Kentucky; Boise, Idaho; and Helena, Montana are experiencing major growth.

While climate change renders some previously fertile land unusable, other areas that never previously supported agriculture are now arable. Crop success is dependent on well-designed genetic engineering. Technological advances enhance climate resiliency, and indoor farming is a new norm.

Private entities fund code plus construction and retrofits to produce structures that will withstand severe weather. Inundated coastal subway systems are being replaced by elevated mass transit. Nations struggle to achieve true preparedness for frequent, major storms.

Governance and Politics

Domestic politics are usually in gridlock, with votes strictly along party lines. There is a lack of leadership at the national level. State and municipal governments are heavily burdened with the effort to maintain law and order and provide what services they can. The criminal justice system is overwhelmed, and many petty criminals are necessarily released without charge. Few cases go before the Supreme Court, due to judicial disorganization and public apathy toward high level social issues.

The government workforce is the smallest it has been in decades, and there are few incentives for federal employment. Its weakened and ineffective state, negative image, and lack of benefits hinder the government in competing for quality employees. Government employment is frequently a second or part-time career for those with other incomes. These employees are not highly motivated.

Funds for government programs such as Social Security, Medicare, and Medicaid are drying up. People who depend on those benefits see a drastic decline in their standard of living and stop relying on their government. They turn instead to private sector entities. Charities and citizens' groups play an increasingly prominent role in social welfare.

Business has a close relationship with the government. Corporations obtain tax exemptions in exchange for providing government services and are among the few parties that benefit from current policies.

Extralegal activity is the new normalcy. Individuals take advantage of leadership and enforcement vacuums. Criminal organizations protect illegitimate businesses with mercenary forces. They extort and exploit corrupt officials. Some communities form vigilante organizations to protect themselves against gangs and individual criminals.

Culture and Society

The U.S. population is disenfranchised and increasingly frustrated with federal inaction. Americans hate their government, but remain committed to the founding ideals of their country. Most have returned to the traditional values of family and community preeminence. These units are once again the primary source of social support.

Wealthier nations see an increase in immigration as people are drawn to their technology for protection against severe storms, food scarcity, and disease. The gap between wealthy and poor nations consequently increases.

Domestic population migration is driven by weather. Refugee camps are forming around cities like Jackson, Mississippi, and Richmond, Virginia, where coastal refugees converge to escape major weather disasters. Only the wealthy can afford to live in the coastal cities, on account of additional construction costs, strict building codes, and high insurance premiums.

Public health challenges are rampant. Life expectancy is decreasing, with a loss of 2% in the U.S. Disease epidemics such as influenza are more common and more lethal. High pollution levels and increasingly contaminated food and water sicken or at least endanger the population. Health care is grossly inadequate.

The wealthiest Americans comprise the smallest portion of the population that they ever have, and their comparative wealth is reduced as survival of business and individual becomes far more expensive. They live even more insular lives in an effort to maintain the style to which they are accustomed.

The middle class is evaporating and being replaced by the new normalcy: 67% of citizens now survive below what used to be considered the poverty line. They have no realistic expectation of improving their economic circumstances. The poorest suffer from high unemployment, low morale, inability to meet basic needs, and inadequate education. Crime and violence increase as access to food and water becomes a priority. People do not focus on politics; they are primarily concerned with survival. There is a perception of unfairness, and general disgust with the government is widespread. Extremists, revolutionaries, and gangs are gaining credibility as they deliver services formerly provided by the government.

On the upside, many people are increasingly self-reliant and resourceful. There is a return to the village mentality as communities manage their own security, farm collectively, and share resources. They meet their children's basic education needs with cheap technology and widely available information. While these attributes enable survival and even an improved quality of life, they do not translate to upward social mobility.

Energy Revolution

The government's limited legislative and executive capacity is focused on addressing natural disasters, aging infrastructure, and stressed natural resources, potable water, and food supplies. Little attention is given to the petroleum industry.

All nations are exploring alternative energy. However, discovery of new oil wells dampened the sense of urgency to develop sustainable technology. Those reservoirs are proving as finite as their forbears as industry draws on them heavily, and petroleum prices are once again increasing. Individual households reduce their energy consumption as people simplify their lifestyles, but large corporations burn oil at their historic levels.

Economy and Commerce

America's Gross Domestic Product has fallen. The U.S. economy has flatlined and the stock market has fallen. National debt is accumulating at an accelerating rate, and defense, foreign aid, and domestic programs suffer massive cuts. Remaining wealth lies in the private sector.

The U.S. economy is stressed by environmental dynamics that create scarcity. The costs of food, health care, and oil have risen dramatically. Personal spending is down, and most income is spent on necessities. Gray and black markets expand in response to the population's basic needs. TCOs thrive and exhibit large regional footprints.

Reduced spending on durable goods and luxury items is more than offset by the booming construction industry, with the perpetual need for repairs and retrofits. Many of these are funded by interested businesses, as insurance companies are unable to cover all damages produced by frequent natural disasters.

International Cooperation and Relationships

Most nations turn their attention inward to deal with the domestic impacts of dramatic climate change. International engagement and cooperation are limited to focus on regional environmental and ecosystem management. Americans are preoccupied with the tribulations of daily life and generally have no interest in foreign affairs.

The U.S. has international treaties and trade agreements with other countries, but is no longer a major player in the international community. America relies heavily on North and South American nations for trade. Competitors such as China and Russia are taking advantage of new Arctic trade routes to become major players in the international economy.

Nations that lack resources have little authority either domestically or internationally. They are likely to prohibit exports of scarce materials, or are able to export such a small amount that the profits have little financial impact. These nations continue to fall in the estimation of the world community, while the gap between nations rich in resources and those that are not continues to widen.

The U.S. is not engaged overseas, but remains vulnerable to terrorist attack. The nation maintains a strong domestic counterterrorism program. Attacks are more likely to be cyber, rather than kinetic. Another most-concerning crime, both anticipated and actual, is human trafficking. The frequency of this activity increases, straining limited enforcement and border patrol organizations.

Western Hemisphere

Minimal government involvement and major national instability in weak states enable TCOs to enjoy increased business opportunities and expanding influence. They manipulate and control weak governments and access strategic resources. Smaller countries in Central America devolve into complete chaos subsequent to TCO interference and are unable to participate in the economic development of the Western Hemisphere. These nations are isolated and carry out their struggles alone.

NATO has dissolved, and the primary U.S. treaty organization is the Western Hemisphere Coalition, which includes most of South, Central, and North America. The WHC is roughly equal in economic scope to the European Union and is mainly concerned with commerce.

Canada and Mexico collaborate with the U.S. to address food supply problems. Immigration from Mexico increases as the country's resources dwindle.

The merchant fleet is vulnerable to piracy. Unfortunately, the WHC lacks the resources to provide optimal security throughout shipping lanes and EEZs. Most vessels carry private security forces, and hijacking insurance is a lucrative business.

Arctic

With the increase in temperatures and decrease in ice, Arctic sea lanes are now open year-round. Vigorous shipping and oil exploration now characterize the region. State and non-state actors are engaged in heavy competition for living and mineral resources, with Russia and China taking more than their fair share. Expanding employment opportunities have generated population migration to the Arctic.

U.S. interests in the Arctic belong primarily to private sector actors, who act as government proxies in case of territorial stakes or disputes. Thus far, they have profited handsomely from their efforts.

The warming climate produces arable land in Arctic regions for the first time in human history. New agricultural enterprises are emerging on the north slopes of the arctic nations. Fish migration patterns have shifted closer to the poles, opening new fisheries in the regions.

Geopolitical Situation

U.S. political paralysis reduces the nation's influence in international fora and encourages other countries to make power grabs. America is operating at minimal capacity to stave off potential usurpers in these bodies. The U.S. military does not enjoy the conventional dominance it once did, but remains comparatively stronger than other countries' armies. Defense is most formidable in the cyber realm. America's strong ties with Canada and Mexico discourage domestic or foreign military action against the homeland. The military and federal law enforcement focus on controlling migration and preventing terrorism and large scale criminal in the United States. They are also frequently involved in disaster response.

Most subtropical, equatorial, and developing nations are suffering migration crises. Those physically displaced by changing sea levels and weather patterns, and those looking for means to improve their personal circumstances, form chaotic human tides moving in every direction. While the immigration crisis of '15 primarily affected Europe, the current problems find desperate migrants arriving in Russia, China, and Canada, in addition to the Eurozone. No country is effectively dealing with the influx to any appreciable extent.

Disease spreads with migrating refugee populations. Governments provide little assistance for these minor pandemics, and little action beyond screening and quarantine. People depend on private organizations and sometimes even criminal organizations to render aid.

Three large caliphates have formed and are constantly at war, exacerbating the world immigrant crisis. They are spreading to Africa, which is already ravaged by conflict and famine. The international community is taking no action to contain them, provided they do not significantly threaten the most developed nations. Currently, they are content to expand into unstable and undefended areas.

The world's littoral and island nations are in desperate straits with rising sea levels and increasingly violent weather. Some Pacific islands and atolls have been abandoned, and the governments of the Philippines, Micronesia, Indonesia, and American Samoa are preoccupied with preventing their homelands from physically disappearing.

Japan, South Korea, and Taiwan are on the cutting edge of environmental engineering and are redeveloping their urban areas to withstand severe weather. However, heavy urbanization and hazardous trade routes have negatively affected their food and raw material supplies and damaged their economies.

China and Russia have all but ceded their coastal areas, focusing instead to defend and bolster their interior agricultural and industrial assets. North Korea is all but dead as a nation. Its dictatorial government has been completely ineffective in responding to environmental change, and its people have finally had enough, abandoning the nation in droves. Even work camp guards have fled, leaving the gates open on their way out.



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