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UNITED
STATES
COAST
GUARD

EVERGREEN IV SCENARIO: STATUS WOE

Drivers

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.

Population Shift and Demographics

High: High Mobility. People and populations are highly incentivized to change their geographic locations or social conditions and possess the ability to do so. The global population is a transient melting pot. Megacities emerge, surrounded by densely populated peri-urban sprawls largely clustered around coastal areas. The confluence of cultures results in greater integration, further accelerating globalization. Socioeconomic class and occupation are stronger influences on personal identity than race, religion, or nationality. Most people follow opportunities as they arise and change location frequently.

Overview

Corrupt politicians and ineffective bureaucrats have taken their toll on the U.S. government and economy. Service delivery is stunted, regulatory enforcement is

Society is accustomed to the nomadic lifestyle. Frequent relocation in pursuit of job opportunities is common.

Federal entitlements are largely a thing of the past. Businesses provide nearly all benefits.

Unemployment is no longer an option, and position vacancies are nonexistent. Competition for better jobs is fierce.

Private industry has entered disaster response, and competes with government forces.

Limited capacity has increased the law enforcement threshold. Only the most egregious crimes are investigated and prosecuted.



ineffectual, and growth is stagnant. Ineffectual government institutions render poor to nonexistent service, and lapses in appropriations occur on a regular basis. Public confidence in government officials is at an all-time low and tax evasion is rampant. State and local governments struggle to support their communities. Financial planning is nearly impossible, as a highly migratory workforce presents taxation problems at all levels. Many in the public

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.

and private sectors resort to corruption to provide for their families and keep their businesses afloat.

Long-standing international agreements are collapsing as a general paralysis sets in. Governments are increasingly unable to enact or change policy. International partners express concern for the U.S. government's creditworthiness and faltering economy. At the forefront of international dialogue are immigration enforcement and migrant labor force taxation. Faltering markets are manipulated by elites and organized crime, and the financial sector is reluctant to dedicate capital to new endeavors. Venture capitalists and angel investors are virtually extinct, and no new start-ups have emerged in recent memory.

Members of Congress focus on the concerns of their constituencies, to the detriment of the national interest. Federal government capacity and reach are drastically reduced. Remaining capability is channeled toward industry regulation and enforcement.

Grossly inadequate unemployment benefits produce a strong impetus to seek any employment, regardless of desirability. Industry has supplanted government as social protector and provider: Private parties and their local government partners now provide social benefits. Populations shift frequently as people search for improved benefits and living standards.

There is a spectrum of ethics within industry. Good companies are in a balanced relationship with government and their employees. They generally abide by regulations and care for their workers. In return, government heeds their concerns and avoids imposing laws that could dramatically impact these companies' profit margins. On the opposite end, businesses operate in the black market and provide little in addition to poor pay for their employees. Management and labor both risk incarceration. While far from desirable, many people, especially illegal immigrants, are forced to find jobs with these firms.

The vast majority of companies are at low risk of sanctions due to the government's limited size and capacity. Most infractions are detected and reported by competitors, and typical consequences are limited to closure of the business. These enterprises frequently relocate and reopen under different names.

People actively search for better employment and are willing to relocate frequently and over long distances. In addition to pay, they seek improved benefits such as health care, housing, and myriad smaller perks. Competition for the best workforce is stiff among companies, which are willing to invest significantly in high-quality employees.

Law enforcement and regulatory agencies are challenged to maintain order throughout the nation. Corridors for human and contraband trafficking across state and national borders have proliferated. Illegal living and mineral resource exploitation stresses the maritime environment.

Resources are dwindling and inefficiently managed, driving up prices and hurting the middle and lower classes. The gap is widening between the haves and have-nots. Aid organizations struggle to keep up with growing poverty. Criminal organizations are making inroads into

disenfranchised communities and expanding their illicit networks, while much of society has splintered into groups based on parochial interests. Individuals band with those of like mind, producing geographic and virtual “colonies” based on ideology and profession. Religious, political, and cultural extremism is prevalent.

Vignette

Swords to Ploughshares

A black luxury sedan arrived at the marina in Alexandria, VA. The driver stepped out and opened the rear door for the passenger. She donned sunglasses against the early autumn rays as she emerged. The lady was smartly clad in a tailored, pinstripe pantsuit and murderously high heels that pushed her height to four inches above six feet. The only jewelry she wore comprised a stainless dive watch and a gold lapel pin, in the shape of an eagle clutching a trident and flintlock pistol, wings outstretched.

“Congratulations, Ms. Turner. Welcome aboard. And my apologies for the mess on the way over.” He was referring to the ubiquitous protestors that perpetually slowed traffic in the National Capital Region.

“Thank you, Henry, and no worries. I’m looking forward to working with all of you.” She extended her hand for a collegial shake, and slipped a twenty into the young man’s palm. With a beaming smile, he offered a little salute to the newest employee of Carlson Irons Consultants, LLC. It was a bit steep for a tip, but she was always mindful of those who weren’t as fortunate as she was. As of this day, she was fortunate indeed.

The car departed, and Harriet Turner, Master Chief, United States Navy, Retired, walked down the pier. She passed the docks filled with small pleasure craft, and then those harboring a few large yachts. *Congressional Row*, as the area was called. She turned down a finger pier near the end of the line, filled largely with cabin cruisers. The *Only Easy Day* was a fifty-foot Grand Banks cruiser with classic lines, lots of teak, and a dark blue hull. The boat had been her one and only home purchase, ten years prior.

Harriet punched her code into the keypad on the cabin door and the lock clicked. Before opening the door, she entered a second code that disabled a number of nasty surprises. She stepped into the salon and closed and locked the door behind her. Only then did she celebrate. “YES!!!” She threw up her fists in utter triumph and would have jumped up and down had it not been for the stilettos.

“Seventh time’s the charm, baby!!!” Harriet dropped onto the sofa, buried her face in her hands, and sighed deeply. She took a moment to exult in the sensation of utter...relief. Retirement pay wasn’t what it used to be. She had crunched the numbers over and over, laid awake at night, worrying. There was no denying the reality: For all her frugality, the transition to civilian life had left her with only four months of savings to burn before she had to start

delving into her investments. With as many years as she had before she could retire, in fact, that was a grim prospect. But now...now, she was safe. Harriet would give Carlson Irons what she had given the U.S. Navy: everything. She was confident they would keep her on for the long haul.

Harriet took off her shoes, and removed her right foot at the ankle. She set the custom machined prosthetic, made for the shoe, on the end table and picked up a much simpler, curved carbon blade. She locked it into the ankle socket and stood, now a mere five feet eleven inches tall. She took off her jacket, laid it over the arm of the sofa, and headed to her little liquor cabinet.

Settled with two fingers of Wyoming Whiskey 18 Year Old, just one ice cube to open it up, Harriet closed her eyes, savored the flavors of the spirit and success, and reflected on the tortuous path she had taken to get there.

Her military career had been tough and satisfying. She had absolutely found her calling as a Navy SEAL, and distinguished herself in skill and bravery. A Navy Cross was the centerpiece of her shadow box, and her Purple Heart was almost out of room for stars. Harriet had spent the majority of her service downrange, conducting specialized operations and working hand in hand with America's allies...mostly off the record. She had been shot a few times, broken a few bones, and lost her right leg at the knee. She also would have lost most of her right hand had it not been for bio-printing. Correction: She *did* lose most of her right hand.

- Six Years Earlier -

The operating room was swarm of activity. The patient was under and the surgery site fully prepped. The last surgical pack had been opened when a rolling cart burst into the room, pushed by a brand-new nurse. The sweat ran down his face and disappeared behind his mask. Excitement shown from his eyes.

The lead surgeon glanced up. "Calm down, Ryan. You're no good to me if you have a heart attack in here." The young man composed himself as he rolled the cart to the table. It carried a stainless steel cooler.

"Sorry, Doctor. I'm just really pumped about this. I'd never seen bio-printing done before." "I'm sure you'll see it many more times. Thanks for hurrying." The nurse nodded and turned to his other responsibilities. The surgeon addressed her head nurse.

"How recent are the files?"

"Three months, Doctor."

"Wonderful. No artistic license required, then." Her patient had received her annual body scan recently. That meant the files used to build the replacement tissues were up to date and everything would look and function correctly. While long bones and large muscles were still

out of reach, the wizards in Walter Reed's Regeneration Division could build small bones, connective tissue, skin, and limited amounts of muscle through biological additive manufacturing. They had gotten to work on her patient's replacement parts within minutes of the warrior's extraction from the field. Their timing, as usual, had been perfect. The surgeon and her team got to work. As was normally the case, the bulk of the surgery was cleaning and trimming the site. Ruined flesh had to be pared away and shaped to match the new tissue. A clean surface was crucial to a good graft.

Five hours later, it was done. The warrior's lost hand had been restored. It would be a few days before therapy could begin, and she would face a long road to recovery. But she would be whole. This was the surgeon's favorite kind of work.

- Today -

It took nine months of physical therapy to regain full use of the extremity and another eighteen before all the nerves were firing, but she had returned to the field with full capability. A new biological leg hadn't been an option, but her prosthetic was, for all intents and purposes, as good as the real thing (and only one foot hurt from her stilettos). A miracle of carbon, titanium, and actuators, it was permanently grafted to her reinforced femur and the surrounding tissue. There was no risk of infection, and the design harmonized with what was left of her leg as no cup-type prosthetic ever could have. Unless she wore shorts, the only indication that she had an "upgrade," as she liked to call it, was the soft whishing sound of the motion actuators at the knee. Like her Hand, Mark II, her Leg, Mark II, had also seen combat. Harriet was proud that her retirement after twenty-five years of service had been her choice, not the medical board's.

Her reminiscing was interrupted by an old classic rock song: "Kill 'Em All," by the legendary Metallica. It was her ring tone. She checked the number and noted the 619 area code. San Diego. The rest of it was familiar, also. She answered the call on the big screen and couldn't stifle a smile.

"Good day, Dr. Perkins." Dr. Perkins fought to get Harriet her high heel foot, but to no avail.

"Can the formality, Master Chief. You seem happy. Things must have turned around for you since we last talked."

"Laura, things have a way of working out. I received two hefty retirement gifts."

"Do tell...?"

"First, the VA...changed its mind...about my foot. They revised their characterization from 'cosmetic' to 'mandatory uniform item.'"

"Congrats! Who did you have to kill?" Laura asked with a hearty laugh.

“Are you on a secure line?”

“Ah...yes.” Laura was uneasy.

“Before I departed San Diego, I met with some not-to-be-named individuals. We infiltrated a not-to-be-named facility.” Harriet would not incriminate her physical therapist or machinist. She would, instead, leave the impression that a couple of old Navy buddies had helped her with the job.

“Did you break into a medical warehouse? A hospital?”

“Better. We scanned my left foot, carried out some minor CAD manipulation, and put the Selective Laser Sintering and CNC machine to work. A couple of hours, and voila, retirement gift number one.” Dr. Perkins beamed. She knew Harriet was referring to the VA prosthetic lab.

“Great people are everywhere. I’m glad a few are willing to break the rules. And gift number two?”

“I got picked up by Carlson Irons today.”

“Well done! What a relief!”

“You’re telling me. The market is brutal. I thought I was going to have to leave the Chesapeake to find a job.”

“You’re among the lucky few. I don’t know too many vets who have been able to put down roots.”

“Seems like no one can put down roots anymore.” They talked for a few more minutes and signed off.

Harriet mused on her foot, her hand, and the less dramatic repairs the U.S. Navy had provided over the years. The medical benefits had been more than an offset for the absence of the GI Bill or other education assistance, eliminated in the course of budget cuts shortly before she enlisted. By carefully managing her money, she had been able to finance her own education through a postgraduate degree, earned at odd hours and in odd places all over the globe.

A radically changing workforce.



While some had criticized her purchase of a boat as financial tomfoolery, numerous military transfers and the anticipation of more to come in civilian life had convinced her to put incessant closing fees, first and last months’ rents, security deposits, and utility setup expenses toward a boat upkeep account. She hadn’t regretted it. Taking her home with her had maintained a sense

of stability through constant change. All the same, she was grateful beyond words that the *Only Easy Day* wouldn't be making any more long trips for awhile. Truly, she had beat the odds. In a big way.

In considering change, she hoped it wasn't too late for some to take place in this great country. Her long voyage from San Diego had starkly illustrated just how badly the government had ground the nation to a halt. While customs paperwork and country clearance had generally been a breeze in foreign ports (even transiting the Ditch), the administrative requirements in U.S. ports had been tedious and extensive. Harriet had researched and prepared the paperwork months in advance of her journey and even contacted each intended port of call to verify that she was prepared to meet the local requirements. On several occasions, her declaration that she had visited foreign ports triggered a deluge of red tape and exhaustive searches of the boat.

The federal customs declaration forms were so outdated that they still listed Cuban products as illegal, and one young agent-in-training was ready to light off the drill and radial saw when he spotted her bottle of rum. She managed to talk him down with her Code of Federal Regulations app, and his supervisor was all apologies when he identified the SEAL pin in her shadowbox. He assured her the young lad was going to be briefed on the past couple of decades' worth of legislative developments.

There had been a couple of other hitches along the way. She had known that the seas would be something of a Wild West and had prepared accordingly. On two occasions, in U.S. waters, no less, rather shady-looking vessels had approached. Warning shots from her AR-10 had convinced them to look elsewhere for wallets and jewelry. The real annoyance had come from some of the private security forces that worked for the resource extraction firms. While seabed mining and drilling rights did not entitle the owner companies to restrict navigation, their hired muscle occasionally tried to act out their law enforcement fantasies. They would insist that she detour enormous distances to avoid their "territory," or that they be permitted to board and search the *Only Easy Day*. The worst clowns were the slack-jawed, chest-thumping brutes that worked for Ocean Sentry. Rumor had it the firm hired for loyalty vice brains. Her encounters had confirmed the very worst tales: fancy black uniforms, no skills. Varying combinations of pistol drawing, shotgun racking, and calls to the real Smokies of the Sea were consistently effective remedies against those idiots.

Harriet's fairly insular military life of the past quarter century had left her unprepared for many aspects of the civilian world. The Colonies (as she thought of them), for example. A Roman history enthusiast, she knew that retired legionaries had formed their own colonies near the garrisons where they had been based. She had found a similar arrangement in Alexandria. It had been a "Military Town" for as long as anyone could remember, but now it was essentially a very large gated community, populated solely by active duty and retired military and their families. Not that she minded, of course. That meant secure environs for her home, filled with like-minded people. She wasn't at all sure she would have preferred the marina at National Harbor, where the fashion designers lived, or Anacostia, where the tech nerd colony had sprung up. Say what you will about diversity, it was good to be among those with a common experience.

Now she would enjoy the company of such people at work as well. After six rejections, she knew she should have felt grateful for *any* job. Harriet was ecstatic to have landed a great one, in this day and age. Carlson Irons was filled with retired military, law enforcement, and public safety personnel. They provided security consulting, Red Teaming, and protective services to the government and businesses. It was a well-respected and highly professional firm. While it hadn't been at the top of her list of desired employers, a couple of her very best assignments hadn't appeared on her dream sheet either.

Dimensions

Technology

An agile and largely independent private sector dramatically outstrips the government in speed of technology development and adoption. Federal projects and grants are rare, and national laboratories are shadows of their former selves. Virtually all advances originate in commercial enterprises, and precious venture capital is reserved only for the most promising innovations.

Information is at the heart of profit: Firms succeed through effective big data collection and analysis. Its criticality warrants paramount protection efforts. Infosecurity is engaged in pitched battle against “infothieves,” the latter generally employed by rival companies. As in other realms, the government’s role has been relegated to verification and validation of corporate security systems. Even this role is largely for show: Businesses are more than adequately motivated to safeguard their information systems.

Technology is widely accessible. Its use by individuals generally falls into one of two categories: lifestyle enhancement or escapism. The breakdown is along social lines. The affluent enjoy smart homes, offices, automation, and optimization in nearly every aspect of their lives. The downtrodden use virtual reality to temporarily forget their woes. New technologies are rapidly embraced and integrated, even when they drive significant lifestyle and industrial process changes. In many respects, personal style is subordinated to technological advancement.

The vast majority of the population has traded privacy for convenience. RFID cards are carried almost universally and enable virtually all conveniences. Engagement with and enrollment in a variety of systems and applications serving daily transactions render individual movements easily tracked. Companies mine this information and develop algorithms describing individual and mass behavior. On the even-more-sinister side, those taking measures to avoid tracking invite scrutiny and suspicion. Black markets for RFID counterfeiting, database hacking and sabotage, and smuggling are well established.

A network of sensors tracks people, vehicles, vessels, and aircraft. The location of virtually everything is known, and this data is a valued commodity. Government has long since ceased to provide such information and is now only one of many buyers.

People widely use social media to assume preferred personas. Truth is rarely distinguishable from fiction in cyberspace. Bad actors alter personal and corporate profiles to meet criminal and competitive ends. Profile protection and cybercrime investigation have formed a vigorous service industry.

Technology has replaced humans across a large swathe of services such as maintenance, food service, administration, and transportation. Employment opportunities for low-skilled and unskilled labor in the United States are exceedingly limited. The poor grow poorer, and many are forced into black market industries for survival. Illegal immigrants are particularly vulnerable, often arriving in the Land of Opportunity to find no opportunities. Automation in manufacturing impacts skilled tradesmen. Computer-driven additive and subtractive manufacturing (SLS and CNC) are ubiquitous and have largely replaced machinists. Widely dispersed production-on-demand, just-in-time inventory, and reliability-centered maintenance ideologies have reduced the required logistics and mechanical workforces.

Cyber

Minor cyber crimes such as denial of service and other nuisance attacks are the price of doing business. In the cyber war of innovation, these are mitigated by constantly evolving security schema such as fast storage and virtual networks. Larger companies take additional measures, affordable only at scale.

Vigorous detection and prosecution, and generally disavowed and crippling counteroffensives make damaging attacks rare. Those that do occur target only the most valuable information and infrastructure or produce enormous payouts. Government systems external to heavily armored military networks are of little interest. Attacks tend to be meticulously planned and executed.

Utilities and other critical infrastructure authorities have consolidated their networks and security efforts. These entities and federal and local governments contract with the private sector for cyber defense, detection, and forensics. Attackers are frequently identified, and those apprehended are invariably prosecuted to the full extent of the law.

An international council, largely composed of private sector representation, has been established in response to a thoroughly interconnected world. This body attempts to establish global technology standards and codes of ethics to address myriad cyber threats.

Maritime Environment

America's exclusive economic zone has become numerous corporate exclusive economic zones. In an effort to reduce the expense and manpower of securing and stewarding the nation's waters, the government has permitted private industries to lease parcels of ocean territory all the way to 200 nautical miles offshore or the edge of the continental shelf.

The standard 20-year term permits the lessee exclusive rights to living, mineral, and renewable resources within the designated parcel. The leasing entity must provide and receive government

approval of resource utilization, surveillance, and enforcement plans. They are subject to periodic inspections and must consistently demonstrate high standards of environmental stewardship and maritime security.

Sensor suites and reporting requirements capture and document virtually all vessel movements. This information is shared with the government as a lease condition. Coverage gaps have been virtually eliminated, and maritime domain awareness is superb.

Corporate lessees patrol their parcels. Though a government requirement, desire to protect their economic interests is stronger impetus. Targets of Interest (TOIs) are detected and occasionally detained, while government law enforcement agencies handle arrest and prosecution, where appropriate.

As a matter of policy, other states and their merchant fleets do not recognize the authority of corporate maritime managers. Surveillance and reporting of suspicious vessels still aids federal law enforcement in targeting and conserves stretched resources. Domestic and international transits through (leased) U.S. waters are restricted to shipping lanes. These are subject to extra surveillance, which significantly deters violations and preserves the health and economic viability of the maritime environment. Predictably, pollution, illegal fishing, and other violations have significantly declined.

For those companies that comply with the requirements of maritime parcel leases, the rewards are handsome. Apart from the direct profits of their investments, the treasure they pour into federal coffers affords them access to and influence over lawmakers. Those that fail to meet the standards of their agreements, from a managerial or reporting standpoint, shortly lose their leases, and often their businesses. Significant entry costs and government monitoring discourage black market entities from participation.

In the early days of this policy, a handful of firms rapidly exploited and abandoned their parcels. The legal and economic consequences that followed, as well as improved lessee screening and oversight, has since prevented such tragedies.

Climate Resiliency

Hurricanes and typhoons have increased in frequency and magnitude. Four to six Category 3 or 4 storms is standard in any given season. Mud slides, in addition to direct storm damage, are an additional consequence for the west coast. Weather patterns in the continental United States, Alaska, and Hawaii have also intensified, producing severe rain and snow storms on a regular basis. States, municipalities, and industry develop and implement plans for environmental resiliency, while the federal government oversees and certifies these efforts against stringent standards.

Environmentally vulnerable industries, such as agriculture and aquaculture, are significantly impacted. However, these industries also spawn innovative solutions for resistance and

adaptation to a changing climate. Production remains adequate for demand, and basic foodstuffs are still affordable.

In spite of the risks, the population is concentrated on the coasts. New zoning and construction codes require a minimum thirty foot elevation for development of all kinds, and coastal structures are subject to stringent structural and insurance requirements. Shoreside dwellings are, consequently, only affordable to the rich. These residents are also subject to government monitoring and mandated compliance with evacuation orders.

All citizens benefit from improved weather forecasting and numerous shelters against storms, floods, and wildfires. Enhanced building codes and community contingency plans render even the cheapest dwellings resistant to most environmental hazards. Private and government-subsidized insurance policies are ubiquitous. Businesses provide emergency shelters for their employees and conduct the bulk of emergency response. As in other aspects of their practices, the better firms are more professional in these areas.

Where government or corporate resources cannot support those impacted by natural disasters, charities pick up the slack.

Governance and Politics

Dynamic population movements across voting districts produce frequent turnover in the U.S. Senate and House of Representatives. Local concerns dominate elected representatives' attention as they struggle to secure multiple terms, while allegiances and priorities are in constant flux. Representatives' efforts are generally futile and productive congressional action at the national level is wanting. Partisan politics are a thing of the past, and forming a caucus along any line is nearly impossible.

Broken campaign promises are common. The most recent polls indicate 30% percent of the population characterizes its distrust of government as "extreme," and voting in the most recent national election was at 5%. Those who are still voting do not restrict their ballots to the two traditional parties. Write-in candidates are common. Movement between districts is favored over demands that representatives live up to promises or produce results.

Like those of their representatives, citizens' perspectives are localized and short-term. When considering prospective legislation, the impact on an individual's employer eclipses concern for the national interest.

The scope, authority, and effectiveness of government are significantly diminished. Some agencies are still effective, owing to quality leadership that fosters intra- and extra-government partnerships and a culture of customer service. These leaders are universally valued and generally avoid the flux that comes with frequent congressional and executive turnover. They also succeed in securing the brightest young talent for their bureaus.

Most agencies, however, reflect the general turmoil of government and the era and suffer from frequent leadership turnover, identity crises, and unpredictable levels of voter support. The truly ineffective organizations are downsized, marginalized, or eliminated altogether rather than reformed. Their ability to attract only mediocre employees hastens their demise.

Some agencies are thoroughly corrupt. They are protected by the rich and powerful individuals or the desperate masses they benefit, and are essentially exempt from congressional oversight.

The private sector now provides a significant scope of services formerly managed by the government, to include disaster preparedness and many response efforts. Infrastructure remains on the federal job description, though the portfolio has been downsized via divestiture, streamlining, and privately-provided transportation options.

Criminal organizations have secured strong footholds in regions with little government influence. Apart from the traditional protection rackets, they provide some services traditionally managed by government and generally consider a satisfied population to be integral to their profit margins. Risk of detection and prosecution is low, thus enhancing the incentive to enter the black market.

Culture and Society

To be employed is to survive, with potential for long-term success and advancement. To be unemployed is to be doomed, as government benefits are virtually nonexistent. Long-term employment with a quality company is a nationwide objective, and the government is no longer perceived as a caretaker or safety net.

Benefits are as much of a consideration as pay when seeking employment. The population is highly mobile, and information on various businesses' employment perks is readily available. Companies understand this and offer handsome pay and benefits packages in an effort to recruit and retain quality personnel. For some employees, there is only minimal pay to accompany the standard housing, subsistence, and health care package. In most of those cases, the quality of living is sufficient to retain workers.

For many, a company closure or quest for better employment means a nomadic lifestyle and restarting a career; sometimes on numerous occasions. The unskilled, felons, and illegal immigrants seek employment where they can. This generally means low pay, deplorable living conditions, and loss of employment due to company shutdowns. Incarceration for affiliation with an illegal enterprise is also a possibility.

The well-employed mostly call company-sponsored gated communities home. Secure living conditions are a major perk, as is subsidized education for employees and their children. Those living outside the aegis of such companies form community watch groups, complete with response teams.

A reduction in crime has become an unanticipated consequence of the current era. Low tolerance for property violations and pervasive security practices serve to keep crime under control. Lack of government benefits has forced would-be criminals to work, leaving them little time or inclination for illegal activity that puts their income at risk. Fierce competition for work edges out the felons, forcing them to leave the country to find employment. Those that find work with criminal organizations are every bit as restricted in their conduct: they quickly become liabilities if they venture into petty theft or murder, and generally find themselves “disposed of.”

Corporate support to employees is not unlimited. Family benefits are finite and do not extend to each new child. Population growth has stagnated, as most families can no longer afford more than two children.

Energy Revolution

Although no international environmental conventions or enforcement bodies of any credence remain, American resource conservation efforts have harnessed the power of the purse. Corporate land leases for renewable and nonrenewable extraction subject the interested business to stringent conservation requirements and government oversight. Firms police themselves and adhere to good business practices to protect their bottom lines. They are well aware that many other firms are waiting to take over their leases if they do not meet the standards.

Improved technology and increased fuel prices have incentivized extraction from even the smallest petroleum reserves. They have also encouraged investment in alternative energy, which now satisfies 50% of the nation’s consumption and is widely employed by companies to reduce their expenses.

Developing nations burn coal to supply their energy needs, but employ clean technology to reduce its environmental impact. America uses the same techniques to best leverage its own coal supplies and sustain energy independence and environmental stewardship. Middle East oil imports are largely a thing of the past.

Substantial engineering has improved vehicle efficiency. Fifty miles per gallon is now the minimum permissible gas mileage. Fully electric vehicles have more range and a constellation of charging stations now spans the U.S. Public transportation is the norm rather than the exception in urban, suburban, and rural areas.

Economy and Commerce

State and local governments suffer from tax base churn produced by a highly mobile population. Uncertainty in long-term funding favors short-term programs, many of which are designed to entice taxpayers to settle and become part of the stable population.

Though a distant second to employment benefits, a given state's or municipality's services and tax rates can influence individuals' decisions to relocate. Areas perceived less favorably suffer population loss and concurrent reduction in tax base. Those regions with more esteemed service infrastructure enjoy an influx of taxpayers. Occasionally, programs in such places can collapse if they experience overwhelming demand before tax revenue can catch up.

The private sector plays the major role in social welfare. It has largely replaced government as benefactor and provider of benefits, now considered part of the overall employee compensation package. Generally effective in that role, industry enjoys relative autonomy from government restrictions.

The manufacturing and retail bases reflect a mobile population. People minimize their personal property ownership to reduce maintenance expenses and make frequent moves easier. Accordingly, durable goods consumption is low, and rental properties are usually fully furnished. More disposable income is spent on consumables, savings, and investment products.

Competition for a quality workforce has gained ascendancy. Spending money to provide the benefits that will attract and retain a quality workforce is considered an investment. While there is less capital available for growth, developing a strong body of employees and combating endemic turnover have become more important to companies striving to ensure their strength and long-term viability.

Responsibility for managing immigrant workers lies with industry. The private sector can issue work visas, and selectively offers these to foreign citizens with desired skills or in bulk to unskilled laborers to fill entry-level gaps. Upon accepting a work visa, immigrants enter companies' tracking systems. Black market businesses employ low-skilled and unskilled immigrants without issuing visas. Desperation or need for anonymity drives these workers to accept such risky employment.

Political factors limit private sector growth. Disjointed domestic and international economic policy and the absence of a national strategy leave industry uncertain and without a framework for development. Virtual currency, while widely in use, is volatile and discourages investments.

On the upside, less oversight and fewer requirements have reduced entry costs and production lead times for start-ups and established firms alike. Many companies have leasing agreements with the government for access to resources. These require the business to effectively manage those resources according to expert-informed plans, while the government need only supervise and enforce.

The risk of detection and prosecution incidents to illegal enterprise has decreased with the reduced reach of government. Activity can proceed for a longer period of time and across a broader scope than ever before, affording black market businessmen more profits and even the opportunity to become established in their trades. Those participating at lower levels in these organizations are frequently unaware of the extent of the company's violations. They find themselves out of employment or incarcerated when the business is shut down upon discovery.

International Cooperation and Relationships

The United States' historic leadership role on international issues has all but ended with government gridlock and the nation's short-term, domestic focus (such as it is). International relationships are cool to apathetic, and foreign policy has nearly vanished from the political lexicon. Overseas military engagements are limited due to restricted funding and minimal political support. America's general policy engagement, to include efforts in supporting democracies around the world and advising and training foreign forces, is a shadow of what it used to be. Resources are scant, and regulating American businesses with overseas holdings is out of the question. The Departments of Justice and Commerce rely upon host nations to detect illegal activity, while they focus on prosecution.

International fora are no longer the exclusive domain of state actors. Industry consortia, frequently spanning nations, have imposed themselves on collaborative and regulatory bodies. As long-standing agreements and conventions collapse or otherwise become irrelevant, business organizations propose new policies and approaches to prosperity and security. Some nations resent these upstarts; others are skeptical, a few interested, and many indifferent as they struggle to keep their own houses in order. The latter, in particular, create openings for private sector organizations to demonstrate and test their strategies. As they frequently succeed, they are gradually gaining legitimacy and favor.

At the forefront of dialogue that yet remains between nations are immigration enforcement and migrant labor force taxation. Conventions on these topics are generally not in the interest of businesses, and are unlikely in the near future.

Western Hemisphere

Potential loss of a parcel lease and permanent debarment are highly effective in encouraging regulation enforcement by private lessees. Maritime smuggling organizations occasionally attempt to pay off these commercial entities. The staggering economic consequences of discovery have effectively quashed collusion. In the same spirit, businesses monitor adherence to safety and environmental laws and are effective in their efforts. Government efforts are largely composed of reviewing safety and security plans and conducting occasional surprise inspections.

Sensors and patrols monitor maritime trade routes. Merchant vessels are subject to reporting requirements. Those that do not comply will be boarded and inspected, with possible follow-on fines or seizure. Submersibles are detected, tracked, and reported, but interception is left to government forces.

Government engagement in North and South American trade and governance organizations is limited. The U.S. has ceded its traditional leadership role in favor of reduced participation or even observer status. In many cases, American companies take an active lead under government

monitoring. The relationships and trade inroads they build benefit the U.S. economy, so they are generally left to their own devices. Economic gains generally trump worker protection concerns as trade blocs expand.

Arctic

Maritime and terrestrial parcel leases originated in the Arctic and are well established and managed. Private industry provided structure for managing territory and resources in the international commons where governments had been ineffective. Leasing companies have participated in resource management committees and other governing fora for years and are established in their roles.

The burgeoning Arctic living and mineral extraction industries have continued Alaska's historic boom-and-bust cycle. Beginning with the Klondike gold rush, continuing through the first oil discovery and Trans Alaska Pipeline construction, and now entering a third phase with offshore drilling and fishing, the Last Frontier is once again struggling to provide infrastructure and services to keep up with demand. More accurately, the corporate interests in Alaska are struggling to do so. As in other regions, the U.S. government limits its involvement to occasional inspections and prosecution of reported violations.

Resource-based Arctic industries provide workforce entry opportunities for low-skilled and unskilled workers. Upon gaining experience and training, many are promoted to positions with their same companies in the contiguous United States. Alaska's population churn is the most extreme of any region in the country.

Other Arctic nations experience a similar pattern. Canada, Russia, and Denmark have expanded their rail networks and other far north transportation infrastructure to accommodate population movements to and from their northernmost coasts.

Geopolitical Situation

Though governments are forced to relinquish a great deal of control, private sector predominance in developed countries is widespread. This trend has been underwritten by cost savings and shift of risk and responsibility away from governments of diminished capacity. That diminished government capacity, combined with the substantial power of many corporations, has compromised the U.S.'s authority in international governing bodies. Non-democratic countries retain strong representation in those organizations and rely more heavily upon them to resolve foreign and domestic issues.

International engagement is dominated by trade. Private sector influence on global politics steers nations toward agreements that support commerce and enhance business opportunities. Most nations retain a defensive posture and decline to intervene in conflicts, preferring to focus on their own security, climate resilience, and economic health.

Now well known to be a strategic asset, America's economy has eclipsed government and public facilities as a target of transnational terrorism. Large corporations maintain their own intelligence and security branches, and cooperate with the government in conducting antiterrorism operations. Their private forces frequently quash emerging conflicts and movements in the incipient stage to prevent threats to the business environment.

With few advancement prospects and most employment opportunities residing in the black market, migrants and unskilled laborers are gravitating toward low-technology industries and even departing the U.S. and other developed nations that were formerly the targets of migration. This phenomenon raises the issue of shifting constituencies and tax base churn to the national and international levels.

The world is becoming polarized: developed countries' economies are now more information-based than ever before, and poorer countries harbor the lions' share of heavy industry. Those with education are travelling to developed countries, and those with manufacturing skills or no skills are moving to the industrial countries. A few notable exceptions to the rule are those nations that experienced their industrial revolutions most recently, and still have mixed economies: China, India, and Brazil. Those countries historically on the leading edge of technology, such as Estonia and Switzerland, have exported nearly all of their manufacturing and raw materials industries. While the arrangement benefits corporations, which can pay a pittance in labor costs, lack of economic diversification creates both significant economic interdependency and economic risk for nearly all nations. Businesses and their government mouthpieces have the utmost interest in maintaining free trade.

With the exception of a thriving South Africa, the African continent is economically lost. It is now the world's mine and forest, and its countries have long since lost hope of developing their own economies. With worldwide economic and environmental challenges, the global community harbors no interest in investing in the continent, but prefers to extract its resources. In the interest of protecting their profits, businesses have hired private mercenary armies to effectively quash terrorist and militant groups, dispose of tin pot dictators, and eliminate once-common atrocities. Though it was imposed at the price of economic independence and development, Africa has finally achieved a modicum of peace.



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ⁱ Image by Luca D'Amico and Luca Teslo. www.inhabitat.com.