

WORLD / GLOBAL CHALLENGES •30:9/302 (A)

2008 State of the Future. Jerome C. Glenn, Theodore J. Gordon, and Elizabeth Florescu (The Millennium Project). Washington: World Federation of UN Associations, Aug 2008/103p/\$49.95 (includes 6,300p CD). (Order from WFS.)

The 12th report in an annual series intended “to provide a context for global thinking and improved understanding of global issues, opportunities, challenges, and strategies,” and to improve thinking about the future. The Project gathers research and judgments of 229 futurists, scholars, and planners in 31 Project Nodes worldwide (groupings of individuals and institutions). The 103p report provides an executive summary and six chapters (below). The CD elaborates on these projects and contains the cumulative work of the overall Project since 1996, including global scenarios (for the next 1000 years, energy in 2020, counterterrorism, a nonnative scenario for 2050), global goals for 2050, and ideas for sustainable development.

1) Global Challenges. Two-page descriptions of 15 challenges, their regional considerations, and prescriptions, updated by an ongoing Delphi process and environmental-scanning since 1996. *Sustainable Development/Climate Change*: the world is warming faster than IPCC estimates: “it is time for a US-China global strategy to address climate change with an Apollo-like 10-year goal” to support electric cars, solar power satellites, geothermal energy. etc.; *Sufficient Clean Water*: “meeting the MDG goal on sanitation would cost \$38 billion and yield \$347 billion worth of benefits—much of it related to higher productivity and improved health”; *Population Growth/Resources*: food production has to increase 50% by 2013 and double in 30 years; new agricultural approaches will be needed; *Genuine Democracy*: the long-term trend is positive but the short-term trend is negative; *Global Long-Term Perspectives for Policymaking*: national legislatures should establish “Committees for the Future” as Finland has done, and national foresight studies should be continually updated and improved; *Global Convergence of ICT*: already a powerful force for globalization, democratization, education, and economic growth; *Encouraging Ethical Market Economies*: a strategic plan for global partnership is needed to reduce disparities, based on the strength of free markets and rules based on global ethics; *New and Reemerging Disease*: >1,100 epidemics have been verified in the last five years and face 20 drug-resistant diseases today; the world is preparing for potential genetic variations in the H5N1 avian flu virus that could kill tens of millions; *Improving Decision-Making Capacity*: more open systems and interactive media are involving more people, which further increases complexity; ubiquitous computing with collective intelligence could inform decisions, but decision making culture is slow to change; *Reducing Terrorism and Conflicts*: backcasted peace scenarios should be created through participatory processes to show how peace is possible; *Status of Women*: women in legislatures have increased from 13.8% in 2000 to 18% in 2008; *Organized Crime*: transnational crime networks continue to grow, with total criminal income likely to be well over \$2 trillion (about twice all the military budgets in the world); *Growing Energy Demand*: world energy demand could double in 20 years; a global collective intelligence (described in Chapter 5) should provide the overviews and

details needed to create coherent energy policy; *Accelerating Sci/Tech*: e.g., >600 nanotech-related products improve quality and make new capacities possible (although health impact studies may tired dangers); *Ethics in Global Decisions*: collective responsibility for global ethics in decisionmaking is embryonic but growing; global ethics is also emerging through ISO standards; and international treaties that define the norms of civilization.

2) State of the Future Index. A measure of the 10-year outlook for the future, constructed with 29 variables. Indicators that show improvement are life expectancy, infant mortality, literacy, GDP/capita, conflict reduction, and Internet users. Negative indicators are CO₂ emissions, global warming, corruption, terrorism, percent of people voting, and unemployment. Overall, “the global SOFI indicates that the future over the next 10 years is still getting better, although not as rapidly as it did over the past 20 years.” Also discusses how to conduct National SOFI, with South Korea as an example.

3) The Real-Time Delphi Technique. Describes a relatively new and efficient method for collecting and synthesizing expert opinions (the big advantage of RTD is that it is practically “roundless”: results are updated as responses are recorded, and respondents are encouraged to revisit the questionnaire as often as they want. (About 1000 people have participated in RTD studies conducted by the MP.)

4) Government Future Strategy Units and Some Potentials for International Strategic Coordination. The MP has prepared brief overviews of 28 future strategic units (all available in Chapter 4 of the CD), with 10 of them described in this chapter: Argentina, China, Egypt, EU, France, Germany, Japan, Singapore, South Africa, and the UK.

5) Global Energy Collective Intelligence. Proposes a Global Energy Network and Information System (GENIS), composed of a Global Energy Network (providing collaboration capabilities for a worldwide community of energy experts) and a Global Energy Information System (a repository and interactive access facility)

6) Emerging Environmental Security Issues. Over 1,100 items have been identified since work began in 2002 [see FS 30:7/254 for abstract of this chapter].

Overall, “the future continues to get better for most of the world, but a series of tipping points could drastically alter global prospects. Half the world is vulnerable to social instability and violence due to rising food and energy prices, falling states, falling water tables, climate change, etc.” International Alert in the UK lists 102 vulnerable countries [ALSO SEE the Failed States Index, 30:9/321]. Still, “advances in science, technology, education, economics, and management seem capable of making the world work far better than it does today.” The time may be ripe to upgrade global policy and decisionmaking systems, many of which are inefficient, slow, and ill-informed. [NOTE: A very useful integration of a vast amount of information from many sources. Continues as the best introduction—by far—to major global issues and long-term remedies. Chapters 3-5 on RTD studies, future strategy units worldwide, and GENIS are important leading-edge contributions.]

(15 global challenges and more)