



New Era Workshop 2007: Scenario Set

This set of three scenarios was specifically written for Bridging the Gap's New Era Workshop in 2007. Each scenario includes explicit "driving forces" that represent hypotheses about causal mechanisms worth investigating in evolving international affairs. Together, the three scenarios act as cases for a structured, focused analytical process geared toward generating policy-relevant research questions about contemporary global politics.

For more information on the use of scenarios in generating research agendas and the distinctive process designed for the New Era Workshop, please see:

Naazneen H. Barma, Brent Durbin, Eric Lorber, and Rachel E. Whitlark. 2016. "Imagine a World in Which: Using Scenarios in Political Science." *International Studies Perspectives* 17 (2), May 2016: 117–135.



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Meta-level intellectual map:

Scenario A – *The World Without the West* – The world is separating into two distinct and equally successful systems. This scenario challenges the notion of Western-dominated and regulated globalization; in this world globalization tends to create a bipolar or multi-polar world, rather than one that is uniformly connected.

Scenario B – *Power to the People* – The international community witnesses disintegration and reorganization of governance in the developing world, and experiments with governance systems in the developed world. This scenario challenges the notion of 'the state' as the principle governance mechanism; in this world, there are many experiments in new kinds of sovereignty.

Scenario C – *A Sick, Sick World* – Everything that can go wrong is going wrong for both the developed and developing world. This scenario challenges the notion of relatively stable economic growth and improving health/welfare conditions; in this world, the quality of life, health, and wealth are all declining and major legitimate political actors are struggling to do much about it.

Each scenario includes the following four components:

1. The high-level concept
2. First cut at driving forces (how did we get here)
3. An exemplary event that captures the mood of this world
4. Other scattered observations (in this world we would see XYZ)



A. The World Without the West

1. A new set of alliances and an alternative institutional architecture emerge in the “World Without the West.” Rising powers neither fight against nor assimilate into but rather ‘route around’ the American-led system.
2. A group of rising developing countries creates a new set of economic and military institutions that essentially bypass the Post World War II set.
 - The emergence of the World Without the West is the product of a rapid deepening of interconnectivity within the developing world—across economic, social, and military parameters—that is happening independent of the liberal democratic West.
 - They are enabled to do this through new technologies (modularization, lower fixed costs, incremental as opposed to breakthrough innovation); and as a result of the US being blinded to what happens around it by its post-cold war mindset of triumphalist modernization theory.
3. At the Beijing Conference of 2010, a group of emerging powers and developing nations signs the Beijing Charter. The principles of the agreement include: a new system of capital controls and national industrial champions; a non-ICANN regional domain name system for the Internet; and a concrete pledge to respect the inviolability of national sovereignty (to prevent intervention by other states or international actors in the domestic politics of member states, particularly protecting the right for states to decide what religious practices are legitimate within their territory).
4. Other observations:
 - In 2012, Beijing Charter signatories abandon the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty in favor of an “Atoms for Development” policy, based on a shared nuclear fuel cycle agreement inside the group. Nuclear power arises as the solution in the developing world to energy, environmental, and economic issues. Developing countries claim that they, given their long history of oppression, have a right to the entire nuclear fuel cycle as a move toward energy independence from the West, and autonomous economic development. China, Pakistan, and India become the largest exporters of civilian nuclear power, repositioning themselves as the champions of green energy.
 - An alternative international financial architecture develops, centered around the Asian Monetary Fund and Asian Development Bank. Both institutions renounce what they call the ‘technocratic imperialism’ of the Washington Consensus, particularly its “good governance” norms, and focus instead on large-scale infrastructure projects.



B. Power to the People

1. The world of 2012 is seeing new and dramatic forms of political reorganization. Technology and culture together enable the de-concentration and de-centralization of power, simultaneously challenging conceptions of the international community and traditional international organizations, and undermining and replacing the functions of national governments with new experiments at the national, regional, and local levels.
2. Various groups in the world have strengthened their organization around non-nation-state centric forms of governance such as cross-national cultural and kinship networks and subnational ethnic splinter groups.
 - Preferential economic arrangements, long opposed by liberal internationalists, are increasingly common and legitimate. They are not regional (i.e. delineated by geography) so much as they are cultural and ethnic (delineated by identity politics, such as technology-enabled kinship networks; e.g., the Chinese bamboo network, and *hawala* financing in the Islamic world).
 - States in some parts of the world are increasingly unable to provide basic governance functions to their populations and are *de facto* 'outsourcing' those functions to a variety of other actors, including private sector security organizations, humanitarian and health NGOs, and mega-philanthropists with global agendas.
3. Citing the unwillingness of the international community to act in stopping ongoing genocide, a collection of extremely rich individuals from around the globe (Richard Branson, Lakshmi Mittal, and George Soros) have raised and deployed privately-financed peace-keeping forces to enforce a cease-fire in the Sudan. They are poised to extend the deployment of their troops to Chad and the Congo.
4. Other observations:
 - Other failing African states, witnessing this intervention, outsource the majority of their principal governance functions to a Gates Foundation/McKinsey consortium, led by Jeffrey Sachs.
 - In parts of the Islamic world, radical parties have led revolutions, creating populist, anti-Western, capitalist regimes that are economically successful, magnets for FDI, and remain dedicated to the destruction of Israel.
 - In the US and parts of Western Europe, fully private cities that are owned, controlled, and governed by private corporations emerge to attract specific religious and cultural groups.
 - By 2010, Iraq has fully disintegrated into three independent self-governing provinces. Rather than being an isolated incident, this is part of a larger trend. Who sits in Iraq's seat at the UN? Which other nations have left the UN as a result (Turkey; Iran)?
 - Traditional international organizations are engaged in massive legal battles. Confusion reigns over who is empowered to sign 'treaties' and other global contractual arrangements in this world.



C. A Sick, Sick World

1. The world experiences high-level systems failure in the realm of public health, the environment, and the economy. Catastrophic shocks overwhelm the resiliency of a variety of systems both domestic and international.
2. A) A dollar crisis in 2007 brings on a deep recession in the US, slow growth in China, slide back into depression in Japan, and European malaise. It is the beginning of a 'lost decade' for economic growth in the West, as the highly leveraged growth of the 1999-2006 period unravels.
 - This is accompanied by different forms of 'social sickness,' including deteriorating mental health, families in stress, a rise in drug abuse, deteriorating infant care, obesity epidemics, etc.
 - Worrisome demographic trends accelerate, including aging populations in the industrialized world against shrinking fertility, and serious gender imbalances in populous developing nations.B) Diminishing resources are chasing burgeoning problems. Forced to prioritize, the EU circles the wagons, calls for the formation of a Concert of Democracies, and declares that only liberal democracies will receive economic, security, and humanitarian assistance from Europe.
3. In 2012, a catastrophic rolling drought, precipitated by global climate change, leads to the death by famine of 4 million people around the globe. Later that same year, massive typhoons decimate the flood plains of Bangladesh, killing a million people in three days. These incidents of mass death are televised live to the world. They are accompanied by enormous migration and refugee flows, which carry with them the threat of a new Ebola epidemic.
4. Other observations:
 - Illicit flows have grown faster than legal flows: grey trade in drugs, guns, women, and nuclear materials is reported to exceed national trade accounts. Internet fraud exceeds legitimate e-commerce.
 - A variety of opportunist actors have become more adept at taking advantage of systems failure. These include: multinational corporations in a desperate search for profits; oil majors in a desperate search for cheap energy; drug companies in a desperate search for new molecules and humans to test them on; neo-colonial adventurers in a desperate search for resources; and NGOs in a desperate search for high visibility victims to serve. They all move in to fill the institutional void on the African continent in particular but also, surprisingly, in developed countries.
 - Multi-national hedge funds make huge amounts of money by placing bets against the largest American and European disaster insurance companies.
 - Contravening legal immigration and flight controls, an eccentric group of wealthy Christian philanthropists charters a fleet of planes to bring thousands of the sickest refugees back to the Washington, DC, area, landing them at a private Virginia airstrip.