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Dude, Where's My Sovereignty?

[dimension states]

[graphic]

Summary

The United States in the future is a gloomy place. It's not a depression, but we've definitely lost our mojo. An endless series of gridlocked Congresses and impotent administrations failed to arrive at anything like the "grand bargain" needed to fund the Baby Boom retirements and maintain fiscal sanity. So the government maintained the old benefit levels, but paid them off in inflated-away dollars, dissipating our global influence and leaving it to the states and individual families to handle their hordes of elderly. The federal government is seen as ineffectual and underfunded, and states do many things that used to be strictly federal jurisdiction. Some states, those with natural resources or technological prowess, do better than others, but all are in tougher shape than they were a few decades ago. Globally, international business elites and a small group of countries exert influence to avoid what had seemed to be inevitable resource-extraction anarchy in the global commons. Some resources have been severely depleted, but this global elite, with little American help, has kept the worst from happening in the world's oceans, sea lanes and other non-sovereign spaces, and has therefore gained power and prestige at America's expense.



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“Come on, Grandpa,” Aidan shouted from the car. “We’re already running late. We have to beat the traffic to the interstate!”

I wincing as I heard my own voice in his. Or maybe it was my father’s voice? I caught my father wincing too – maybe recognizing *his* voice. Or maybe it was just “the lumbago,” as he called it. As I guided him from the grim-looking state Elderly Residence toward the car, he lifted his head toward the source of the shout.

“We’re not going in *that!*” he said.

“Yes, we are going in that,” I answered wearily.

“Indian piece of junk,” he grumbled. “Even my bony rear end can’t fit in the back of that thing.”

“You can sit in the front,” I said.

“Awww!” yelped Aidan.

“You can use the multimedia in back,” I said sternly.

“Ohhh...why can’t Grandpa use the multimedia?”

“Because he doesn’t know how, and he’s not interested,” my wife quickly said from the back seat, tensing up.

She neglected to add that the last time he had used the multimedia headset, somehow he had ordered just about every “coming-of-age” movie from back in the 1980s, as well as some less savory stuff, and how we were surprised the next month by a very large bill that we were still paying off. Well, it wasn’t his fault, the old geezer... though plenty of other things were, I thought, as I deposited him in the front seat.

“All right, let’s go to the ocean,” I said as I got into the driver’s side of our nine year-old Tata Aria SUV.

My son expelled a mighty “Yessss!” I smiled. Aidan had never seen the ocean. Aidan had hardly been on a real, non-“virtual” vacation at all in the entire decade of his existence, poor kid. And he deserved it, if anyone did anymore. How my wife and I had lucked into such a well-behaved and happy child was a topic of mostly unspoken wonder between us. We had both been lucky enough to obtain decent (if modest-paying) jobs with US affiliates of foreign corporations in our city, a truly rare achievement in these days of persistent stagflation and high unemployment. Mine was with a Chinese multinational conglomerate that made most of its US-sourced money mining coal via



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mountaintop removal in Appalachia. My wife worked as an accountant for a Latin American aircraft manufacturer. We both needed vacations, but Aidan was the one who really deserved it.

Aidan settled into the back seat next to my wife. But as we got onto the interstate, and I concentrated on avoiding the potholes, I noticed that Aidan had not put on his multimedia headset, but instead was staring at the bald spot bouncing around in front of him.

“Grandpa,” he finally said.

“Huh?” My father jerked awake.

“Did you ever go to the ocean?”

“Did I ever go to the ocean?” my father answered. “I was born in the ocean.”

“He’s kidding,” I said to Aidan. “He’s exaggerating.”

“Not by much,” my father said.

“Where were you born?” Aidan asked.

“I was born in Boston,” my dad said. “You know where that is?”

“Massachusetts,” Aidan chirped.

“That’s right,” Grandpa said. “I guess that on-line home corporate-sponsored schooling isn’t a complete waste of time.”

“Jim,” my wife said nervously.

“Come on now, Dad,” I interjected. “Aidan’s not home-schooled. They just do a lot more education on line now, to save money. Without the corporations being involved, half this country would fall to pieces. And they’ve done studies that show that it’s more effective than sitting in a big classroom.”

“Oh, they’ve done *studies*,” Grandpa sneered. “Let me ask you this. You think the guys who did those studies – ”

“Women,” my wife interjected, unheard.

“ – got their PhDs hooked up to some kind of goofy gadget?”



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I didn't answer. He was on a roll.

"Well, when I was born in Boston, we didn't have to wear helmets to get educated."

"How did you learn, then, Grandpa?"

"We all sat in a classroom and had human teachers."

"Oh, we do that a couple of times every year, Grandpa!" Aidan said.

"Well, we did it every day," Grandpa said. "We didn't need any 'Socialization' classes, neither."

"You know that these days public schools can't afford to have all the kids in every day," my wife said.

"I bet they still do in Boston," he responded.

"Well, everyone knows Massachusetts is a more affluent state, unlike ours," she said. "They can afford full-time dedicated school facilities. Our state can't."

The car suddenly swerved to avoid a gigantic van-swallowing pothole. And they can afford decent roads in Massachusetts too, I thought to myself.

"How I ever ended up in this flatlander state is beyond me."

Well, it wasn't beyond me. My dad had had a great life as a member of the "Biggest Generation," the Baby Boomers who had been reared by the self-sacrificing World War II and Korea generation, had sat out their war ingesting substances on campus while getting degrees in the liberal arts, and had generally consumed their way through life, as far as I could see. Then as they approached retirement and there wasn't enough cash in the kitty, they started screaming about "the debt," while simultaneously voting against any Congressional candidate who voted to rein in borrowing, raise taxes, or cut spending that might have addressed the shortfall. The predictable result was a slow-motion fiscal train wreck that stunted the economy, destroyed the value of the dollar, and rendered their precious benefits next to worthless.

Which is where we came in. My wife and I were struggling to make our way with degrees from reputable second-tier colleges (it seemed only the elite ever got into the "top" institutions anymore), making a life as new parents in a small apartment in a less-than-fashionable state, when reports began trickling in of odd behavior on the part of my father. By then widowed and in his late 70s, he had seemed perfectly self-sufficient, until I got the call from my sister that he'd been picked up by the police, calling them "jack-



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booted thugs,” telling them he “wasn’t holding,” and asking for directions to Burning Man.

My sister and I quickly ascertained that, contrary to our fond expectations, dad was completely broke. Since she was then in the process of transitioning, as so many high achievers have these days, to an overseas post with a well-heeled corporate-affiliated Non-Governmental Organization, in her case working on environmental issues in Brazil, I volunteered to find a place for Dad near us. Which might not have been the brainiest move, I now considered, as I swerved to avoid another pothole. After all, in Massachusetts, at least the facilities for indigent elderly were better, thanks to the corporate support of all those Route 128 high-tech firms. And Dad passed the residency requirement. But I was not going to leave him all alone in an institution with no relatives around, even one that was superior to the one he was in. And neither my wife nor I could get a job in his state, so this was the way it was – we were still in our apartment, and I was still talking him out of hitchhiking to Cancun every couple of weekends.

It was a drama that had probably played itself out fifty million times all around the country. Congress squabbled, political battle lines had hardened until they fossilized, and there seemed to be no way to get the feds to do anything about this whole system that was crashing around their heads. Meanwhile, the rest of the world was moving ahead while we pulled into our shells like turtles, pulling our military back home from the Middle East and cutting all kinds of federal spending. Asia was steaming past us; even Europe and South America – and especially Canada – were looking good. Vancouver sometimes sounded like heaven to me. I wondered what it might be like to live near mountains and ocean, in a place where crime and the general slide into squalor weren’t right in your face all the time, and the roads didn’t have giant potholes to swerve past (“Sorry, again.”) A bunch of my friends had even left for Canada – one or two only quasi-legally.

They didn’t have Dad to worry about, though.

“So you were born in the ocean?” The boy’s voice was a welcome wake-up call in the middle of the night. My eyes widened, scanning for Pennsylvania potholes. Half the streetlights on this turnpike were dead, or maybe just turned off to save money.

“Not really *in* the ocean. But darned near it.”

“So did you go to the beach when you were a boy?”

“Every day, in the summer. My parents had a house on the Cape, before it got ruined.”

“What happened to it?”



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He made a dismissive wave, as if to banish thoughts of a lifetime's worth of waste and bad decisions.

"Is it still there?"

"No. They tore it down and someone built a much larger house in its place. Some dot-com millionaire."

"What's dot-com?"

"Dot-com was the story of our lives. Big hopes, because we're so much smarter, everything is going to get faster, cheaper, better, the future's so bright that you have to wear shades... and then it all goes poof."

"Dad, did you go to the beach when you were a boy?"

"Not as much as your grandfather. A few times," I answered. I didn't mention the family mythology of the Fall: a long, multi-generational tumble from financial grace, leisure, and ease that had been pounded into me and my sister throughout our childhoods. *No, we can't go to the Cape anymore: the house is gone, why bother stirring up your father's bad memories, this beach up here is fine.* But it wasn't fine. It was crowded and seaweedy and full of paper cups and plastic water bottles, and it was often closed by order of the Health Department. I had never actually been to the Cape myself, despite growing up just an hour or two away.

Aidan turned back to my father. "What was the ocean like?"

"It was... infinite. It was full of fish. I used to go out with my uncle on his fishing boat and we'd catch all kinds of fish. Stripers. Sometimes even bluefin tuna."

"Bluefin tuna? Isn't that wrong? I thought it's bad to fish them."

"Not back then. Or at least, they never told us. We'd catch bigeye tuna and cod and pollock and scrod and bluefish. Then we'd take them back to the cottage and my mother would cook them up. We'd give the rest to the neighbors, and sometimes they would give us some when they had a good catch. And then there were the clambakes. The Holy Ghost Club in Mattapoisett had a great one every year."

"You had clambakes with ghosts?"

My father rattled on, disregarding this. "And the beaches were magic. Big, wide, blinding white sand, stretching out until you couldn't make out the end in the shimmering



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heat. You'd look out to sea and it was... infinity. Just water and sky and a white cloud, and maybe some boats." He seemed lost in a reverie.

There was no infinity in my beach, I thought. Nor in my childhood, nor Aidan's. I decided to break in here. "It might not be exactly like you remember, Pop."

"What are you talking about?" he responded crankily, as if I had ejected him from a state of bliss.

"Well, you have to remember, the Cape is a constantly changing geological phenomenon," I said. "There's been a lot of erosion what with that huge hurricane a few years back, and sea levels rising, and climate change and all that."

"Climate change and all that," he snapped. "Bunch of hogwash. Climate's always been changing. It's all about sunspots and such. Some things don't change. The ocean is forever and it's too big for us to spoil. Don't be disappointing the boy."

I let it go as we sped through the blackness toward New Jersey.

The traffic was a mess as we approached the Sagamore Bridge some time after a gray dawn. We had been held up at the Massachusetts border for twenty minutes; the state cop thought we were here to dump Dad back onto the generous taxpayers of the Commonwealth. Not that the idea had never occurred to me, but we had signed away his rights to those benefits when we took him back west. After a bit we rustled his papers out of the back hatch and he let us go. "Enjoy your visit," he said from behind his reflector shades. Actually, we had been pretty lucky. We had passed five state borders, and only at this last one had we been stopped. It can be easier to get into Canada than California these days.

"Why didn't you take the Bourne Bridge?" my father asked irritably, as he awoke from a restless slumber. "I should be driving."

"The Bourne Bridge is out," I informed him. "Has been for a couple of years. They are rebuilding it. It collapsed, remember?" I vaguely recalled the newspaper reports at the time: yet another bridge collapse, one of dozens over the past couple of decades, but notable in that most of the others seemed to be in the Midwest or South. Although Massachusetts was supposed to be one of the richer states, a decision had been made to concentrate its infrastructure investment into more business-friendly areas: its high-tech corridor, university facilities, and commercial port infrastructure. With the tourism business in America in what appeared to be a permanent and general slump, bridge repair



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over the Cape Cod Canal was clearly a lower priority. Decades ago, the feds would have rebuilt it. Fat chance of that now, with a permanently gridlocked Congress.

And yet, despite the crawling traffic snaking over the Sagamore, as we moved across, I felt a sense of excitement, of the new, of possibilities. *This is my first time over the bridge and onto the Cape*, I thought, and looking back at Aidan straining upward to look down on the Canal out his back seat window, I could see that he felt the same way. Maybe this would be good for him. Maybe there really was infinity over that bridge. Maybe what I had been missing my whole life was on the other side – a sense of infinite possibility, a sense of optimism, a belief that the future really could be better than the past.

Aidan leaned forward and down to see the rusty sign over the bridge. “Sag-a-more Bridge 1933-1935,” he sounded out as we crawled along. “Were you there when they built it, Grandpa?”

A choking laugh broke from my father’s throat. “That’s good,” he said after recovering. “No, not quite. My father was a baby back then.”

Eventually, we made it over to the other side. “We’re here,” I said. “We are officially on Cape Cod.” Aidan cheered; my wife stirred in the back seat and smiled. My father stared straight ahead, apprehensively.

If I had expected instantaneous views of the ocean, I was disappointed; Route 6 was bordered by thick stands of trees on both sides. We drove on in silence as the navigation system told me where to go.

As we approached the exit for the motel, I suddenly said, “Pop, what do you say we go see your old house.”

“What?” he answered, in disbelief. “That house has been gone since... since the disco era.”

“Yeah, I know,” I said. “But let’s go see where it was. I’ve never been there.”

“YEAH!” Aidan said. “I want to see it too!”

“Can’t we stop at the motel first?” my wife chimed in, blearily.

I turned to her. “I’d really like to see it,” I said. She saw the look in my eye and leaned her head back and closed her eyes.



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“Well, go to the next exit,” my father said. He seemed agitated, and I could not tell whether that was good or bad.

In a few minutes we were driving past what appeared to be an inlet or estuary of some sort. It was studded with what appeared to be floating docks with no boats around them, with day-glow orange buoys and warning signs:

NORTHEAST CORPORATE AQUACULTURE CONSORTIUM
A PUBLIC/PRIVATE PARTNERSHIP WITH THE COMMONWEALTH OF
MASSACHUSETTS
KEEP 200M AWAY
NO WAKE

“What is all this?” my father asked no one in particular.

“Don’t ask me,” I said.

“I don’t recognize this... the roads have changed since I was a boy.”

“Maybe the storm surges knocked out the roads.”

“Let’s go to the harbor. It must be up there.”

As we drove further, my father’s mystification increased. “Where’s the harbor?” he asked a passerby. The woman simply shrugged. “I don’t know of a harbor around here,” she said. “Maybe you’re thinking of the harbor they moved inland? The one that got smashed in the hurricane? I don’t think you can go there anyway. It’s restricted to some international organization studying clams or something. You need a badge.”

We drove on in silence until my father said, “There’s the sign for the beach! The house must be over there!”

A minute or two later, we pulled up to a row of decrepit abandoned houses. Clearly at one time they had been much farther from the water. My father opened his door and got out. Aidan did the same. I opened my door and my wife mouthed, “Watch out for the boy.” I nodded, and the three of us walked toward the houses.

“It says ‘No Trespassing, By Order of the Something Foundation,’” Aidan informed us.

My father walked on despite this, mesmerized. I followed, grasping Aidan’s hand as I did so.

“My beach,” my father muttered. “My beach is gone.”



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I looked out. “There’s a beach there,” I said.

“Not like it used to be,” he said. “It used to be like this.” He spread his arms wide. “A quarter-mile wide. And all white sand. The water... it’s so much farther up here.”

“Are you sure you aren’t remembering the beach as bigger than it was, because you were a kid?” I asked. “Or maybe this isn’t even the right beach.” But I already knew the truth.

“No,” he answered simply, after a moment’s staring. He pointed to the wreckage of some sort of structure near the waterline. “That was the changing house,” he said. He pointed further down the shore, to another decaying wooden structure. “That was the Fried Clam shack.” And then his finger moved to the next building, a hulk of gray rotting wood, and stayed there, and he started to convulse slightly.

At first I thought he was crying, but then something rasping that was obviously meant as a laugh became audible. Aidan looked at me, a little worried.

“What is it?” I asked.

“It’s the dot-com millionaire’s house,” he said, and he laughed again, this time for a minute or more. Then he sat down on a nearby log, his elbows on his knees and his fists on his jaw.

“This is what it’s all come to,” he said, and laughed again, this time a bit more sorrowfully. He gestured out onto the crowded water. No swimmers, but more floating dock-like structures, more buoys, more warning signs, some wind farms in the distance. A muggy day, a cloudy sky; some stinging flies beginning to nip at us.

“Where’s my beach?” he asked, simply. I didn’t have an answer.

Aidan sidled up to me as we shuffled slowly toward the car. “Is this where the ghosts were?”

We drove back to the motel in silence until my father muttered, “How do you use up infinity?”

I thought back on the past, how I was born into an America that was called a “hyperpower,” that bestrode the earth as a colossus, the envy of the world, whose corporations penetrated every last crevice of the world economy, whose military was feared and envied by all, whose way of life was a model for the wretched and hopeful teeming masses of the earth; I thought of how what now seemed like just a few moments



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of self-indulgent political squabbling had caused it all to dissipate, just like that beach, just like those houses.

And so I drove onward toward the cut-rate motel (only \$499 a night!) in my second-hand hybrid Indian SUV, and I knew how you used up infinity – just like that.



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Characteristics Matrix

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| U.S. Economy | Weak |
| Nature of Disruptions | Traditional |
| Role of U.S. Federal Government | Substantial |
| Global Mobility | Fluid |
| Background | <p>The U.S. economy lags others due to entitlement burdens and tight but inconsistent regulation of corporations (partly in response to a generally “anti-globalization” popular attitude). Cyber attacks also hit the U.S. economy especially hard back when the U.S. was a particularly rich and vulnerable target, though they subsided as American companies tightened up their systems (with some clumsy government intervention). This has tended to isolate the U.S. from the outside world, and to make doing business here relatively more difficult.</p> <p>The political divisions of 2011 have hardened over time. Limited and defensive U.S. federal government, bogged down by gridlock and infighting, has not been able to keep up with a fast-mutating world. The left doesn’t want to ship jobs overseas; the right does not want foreign influence. There is xenophobia, isolationism, and some protectionist tendencies. Major corporations have been reducing their footprint in the U.S. over time. Congress is gridlocked and the political pendulum swings often; businesses can’t depend on policies lasting. Entrepreneurs move to where the money is to be made – China, India, Brazil, EU.</p> <p>Some states within the U.S. have taken advantage of a series of Supreme Court decisions limiting federal powers in order to take more control over their territory and their economies. Gridlock in Congress has essentially ceded more power to states as well; in the face of federal inaction, many states have assumed traditionally federal functions to one degree or another, and the judiciary has generally decided not to intervene in this process. For example, some states have severely restricted abortion rights; others have decriminalized marijuana. Some richer states have gotten richer, while some poor states have lagged badly.</p> |

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| | <p>Internationally, a slowly developing mosaic of non-state actors (multinational corporations, I/Os, NGOs) have come together with some key states –India, Brazil, the EU, and sometimes China – to form global networks for trade, technology development, financial coordination and governance, outside the normal diplomatic and trade organization channels. Powerful transnational economic and technological networks (corporations, international organizations, NGOs, and powerful individuals (Gates Foundation, Clinton Initiative, Oceana, WWF, George Soros) have arisen. They have little or no loyalty to nation-states, though they try not to openly offend them when possible. The media contain headlines such as “The top forty billionaires get together to make decisions about the future. “</p> <p>Asia in general has risen as predicted, and the U.S. has receded in relative prominence. Europe eventually fixed their labor, immigration, and entitlement problems through a combination of austerity and greater integration and aid from more wealthy nations, and, without the military burden dragging them down, they are doing relatively better than expected.</p> |
| <p>Global Stability & Conflict</p> | <p>There is global governance and it is fairly effective. However, the traditional sources of power in the world – powerful nation-states, the U.N., and other nation-state-based institutions – wield relatively less power these days, and it’s not always clear who’s really in charge. There have been a number of conflicts around the world as the political strength of some nation states has become clouded, but none of these have grown into significant wars.</p> <p>In the wake of receding American power and forward presence, an international coalition of business, international organizations, NGOs, and wealthy people have done a reasonable job regulating what would otherwise be a worldwide scramble for resources; a sort of world order has been established that works reasonably well for most world actors.</p> |
| <p>Global Governance</p> | <p>Nongovernmental organizations and corporations are more and more involved in resolving global governance issues after nation-states (including the U.S.) have failed to. These groups have worked with China, India, Brazil and the EU to establish governance mechanisms outside normal nation-state channels. An initial lack of a coherent approach to governance of the commons has created a world in which global elites (wealthy, humanitarian, corporate, some governmental) meet, where their interests align, to decide priorities of crises and ensure orderly global governance. NGOs and IOs (e.g. WHO) address world health problems; organizations such as World Economic Forum deal with economic issues, etc.</p> |

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| | <p>The General Assembly of the UN is weak. WHO and the World Bank are more effective, partnering with private foundations such as the Gates Foundation. A desire for stability on the part of more flourishing states causes an acceptance of the legitimacy of moneyed NGOs. There are orderly markets and other schemes for resource allocation, to promote predictability for trade and business.</p> <p>These actors have no authority to compel, other than via embargoes and organized economic retaliation such as withholding of investment. Their priorities are order and globalization for maximum profit, not necessarily pure disinterested virtue; yet the obvious “prisoners’ dilemmas” that have arisen from a lack of global governance push them into a leadership role.</p> |
| <p>Key Global Actors</p> | <p>Several varieties of new consortia have emerged. In some, groups of states like the EU have usurped powers formerly held closely by nations. In others, international corporate organizations or groups of corporations have successfully eluded national controls. There are also some interesting hybrids emerging that include aspects of private sector and public sector interests in the same organization. U.S. states are also increasingly autonomous actors, some more powerful, some less; some of them have developed regional blocs for increased bargaining power and harmonized standards.</p> <p>The most important nation-state actors are India, Brazil, the EU, the U.S. (influential, but no longer dominant); and China, although the Chinese government cannot be relied upon to control its major economic actors any longer.</p> |
| <p>Status of Haves and Have-Nots</p> | <p>More and more have-nots do not accept globalization. They resist change, and suffer from high unemployment. Political gridlock makes solutions difficult. A disproportionate percentage of “haves” have either clustered in affluent cities or sub-communities, or have left the country entirely to pursue opportunity elsewhere. People in the middle and bottom have gotten worse off, so income and wealth inequality on the whole have compressed. A lot of anger exists with increased domestic violence. The lethargic economy is causing outbreaks of anger and occasional violence amid much hopelessness and feelings of impotence.</p> |
| <p>Terrorism</p> | <p>The U.S. is less of a focus for international terrorism due to lost pre-eminence, but home-grown political violence is growing, due to economic and social dislocation.</p> |



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| | <p>With Mexico a dangerous narco state, states in the U.S. are much more heavily involved in patrolling borders. There has been a blurring between terrorism and organized crime in border regions.</p> <p>Some popular discontent persists in the Middle East as oil revenues have declined and population has grown, but this is not as often channeled into jihad, as many of the grievances that formerly led to Islamic terror (U.S. presence, Israel-Palestine issue, Iranian aggression) have been resolved or ameliorated. Nonviolent protest is now the preferred popular method of pushing for change, since its success in bringing about a two-state solution in Israel-Palestine.</p> <p>What terrorism there is tends to be disjointed and isolated reactions to the destructive effects of globalization on traditional cultures.</p> |
| <p>WMD/E</p> | <p>The U.S. military and security infrastructure remains relatively strong, though funding for it is challenged due to fiscal problems. Anti-WMD/WME regimes are effective, thanks to world corporate and NGO and IO interest in a stable world. Federal government is strong in radiation detection and nonproliferation.</p> |
| <p>Global Crime</p> | <p>There is a higher level of domestic crime in the U.S. with a lot of transient populations, and weak municipal governance in some areas.</p> <p>International organized crime is very sophisticated and some believe it is inextricably tied into global elites. Criminal gangs are still smuggling drugs. Some states do not enforce drug laws; some have made them harsher; some states are enforcing laws against exporting guns to Mexico. Conflict between states on guns and money headed south.</p> |
| <p>Global Markets</p> | <p>Global energy prices are low in real terms, though they are expensive in dollars (OPEC now prices oil in other currencies). New oil fields have opened in the Arctic (Russia, Canada, Alaska), Africa, offshore of Brazil, and elsewhere; we seem not to be past peak oil.</p> <p>U.S. and Europe are large markets for geriatric drugs. India is a major producer of both ethical and illegal pharmaceuticals. Major markets are Asia (India, China, ASEAN), US (though receding), EU, Brazil, Canada.</p> <p>India is exporting cars. Some light manufacturing has moved to the prosperous south/southeast of Africa. Germany and the rest of the EU are</p> |

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| | <p>making high-end cars and high-end high tech products, as is Japan. Brazil is manufacturing aerospace products, cars, other high-end goods.</p> <p>Turkey and Iran are regional economic powers. Iran has moderated, with regime change internally as a result of economic crisis due to government mismanagement and low oil prices. Turkey is the mediator between Europe and Middle East (and a large market themselves).</p> <p>U.S. and Canada are exporting resources and agricultural products.</p> |
| <p>Global Trade</p> | <p>Global trade has grown a great deal. While the U.S. is still a significant player, it is no longer dominant. Increased U.S. regulation and inept corporate taxation policy has driven major corporations and investment away. London, Hong Kong, Frankfurt, Mumbai, and Sao Paulo are the major financial centers. (Wall Street is still a player, but has fallen off a great deal.)</p> <p>China, EU, India and Brazil are the strongest markets. Russia is important in resources, but somewhat unstable. The Panama Canal is not as busy; Suez much more so.</p> <p>Trade is increasingly ordered and predictable, despite some territorial uncertainty in Russia. Order has been greatly bolstered by an amalgamation of NGOs, IOs, corporations, and wealthy elites that have complemented (and sometimes pressured) nation-states to improve global governance.</p> <p>Trade routes have changed: much grain and other commodities is now shipped out of Canada (Churchill, Manitoba (Arctic Sea Bridge to Murmansk); Vancouver; Prince Rupert; St. Lawrence Seaway). Electronics still come from Asia, heavy industrial goods from Brazil, cars, ships and planes come from (and go to) India.</p> <p>The U.S. has gone back to exporting all kinds of commodities (grains, coal, timber, minerals (e.g., Alaskan zinc mines)). US universities are still seen as top notch; the U.S. exports distance learning (even as community colleges at home are closing down).</p> |
| <p>Energy</p> | <p>Oil prices are depressed (~\$25-30/bbl in 2011 dollars; multiples of that in contemporary inflated dollars). IOs, NGOs and corporations have done a lot of work on alternative energy, conservation, efficiency, but with newly discovered supplies, we are also not past peak oil, and both of these things depress fossil fuel prices.</p> |

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| | <p>There are attempts to rein in carbon and pollution, led by a number of nation-states, IOs, and NGOs, mainly in reaction to the Chinese government's unwillingness or inability to control its emissions. The Chinese government says all the right things, but when push comes to shove, they appear unable to control their major polluters.</p> |
| <p>Natural Resources</p> | <p>An initial land rush on world resources, some narrowly averted wars over resources, and the seeming inability of nation-states to address this, has pushed corporate and other nongovernmental institutions to take the lead on governance regimes. "Politics is too important to be left to the politicians."</p> <p>Timber is recovering because corporations pay countries to plant trees. There is a freshwater stock market. China loses its lock on rare earths; corporations resolve disputes, ensure access.</p> <p>Some major fish stocks collapsed before the improved governance, but other species have taken over (much as lobsters rebounded after the cod collapse). Aquaculture replaces wild fisheries with species that do not rely on eating 7 lbs. of other fish to build protein. Genetically modified farmed fish are common.</p> <p>Energy is ironically under less pressure than other resources due to new oil and gas finds in Arctic and elsewhere.</p> |
| <p>Environment</p> | <p>Early significant environmental deterioration occurred in tandem with climate change. Problems were exacerbated by both a lack of resources, and lack of, or inconsistent, regulations. IOs, NGOs, and corporations stepped in to deal with the situation. In the U.S., some states have far less environmental regulation than others; this allows acceleration of mountaintop removal for coal and other environmentally destructive (but, in the short term, profitable) practices. But other neighboring states put stricter standards in place.</p> <p>Pollution is generally leveling off in the developing world (China, India, ASEAN, Latin America) because corporations and other nongovernmental institutions and powerful individuals see it in their interests not to let it get so far out of hand that it destabilizes key markets.</p> <p>New clean forms of energy also help ameliorate pollution, on the margins, while also holding down the price of energy. Bioengineered microbes are helping to clean up the Pacific Garbage Gyre, eating up the waste and excreting harmless particles.</p> |
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| <p>Climate and Weather</p> | <p>Climate change has occurred at a rate corresponding to more pessimistic models; various actors are trying to tackle this after traditional institutions initially failed. Sea levels have risen and ocean acidification has become a serious issue. There are more droughts and flooding. “Enlightened billionaires” are trying to solve this and other problems (saving coral reefs, lowering temperature of oceans, etc.). Multinational corporations and NGOs and corporations are often out in front of the government on these issues, in order to be able to make money and reduce uncertainty. Corporations and NGOs are beginning to attempt controlled geo-engineering (carbon sequestration, e.g.) and are moving to greener energy sources, in their own self-interests. Prizes for solving climate problems are being offered by billionaires.</p> |
| <p>Natural & Accidental Disasters</p> | <p>Climate change seems to be driving higher-severity weather events. Floods, hurricanes, and erosion are being caused by maritime weather events. Larger storm surges from both hurricanes and nor’easters occur with more regularity. There is also more flooding in Midwest than the historical norm.</p> <p>Some states are responding much more competently to these disasters; other states can’t or won’t.</p> |
| <p>Demographics</p> | <p>China is just hitting the age-wave wall, after decades of having a comparative advantage. But it did not “get old before it got rich.” Continued steady growth has cushioned the demographic impact.</p> <p>The U.S. is not in a position to take advantage of any possible Chinese slowdown, since government gridlock prevented them from dealing adequately with their own problems. Population growth has moderated with a closely-patrolled border, aging (and dying-off) population, and decreased long-term economic prospects.</p> <p>Russia’s population has shriveled and thrown in its lot with Europe, while the EU surprisingly has dealt with its aging population, and immigration to pay for their benefits, better than almost anyone imagined they would.</p> <p>Africa’s population has continued to rise quickly, though economic development, especially in the southeast, has staved off disaster.</p> <p>The population of the Middle East has put some pressure on governments and economies there, with oil prices at relatively low prices historically; but this has not resulted in more terrorism to date.</p> |
| <p>Migrant Flows</p> | <p>U.S. border states are patrolling the Mexican border due to a perceived</p> |

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| | <p>lack of federal action and the frightening chaos south of the border. There is substantial migration within the US, as people look for jobs and the lost American dream – some movement back north (from the drought-stricken southeast and southwest). Some states have set up roadblocks at state lines to discourage migration of the “wrong sort” into their states. Some immigration of U.S. people is occurring to Canada, creating some backlash in Canada against U.S. immigrants.</p> <p>Migrant flows globally are often driven by climate change and drought, as well as chasing economic opportunity.</p> <p>Immigration into the EU is handled in an orderly way, helping to solve the entitlements problem there.</p> <p>There is a great deal of demographic pressure from a relatively slumping, ecologically challenged China on the Russian Far East.</p> <p>Low-lying coastal areas (Bangladesh, China, Indonesia) have been hit hard by climate change and a changing flood-drought cycle. There are also emerging disease vectors, novel insect pests, and invasive species; these have had some localized impact throughout the world, though none has been catastrophic.</p> |
| <p>Human Health Issues</p> | <p>There is a need to be careful of charlatans. Superb care is available, but mostly at the top end, for corporate winners. It’s very uneven. Things are bleak: there are more mental health issues, more alcoholism and other addictions. Distance medicine and telemedicine are no panacea, due to lingering IP and privacy concerns. Regulation of pharmaceuticals is uneven; the FDA can’t move fast enough, and states have varying regulations on drugs. Some states legalize marijuana for fiscal reasons. Black markets abound for foreign-manufactured pharmaceuticals.</p> <p>Issues with water quality, air quality in some US states and regions, resulting in interstate conflicts. New diseases are emerging from the thaw of the permafrost and other ecological damage.</p> <p>Obesity is epidemic in the U.S. and heart disease, cancer, and diabetes have been worsened by economic hard times. There is increasing eating of “food-like substances” as opposed to fruits and vegetables. Cutbacks in health care programs have exacerbated the situation. “Food Inc.” “Supersize Me”-type world. Epidemics of TB, e.g. in “have-not” states. Hundreds to thousands of people die locally or within states.</p> <p>Lots of old people do not have caretakers (lack of kids, lack of immigrants).</p> |



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| | <p>Cyber-hacking makes on-line medical records less practical. Everyone seems to have a Grandma to worry about.</p> |
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| Education | <p>Fewer international students are in the U.S. university system (except in states that have money). The shift to on-line universities has accelerated and there are few brick and mortar campuses aside from giant research institutions. Liberal arts schools have shriveled up. Many community colleges have failed. There is more focus on technical and on-the-job training. There has been a move away from the idea that “everyone can go to college”. Fortunate kids can get out to other countries where they have opportunities. More kids are going to technical schools than state colleges. Second-tier-school graduates find it difficult to find jobs.</p> <p>Primary education is in crisis, with shriveled state support. Increased home-schooling by parents has emerged to keep their kids out of sub-par local schools. On-line courses of study make home schooling more attractive and less work for busy parents.</p> |
| | |
| Media | <p>Media mainly serves the interests of the new non-nation-state networks of corporations and rich people. Media providers are less independent in many areas than they have been. There is a lot of demagoguery and anger; but also, a lot of clearly corporate-driven news analysis. Nation-states have lost of the influence to keep media even-handed. It is often difficult to tell who is behind any particular broadcast.</p> <p>In the U.S., it’s very segmented by smaller and smaller groups. On-line movements of alienated people become a source of information for many people. A lot of have-nots now have time on their hands to blog. So much information is out there that people choose their specific favorite information sources.</p> <p>Media aggregators still exist but are less powerful. Corporations have sensors everywhere. Privacy is impossible to guarantee. There is lots of push media. Security remains a real problem, though it is less apparent than in the early years.</p> |
| | |
| Religion/Beliefs/ Values/Ideology | <p>Inside the U.S., people are retreating into their own religious and ideological groups due to failure of governmental institutions. Many people are dissatisfied with their lives and therefore hardened in their beliefs. There has been a return to traditionalism and fundamentalism in many religions. Homegrown political violence in some cases is related to religion. But a lot of other people are not interested in religion at all.</p> |



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| | <p>Outside the U.S., it's a good world for the Catholic Church in Africa, evangelical movements in Latin America, and, e.g., Latter-Day-Saints-like outreach into the developing world. Governments are less powerful, and private or religious outreach networks become an appealing substitute.</p> |
| | |
| <p>Nature of Business</p> | <p>Much entrepreneurship is in the NGO/non-profit sector. Entrepreneurial energy is outside the US. In general, globally, less government oversight, more oversight from other types of organization.</p> <p>Workforce is very uneven across the U.S. Some states have excellent schools, others not so much. There is significant immigration to where the jobs are. A few "technology clusters" remain in the United States – Silicon Valley, Route 128, Research Triangle – but the U.S. is more of a resource exporter than it used to be, and less of a technology and innovation leader. Away from the coasts and the large cities, education is poor and opportunities are few outside of the commodities industries.</p> |
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| <p>Information Management</p> | <p>I.T. in the U.S. is no longer exponentially growing. In general, after an early period of critical vulnerability in which financial records, credit histories, and government databases were corrupted, the cyber domain is now fairly secure for corporations in the US, but less so for individuals. There is a large gap between business and government computing power. The U.S. federal government has not been able to effectively capture and use information (particularly about its massive retiree group) and convert it into useful knowledge, but some corporations are able to manage the glut of information and extract knowledge.</p> <p>Information technology has reached the level of "anything, anytime, anywhere" – at least outside the U.S. In the U.S. there is strained bandwidth, especially wireless. Applications are advancing faster than the infrastructure can handle. Most advanced businesses and other organizations have been revolutionized by information technology; fewer employees, more contractors, just-in-time labor, just-in-time everything else. This has had a negative impact on employment in the U.S.</p> |
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| <p>Areas of Technological Innovation</p> | <p>Technology innovation is increasingly outside of the U.S. There are some technology clusters in the U.S., but mostly the U.S. is lagging. Nanotechnology and biotechnology centers of excellence are in Asia, Europe, and Brazil. Business drives innovation relatively more than do the military or government.</p> <p>There have been major changes in business structure and management, with a move towards a more fluid, project-based economy overseas. Private sector technology is far more advanced than U.S. federal</p> |

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| | <p>government systems.</p> <p>Privacy and perfect on-line security are things that only the wealthy can afford, as commercial interests drive surveillance (including satellite), sensing, smart materials, IT, nanotechnology, and biotechnology.</p> |
| <p>Cyber Security</p> | <p>Cyber security was a serious concern in the U.S., with lots of threats and great difficulty tracking down perpetrators. The U.S. was particularly victimized early on by cyber-predators; this added to the costs of doing business in the U.S. for major transnational enterprises. Cyber security continues to be very important to corporations, NGOs and IOs.</p> <p>The U.S. federal government still cannot quite keep pace with cybercrime and cyber attacks, so the private sector comes up with fixes and polices the cyber-world. There is a web consortium “seal of approval” for cyber-protection.</p> <p>Leaders in the cyber (and cyber-security) domain are China, Russia, India, Brazil, large corporations, and criminal syndicates. There remain many seams and weaknesses to exploit, though now these threats appear to be more or less under control. Some suspect that international criminal syndicates are being paid off by other major actors to keep cyber-crime under control.</p> |
| <p>U.S. Economy</p> | <p>Economic growth is stunted by lack of a fiscal solution, and bounces between -2% and +2% in real terms. Unemployment varies greatly by region, but has remained above 7%, and real median household income has actually lost ground (much of this is due to seniors living on fixed incomes hit by inflation).</p> <p>The U.S. has slid off the hilltop gradually. There has been a long-term tendency for U.S. corporations to leave for greener pastures. U.S. regulation and relative over-taxation of corporations (an attempt to “painlessly” solve its budgetary dilemma) drove many of them to other countries, and has hurt tax receipts. Gridlocked government can’t keep up with the pace of economic change. Manufacturing has not recovered in general in the U.S. (though defense is still a major , if declining, industry); service jobs can be done anywhere in the world. Uncertainty as to government policies is the norm, and a perceived difficulty of protecting intellectual property in the U.S. has persisted ever since earlier cyber attacks. Pockets of prosperity still exist in the U.S. – states with “pro-business” attitudes like Texas and Alaska, and other states with technology clusters or natural resources, such as Massachusetts, California and West Virginia, are doing better – but more broadly, the U.S. is losing the high-</p> |

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| | <p>tech start-up culture. There is less entrepreneurialism happening in the U.S., more overseas.</p> <p>The U.S. is reemphasizing resource extraction: being coal miners, lumberjacks, etc. Resource businesses are more prominent in the U.S. – agribusiness, coal, oil, timber, production, minerals, aquaculture, and exports of fresh water. Despair abounds that kids aren’t going to make it out of this life. “I owe my soul to the company store.” There is also some xenophobia between states – “Non-Alaskans Need Not Apply.”</p> |
| <p>U.S. Political Climate</p> | <p>The familiar battle lines from the 1990s have, if anything, hardened, stymieing almost any attempt on the part of the federal government to do anything controversial or large-scale. Political paralysis has made a grand bargain on entitlements impossible, while keeping the debt, and government’s inability to address it, front and center in the headlines. The left refuses to touch entitlements; the right refuses to raise taxes; and the result has been entitlements paid out in relatively worthless dollars, and a stagflation economy.</p> <p>The federal government, through a series of Supreme Court rulings narrowing the uses of the Commerce and Expansion clauses, and the increasing inability of the Congress to solve problems, has very gradually ceded power to states, which are taking over some aspects of sovereignty from it. Many states now are far more economically and educationally specialized; they have more distinct and diverse policies for taxes and regulations, and are competing to attract investment and jobs. Some have put together “exchanges” and free trade areas, and have succeeded in loosening regulations via “home rule,” while tightening others beyond federal minimums. E.g., maritime U.S. states accept the new regulations promulgated by global business elites, IOs and NGOs; but they “coordinate” these rule changes with the federal government for “face-saving” purposes.</p> <p>The benefits of this specialization are spread very unevenly across the U.S., with resource-rich, agricultural and coastal states doing well, while others lag badly. Poorer states tend to be more dependent on a strapped federal government, which exacerbates their predicament. Some state governors have increased their profiles by emphasizing their roles as commanders-in-chief of their state national guards; some have attempted (with varying success) to push the feds out of certain activities in their states.</p> <p>The international view of the U.S. is that it is a failed experiment, with its presidential democratic system (as opposed to the parliamentary model) discredited by gridlock. Corporations, IOs, and NGOs wield great power</p> |

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| | <p>globally and even over the U.S. in certain instances, enraging certain segments of the American public and giving further impetus to “states’ rights” movements.</p> <p>The gridlock is quite profitable for one group: corporations and other influencers tend to go direct to agencies or states to get things done, and NGOs now offer some traditional federal government services. Global networks of corporate and other nongovernmental interests have lobbyists everywhere, working not only the national government, but also state governments. Their political power comes from:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Subtle behind the scenes manipulation of national politics ▪ Global cooperation and resulting efficiencies; ▪ Status as sources of jobs and growth; ▪ Seen as the engines of technical progress — attract the best minds from all countries; ▪ Providing solutions that work (as opposed to the federal government); ▪ Present a viable alternative to the decision-making organizations based on sovereignty (the UN) that are generally not working. |
| <p>U.S. Fiscal Status</p> | <p>Attempts to solve the debt dilemma have succumbed to gridlock and partisan infighting, gradually putting the U.S. at the mercy of their creditors. Inflation has risen in the U.S. while our bond rating has drifted down. Discretionary federal government funds are in very short supply. Some states have plenty of discretionary funds, but most do not.</p> <p>The U.S. dollar has been replaced by an indexed basket of currencies (rupee, euro, real, dollar, renminbi) as the universal world reserve currency, as a result of a series of economic decisions by world economic elites, finance ministers, and other actors, contrary to the wishes of the United States. Large-scale commodity contracts (e.g. oil) are no longer priced in dollars. We can’t print money any longer in this world without direct inflation. More outsiders (markets, corporations, NGOs, IOs) are telling the U.S. how to get its fiscal house in order.</p> |
| <p>U.S. Social Climate</p> | <p>People are generally nervous and depressed. Americans can “feel it slipping away.” There are haves and have-nots: the people that “have” are worried about losing it, and the people who don’t are worried about themselves and their kids falling down further.</p> <p>American identity is threatened, with a majority of innovation coming from outside the US. Do we adapt or reject? Mostly, we reject. Still, some entrepreneurial activity goes on in the US, but it is getting difficult to get</p> |



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| | <p>investment or to assure corporations that their intellectual property can be secure in the U.S.</p> <p>The entertainment market is strong, but increasingly content is developed internationally. There's a second golden era of cinema, which is a "cheap date." Unions are coming back, in some unexpected areas (knowledge workers), as part of resentment at offshoring of jobs. Lots of outspokenness, protests, and discontent with gridlock. But some states band together in shifting regional coalitions to get things done (e.g., regulating aquaculture on the east coast.) There is pressure for states to break up into smaller components (but this is difficult constitutionally).</p> <p>Families, under economic strain, are fragmenting. "Haves" have opportunities to move elsewhere. Communities see a lot of change, and there are fewer long-term residents. In the U.S. it's a transient, rootless world, with little optimism about the future.</p> <p>There remains a sense of American patriotism and identity among lower/middle classes, along with bitterness in those falling down into those categories. People who have been told they were successful their whole lives, and who went to college and moved to make it big somewhere else, are now out of work and bitter, alienated, rootless, and looking for someone to blame. The atmosphere is ripe for movements: unions or coalitions of people with similar situations (e.g. displaced knowledge workers); or xenophobic parties. Private security firms have evolved to protect the haves and corporations. Many individuals look for on-line training networks.</p> <p>The United States has some of the feel of Huey Long days – populism, xenophobia, and the potential for the rise of a demagogue. Several third parties have made some headway – but in each case they have been co-opted by one of the major parties and gridlock has resumed.</p> |
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| <p>Status of Government Programs</p> | <p>Gridlock has made compromise on entitlements impossible, so the system has been more or less hollowed out. The government pays out on Social Security, but in inflated-away dollars that provide little more than beer money. Some states have better health care than others; this causes migration to those states. NGOs (e.g. American Lung Association) are also providing some basic and preventive medical services. (Doctors Within Borders, Gates Foundation, churches and others offer elder care to indigent Americans, e.g.) A federal government-mandated health care system was tried, but collapsed. Many hospitals closed down due to the lack of reimbursement. Corporations, however, have good health care systems for employees. A loose affiliation of states and millionaires and</p> |

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| | <p>billionaires and NGOs, shape the future of health care for children and preventive care, but it's a rear-guard action. The very poorest are sometimes taken care of, and the richest, but the great middle is in trouble.</p> |
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| Transportation Infrastructure | <p>Some states have really good infrastructure, but others don't. It's a mixed bag. East coast ports are shipping out coal. Alaskan ports are shipping out natural resources. Some offshore facilities have been built in Alaskan inlets.</p> <p>U.S. infrastructure lags the world-best, except where states/localities have money. Insufficient maintenance has been done on the interstate highway system and other intermodal connections in the interior of the U.S. Pipelines and bridges are falling apart. The electrical grid is declining; brownouts and blackouts are more frequent. Much of the infrastructure investment that is taking place in the U.S. is through the purchase of foreign-manufactured or -built facilities and systems that offer lower system costs immediately.</p> <p>Very sophisticated intermodal systems exist in Asia, Europe and Brazil.</p> |
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| Canada | <p>Canada has gradually moved away from the slumping U.S. and toward Asian and European corporations. Canada is resource-rich: corporations from everywhere are looking to get in to get minerals, fresh water, access to the Arctic, oil and gas, agriculture. Canada is a resource superpower.</p> |
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| Mexico | <p>Mexico is a mess and the federal government has difficulty controlling the border. Kidnappings and government by <i>narcotraficantes</i> are common. Mexico has become <i>Colombia del Norte</i>. This has been a failure of both the U.S. federal government and the Mexican federal government. U.S. border states have formed militias to guard borders.</p> |
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| Central America & the Caribbean | <p>Much of the Caribbean is experiencing hardship, with a number of gangster-controlled private islands. Tourism has declined from the U.S. and Europe, and ironically, Cuba is doing far better than most countries in the region.</p> <p>Most of Central America is in economic depression, with little rule of law in several countries. With the less attractive U.S. and the lawless Mexico to the north, most of them are turning south to South America for future growth.</p> |
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| South America | <p>Latin America is doing relatively well. It has resources for export and it no longer depends primarily on the U.S. as either a military ally or a market.</p> |

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| | <p>Brazil is the engine of growth, with massive oil finds offshore, increasing technological and manufacturing strength, and growing international influence. But virtually the whole continent is doing well, and Venezuela and the other resource-rich nations are diversifying their energy export markets and growing their middle classes.</p> |
| <p>Europe (including Russia)</p> | <p>EU countries are doing well. They are the prototype of a supra-national organization succeeding where a nation-state loses power. Barriers to migration are lower, and there is far less friction socially than was predicted. As a result of the euro crisis of the early 2000s, they have finally put together a true economic as well as a monetary union, after a joint agreement to implement austerity on the part of insolvent countries, with more prosperous countries agreeing to guarantee the insolvent nations' debts. In the younger generation rising, there is a notably declining sense of nationalism, on average. Extreme nationalism and xenophobia seem to have been an artifact of a previous, dying generation. Immigrants are increasingly easily integrated, and fears of "Eurabia" have given way to relief that Muslims are becoming French and German rather than France and Germany becoming Muslim.</p> <p>Russia is trying to hold on. The disintegration of the old Soviet empire was followed by a disintegration of much of the old Tsarist empire. Across the country, highly independent and corrupt corporations and syndicates engage in crony capitalism. The western, ethnically European part of Russia is closely tied, economically and politically, to the EU. Many of the eastern and southern parts of Russia are in crisis, with little central government control and increasing provincial autonomy. There has been a significant amount of illegal migration from China into western Siberia. Russia's priorities are to keep its resources in the Arctic strip, come what may, and to try to stem Chinese immigrant encroachment on their Far East.</p> |
| <p>China</p> | <p>China's continued strong economic advance has created some contradictions that are increasingly difficult to paper over – but that papering over has become absolutely essential to its continuation. On the one hand, the central government insists that it has final say over everything. On the other hand, gigantic corporations that originated within the government and military are increasingly obviously exercising a great deal of autonomy and influence. The saving of face is so important, however, that even these corporate titans are completely invested in perpetuating the myth of the centralized, harmonious China under Communist Party rule. Outside of China, however, the split between self-image and reality has had some major consequences. While Chinese government officials posted to international organizations praise and</p> |

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| | <p>solemnly pledge to uphold global environmental standards, for example, huge Chinese multinational corporations visibly flout those standards, continuing to emit excess levels of greenhouse gases and other pollutants. The Chinese government says all the right things, and simply ignores the mounting evidence presented to it that its own companies are violating international norms in a variety of areas.</p> <p>The “One Country, Two Faces” approach has left many other national governments nonplussed, but has actually caused much of the rest of the world to pull together to address problems such as climate change, pollution, and overfishing, with multinational corporations, international organizations, and very wealthy individuals taking more and more prominent roles in advancing these issues – in large part to counter the damage being done by seemingly uncontrollable Chinese corporate interests.</p> <p>When directly challenged, the Chinese government responds swiftly and harshly to internal dissidence. But, aside from a few politically convenient show trials, it clearly is not able to control the actions of its largest corporations, nor is it able to enforce its own anti-pollution and anti-corruption laws. China’s environment is in bad shape, and corruption has continued, but economic growth is strong and total Chinese influence – that is, influence of the Chinese nation, its corporations, and individuals, economic and political – has continued to grow across the world. Taiwan remains separate from – though increasingly integrated with – mainland China, and powerful and/or rich cities and provinces – e.g., Hong Kong, Guangzhou, some internal provinces – have an increased level of autonomy from Beijing. The Chinese public has some gripes over pollution and corruption and the lack of freedom, but nationalism remains strong and the continued move into affluence has kept discontent far from the boiling point.</p> |
| <p>India/South Asia</p> | <p>India is doing well; they are now the most populous nation, with by far the most engineers. It is stable, with healthy economic growth. They have been affected less by climate change than China or Bangladesh. Entrepreneurship and a youthful population have driven growth. They have more people to deal with climate change effects on infrastructure.</p> <p>Pakistan has also become more stable and prosperous, as border disputes with India have been essentially resolved, China has invested a great deal in Pakistan, and the Islamist threat has been decisively rejected by the majority.</p> |
| <p>Northern Asia</p> | <p>Japan has aged badly, with its demographics hitting it hard and its lack of</p> |

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| | <p>immigration hurting its prospects. It is difficult to recall that Japan once bestrode the region as a colossus.</p> <p>Korea has reunited, with the help not only of China and other regional states, but also NGOs, IOs, and many corporate partners that have a stake in seeing a successful and stable peninsula. Economic growth in both China and Korea has allowed reunification to proceed as a sort of major multinational economic stimulus program, buoying growth all around the region.</p> |
| Southeast Asia | <p>Southeast Asia is undergoing rapid development. Mushrooming inter-Asian trade and more national specialization in line with comparative advantage continue to fuel a boom. More manufacturing is going to Southeast Asia and India, which is solidifying ties around the region.</p> <p>Australia has long been an integral part of the Asian economic system, and has closer ties to Indonesia, e.g., than to the U.S. or Europe.</p> |
| Africa | <p>Africa is being developed with assistance from NGOs, good global governance, and more far-sighted corporate investment in the continent. A large stable area has emerged in south and southeast Africa (South Africa, Botswana, Tanzania, post-Mugabe Zimbabwe, Mozambique, others). Resource exploitation is, for the most part, being paired with development assistance.</p> <p>North Africa: immigration into EU is managed well, and development has been better than projected.</p> |
| Middle East | <p>A nonviolent civil rights movement on the part of the Palestinians finally caused the Israeli-Palestinian problem to be resolved with a two-state solution. The spectacular success of the nonviolent approach in breaking the logjam of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, and popular disgust with futile terrorist atrocities (a la Northern Ireland in the late 1990s), led to nonviolent resistance being employed throughout the region, with a good deal of success, against corrupt and autocratic regimes.</p> <p>As one example, the normalization of Iran removed a major source of instability in the region. With Hezbollah and Hamas no longer receiving aid or direction from Iran, and the U.S. clearly signaling that the time for a solution had come, the path to peace was smoothed.</p> <p>Lower oil prices and booming population have caused some disruption in</p> |



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| | <p>the Middle East, economically, but ironically, the increased difficulty of everyday life seems to have put thoughts of jihad out of mind for many. Lower oil profits also provide fewer resources that can be devoted to terrorist activity.</p> |
| <p>Polar Regions</p> | <p>Accelerated climate change has had an effect on the Arctic. The Arctic Ocean is now open for weeks in the summer, though there is still ice in winter. Melting is accelerating, but so far there has been no catastrophic breakup of Greenland or Antarctic land ice sheets.</p> <p>Alaska is a winner, making deals with corporations for oil and gas development, as well as timber. Separatist sentiment has risen in the state.</p> <p>Arctic nations (Arctic Council) are working to make sure development of the Arctic is sustainable. The one wild card is the biggest Arctic nation, Russia, which faces serious challenges, from internal secessionist pressure in the south (Caucasus), to demographic predation from China in its Far East. Relatively lower energy prices have exacerbated Russian internal and governmental problems. However, these pressures have caused Russia to increase its ties to the EU and other international bodies such as the Arctic Council in a desperate attempt to hold its far-flung territory together.</p> <p>For now, the Antarctic Treaty remains sacrosanct, as it has the support of “enlightened self-interest” of corporate and wealthy elites as well as IOs and NGOs.</p> |