

GLOBAL CHALLENGES: THE WEEK IN REVIEW

Destabilizing Threats, Stabilizing Policies, and Global Powers at a Glance

Threat Summary

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| | Environment. 33 mega-cities predicted for 2025. Editorial Note: huge chance for urban design. |
| | Inter-State Conflict. UK Defence Secretary recognizes need to talk to Taliban and other groups. |
| | Proliferation. Egypt going nuclear with help from France and Russia. US buying from Russia. |
| | Poverty. Rising food prices represent the “perfect storm” at precisely the worst possible time. |
| | Infectious Disease. British TV crew spreads deadly virus to Peruvian tribe. 1492 revisited.... |
| | Civil War. Kenya militias building up behind peace deal. UN Darfur force at 35% manning. |
| | Genocide. See China for Tibetan cultural genocide continuing. www.genocidewatch.org . |
| | Transnational Crime. Guatemala and Mexico see persistent drugs, crime, torture, disappearances. |
| | Other Atrocities. Iraq names fever after Blackwater—but Halliburton failed Reconstruction 101. |
| | Terrorism. Terrorists get smarter about moving money while banks get slower about blocking. |

Policy Summary

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| | Diplomacy. Sprat leys get satellite communications; Dutch anti-Koran film; China Olympics down. |
| | Economy. Cargo slows, railcars idle. India impatient with US myopia. Bush digs deeper hole. |
| | Security. NYPD hates FBI (with good reason). Heathrow chaos. US outsources passports. Cheney. |
| | Society. Median family incomes down 2.6% while healthcare premiums up 78% since 2000-2001. |
| | Water. 2008 Stockholm prize to “virtual water” as water poverty increases, UN concern rises. |
| | Agriculture. Indonesia and Thailand lead in food resilience initiatives. Philippine rice corruption. |
| | Education. US continues to be a mess, with Latinos and Blacks left behind (as well as the poor). |
| | Energy. MIT improves solar cells. US Energy policy in crisis. Editor: as Treasury abdicates to Fed. |
| | Health. Medical tourism to India short-changing indigenous health care. US public health a mess. |
| | Immigration. Hand-picked tomato crop in PA lacks workers. Editor: California automated years ago. |
| | Family. Children (in the well-off West) cost \$204,000 from birth to age of 18. Cheating spouses. |
| | Justice. No major stories. |

Major Player Summary

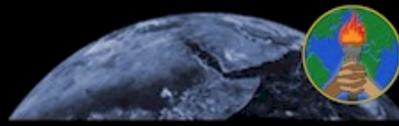
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| | Brazil. New find could increase reserves by 40% and move Brazil into top 10 oil producers. |
| | China. German chancellor will not attend Olympic opening. Tibet and the CIA—legacy of ashes. |
| | India. Maoists exaggerated. Northeast violence, separation, Myanmar deal, China lust. Counterfeiting. |
| | Indonesia. Thailand seeks Indonesian help with unrest in south. Indonesia innovates against radicals. |
| | Iran. Seeks to join SCO. Persian Economic Alliance with Tajikistan and Afghanistan? Uzbekistan? |
| | Russia. Plans to double production of conventional weapons by 2015. Editor: to just one third of US. |
| | Venezuela. Chavez beats Exxon in UK court. Oil tax on windfall profits. |
| | Wild Cards. Pakistan tribal chiefs warn US against disastrous consequences of any US action. |

World Crises - monthly assessment by [International Crisis Group](http://www.icg.org) - 01 March 2008

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| ↘ | Alert: Armenia, Comoros Islands, Kenya |
| ↓ | Deteriorated: Armenia, Cameroon, Chad, Comoros Islands, DR Congo, Ethiopia/Eritrea, Israel/Occupied Territories, Philippines, Serbia, Somalia, Sudan, Timor-Leste |
| ↑ | Improved: Cyprus, Kenya, Kosovo, Pakistan |
| ↑ | Conflict Resolution Opportunity: Cyprus, Pakistan, Timor-Leste, Uganda |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Unchanged: Afghanistan, Albania, Algeria, Azerbaijan, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Basque Country (Spain), Belarus, Bolivia, Bosnia & Herzegovina, Burundi, Central African Republic, Chechnya (Russia), Colombia, Côte d'Ivoire, Ecuador, Egypt, Ethiopia, Georgia, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Haiti, India, Indonesia, Iran, Iraq, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Lebanon, Liberia, Macedonia, Mali, Mauritania, Moldova, Myanmar/Burma, Nagorno-Karabakh (Azerbaijan), Nepal, Niger, Nigeria, North Caucasus (non-Chechnya), North Korea, Rwanda, Saudi Arabia, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Somaliland, Sri Lanka, Syria, Taiwan Strait, Tajikistan, Thailand, Turkey, Turkmenistan, Uganda, Ukraine, Uzbekistan, Venezuela, Yemen, Zimbabwe. |

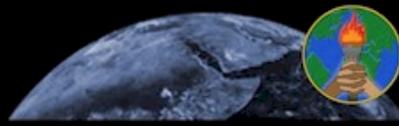
ISSUE This marks an issue that is presently without a wise or obvious solution.

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| Threats | | <i>see daily items with links to full stories on the web at PDB-Threats</i> |
|---|---|--|
| Poverty news list forecast | ↓ | An informative item on a continuing and growing crisis that affects the poor most: Food prices are rising worldwide -- "from subsistence farmers eating rice in Ecuador to gourmets feasting on escargot in France, consumers worldwide face rising food prices in what analysts call a perfect storm of conditions ". <i>see: Agriculture (RI, Thailand agree to continue food resilience cooperation)</i> <i>see: Agriculture (Arroyo asks police to raid warehouses)</i> |
| Infectious Disease news list forecast | • | A need for strict health protocols where none presently exist: British TV crew 'spread deadly flu to remote Peruvian tribe' -- "the key principles here are sensitivity and accuracy, something TV companies are often not good at". |
| Environment news list forecast | • | "The World Resource Institute predicts 33 mega cities --those with populations exceeding 8 million --by 2025" -- The 10 Biggest Cities Of 2025 . |
| Inter-State Conflict news list forecast | • | " Britain must be willing to talk to the Taliban and other extremist groups in order to try to stabilise the world, the [UK] Defence Secretary says today " -- We must talk to the Taliban, says Des Browne . The real story of 'Curveball' -- "worse than having no human sources is being seduced by a human source who is telling lies ". <i>see: Security (Cheney: Dead soldiers, they volunteered)</i> |
| Civil War news list forecast | ↓ | Note: 'Civil War' here includes internal instability. Trouble builds behind scenes in wake of Kenya peace deal -- "... new reports suggest the recruitment and build-up of these militias continues in some communities". More obstacles plague Darfur peacekeeping mission -- "the [UN] force, which officially took over from an overstretched and exhausted African Union force in Darfur on Jan. 1, has just more than 9,000 of an expected 26,000 soldiers and police officers ..." |
| Genocide news list forecast | • | <i>see: China ([Tibet items – Cultural genocide])</i> |
| Other Atrocities news list forecast | ↓ | Fever named after Blackwater -- there is no longer any excuse for Iraq's neglected hospitals which still lack the most basic medications and equipment . Human Rights Watch gives more detail on Philippines continuing extrajudicial killings -- Justice absent in killings and 'Disappearances' . |
| Proliferation news list forecast | • | Egypt now has nuclear cooperation arrangements with France , as well as Russia -- Egypt, France discuss nuclear energy cooperation: spokesman . Court cases threaten effort to reduce Russian weapons uranium [An important and complex legal tangle over Russia's reduction of weapons-grade uranium by selling downblended fuel to the US.] |
| Terrorism news list forecast | ↓ | War on financing of terrorism stalls -- "the international cooperation and focus is dropping, the farther we get from 9/11" [Simply ... the "terrorists" are getting smarter.] <i>see: Security (15,000 bags stranded at Heathrow)</i> <i>see: Society (Pope baptizes prominent Italian Muslim)</i> Dutch Islam critic launches anti-Koran film -- " right-wing Dutch lawmaker Geert Wilders launched a film [27 Mar 2008] ... despite government fears that it will offend Muslims worldwide and stoke unrest ". Indonesia criticizes Dutch film |

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critical of Islam -- "... **misleading** and would hurt efforts at **interfaith dialogue**".

ISSUE "**Free speech**" is in the catechism of modern democracy, but does not include crying "**Fire!**" in a crowded theatre. Does it license the cry of any idiot, anywhere about anything, even if this may provoke the death of many? Does the *Utility* of the act matter? The most Good to Most? No good to Anyone? ... **Qui bono?**

Transnational Crime
[news list|forecast](#)

- **Guatemala shootout leaves 9 dead** -- "the area in Zacapa province is on a **smuggling route** for **drugs** heading from **Colombia** to the **United States** and officials said they had shut down **border crossings** with **El Salvador** and **Honduras** to prevent gunmen from fleeing the country".

Disappearances, the 'Silent Side' of Mexico's Narco War -- "the unearthing of at least **48 murder** victims from three properties in Ciudad Juarez and Chihuahua City during recent weeks grimly refocused attention on the persistence of torture and forced disappearance in Mexico".

Policy

see **daily items with links to full stories on the web at PDB-Policy**

Agriculture
[news list|forecast](#)

↓ Amid top **secrecy**, at 3 a.m. [31 Mar 2008], federal officials finalize their **estimates** of how many acres of **corn, wheat, cotton, oats, barley** and **soybeans farmers** will plant this year -- *Shhh! This is crop secret.*

RI, Thailand agree to continue food resilience cooperation -- "**Indonesia and Thailand** have agreed to go ahead with **food resilience** cooperation in the face of soaring **world food prices**".

Arroyo asks police to raid warehouses -- "the [**Philippines**] Secretary of Agriculture is staking out all the **warehouses** of the National Food Authority (NFA), a **rice-importing agency**, so he can follow the trucks and see where they are bringing rice".

Diplomacy
[news list|forecast](#)

- **Military installs satellite link to remote Spratlys outpost** -- "the 60 [**Philippines**] soldiers are spread over the eight **Kalayaan islands**, with most of them on **Pag-asa**". Also: **The Spratlys and the Philippine claim** [historical background].

see: **Terrorism** (*Dutch Islam critic launches anti-Koran film*)

see: **China** (*Merkel won't attend Olympic opening, minister says*)

Economy
[news list|forecast](#)

↓ **Weak economy slows cargo, idles railcars** -- "... the nation's top hauler of container rail freight, is parking miles of railcars in Montana and elsewhere because there isn't enough freight to keep them rolling".

The *Economic Times* [**India**] shows a note of impatience with the **US**: "... managers were lulled into complacency by the facile ideas of **exceptionalism** of the US. **Strange theories** of "dark matter" suggesting that the **US economy** can go on living beyond its means for ever ..." -- **How can Asia help the US economy?**

see: **Society** (*Market depression - Money can't buy happiness, and spending it can't fix economy*)

Education
[news list|forecast](#)

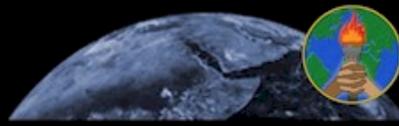
- **5 Myths About No Child Left Behind** -- some clarification of the "... 800-pound gorilla of **U.S. education**. The **No Child Left Behind Act**".

Latinos' education failure is their own fault! -- fear of **racism** can create racism and may become an excuse for **academic laziness**; reminding **Latinos** and **Blacks** that success comes from hard work is not space science, not racist.

Energy
[news list|forecast](#)

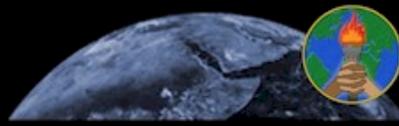
- Again **MIT** earns its money: **More-powerful solar cells** -- "the 27% improvement will bring **multicrystalline cells** to **efficiencies** about the same as **single-crystal cells**-- around 19.5 percent--at the lower costs".

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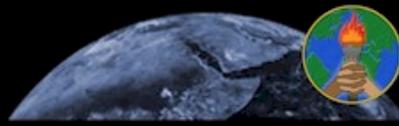


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| | <p>The US Secretary of Energy takes <i>Washington Times</i> to task over its claim that Bush energy policy has one purpose "getting more oil" -- <i>U.S. energy policy, as the Energy Secretary sees it.</i></p> <p><i>Oil price-speculators link eyed [Analysis]</i> -- "... significant flow of funds into the commodities market ..." [Comment: Saudi says it is pumping everything demanded; surely the Thieves on Wall Street – who gave the world a no-doc loans crisis -- couldn't be to blame (again) ...]</p> |
| <p>Family news list forecast</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "According to its latest estimate, a child born in 2007 costs \$204,060 to watch over, feed, cart around, educate and house from birth to the age of 18" -- <i>Million dollar babies.</i> • <i>How common are cheating spouses? -- "monogamy worship is leading some experts to think that expectations are exceedingly unrealistic and, probably, hypocritical."</i> |
| <p>Health news list forecast</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • India: "There are millions of people who need better healthcare facilities. Treating foreigners and leaving our own people suffering is not a nice proposition" -- <i>Medical tourism is waste of resources if poor not treated: Health Secretary.</i> • <i>Federal agencies pummel public health</i> -- "federal agencies -- such as the FDA, the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) and the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) -- are hobbled by ineptitude and in thrall to political and corporate interests." Also: <i>U.S. unveils web site on health care quality</i> -- "The [US] Hospital Compare Web site – http://www.hospitalcompare.hhs.gov -- allows the public to compare hospitals based on specific medical conditions or surgical procedures" • <i>Natural properties</i> may again prove to be among the best weapons available: "Copper ions separate on contact with bacteria and cause irreversible damage to the bacteria's cells" -- <i>Copper: The color of tomorrow's hospitals?</i> • see: Society (Health of nations) |
| <p>Immigration news list forecast</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Major grower ends crop, lacking workers</i> -- "... a fourth-generation farmer ... said he saw a dramatic decline last summer in the number of migrant workers who showed up to pick tomatoes at his 2,000-acre farm in northeastern Pennsylvania." |
| <p>Justice news list forecast</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • see: Other Atrocities (Justice absent in killings and 'Disappearances') • see: Proliferation (Court cases threaten effort to reduce Russian weapons uranium) |
| <p>Security news list forecast</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>NYPD to store vital security data in secret vault</i> -- "The lack of confirmation from NYPD's end appears to be rooted on alleged clashes in the past with the FBI over the control of information". • <i>15,000 bags stranded at Heathrow</i> -- criminal incompetence and misplaced trust in "technology" brings chaos that "terrorists" could only dream of. [Comment: The top-down mega-systems of our Great Societies yield profits to some when they work but are tailor-made for maximum damage by the smallest of well-placed (asymmetric) impacts.] • <i>Outsourced passports netting govt. profits, risking national security</i> -- "The United States has outsourced the manufacturing of its electronic passports to overseas companies — including one in Thailand that was victimized by Chinese espionage ..." • <i>Inside the Cyber Defense Group</i> -- "there is a large amount of funding that is being budgeted for this effort. Inside sources believe in this current year the budget is \$6 billion". • The US vice president shows his sensitive side: <i>Cheney: Dead soldiers, they</i> |

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| | <p><i>volunteered</i> -- "Cheney reminded the NBC News' White House correspondent that they were all volunteers.... <u>The president carries the biggest burden, obviously</u>".</p> |
| <p>Society news list forecast</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Health of nations -- an illumined item recalling that GDP is not a measure of quality of life; "Median family income has <i>declined 2.6%</i> annually since 2000, and the cost of healthcare premiums has increased <i>78%</i> since 2001". Market depression - Money can't buy happiness, and spending it can't fix economy - "<i>Despite all the noise, we are now a largely joyless society that finds little or no authentic meaning within ourselves</i>" says a Perdue professor. U.S. women making strides in education, entrepreneurship -- "<i>the number of women-owned businesses - 6.5 million - has increased by 20 percent between 1997 and 2002 ...</i>" and several other benchmark statistics. A provocation?: Pope baptizes prominent Italian Muslim -- "<i>he titled one book 'Long Live Israel' ... If Allam truly was compelled by a strong spiritual inspiration, perhaps it would have been better to do it delicately, maybe with a priest from Viterbo where he lives</i>". |
| <p>Water news list forecast</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2008 Stockholm Water Prize goes to 'virtual water' innovator -- "<i>Virtual water</i>" is a very useful concept; for instance, the virtual water in a hamburger is <u>2,400 litres</u> of water 'Water poverty' set to increase -- as the cost of water comes closer to its value, the number of "<i>water poor</i>", even in an industrialized nation like the UK, will increase -- "<i>... the term for people whose water bills cost more than 3% of their income after tax.</i>" UN experts concerned by water footprint -- UNESCO's Institute for Water Education in Delft confronts reality; all the urine in Africa matches the nitrogen and phosphates used for agriculture; the world's cities are growing by <u>1 million people a week</u>; ... |
| <p>Challengers</p> | |
| <p>Brazil news list forecast</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New find places Brazil on world's top 10 oil producers list -- "<i>a Brazilian new find, a huge offshore oil discovery, could raise Brazil's petroleum reserves by a whopping 40% and boost the country into the ranks of the world's major exporters</i>". |
| <p>China news list forecast</p> | <p>↓ An easy mistake to make: "<i>The U.S. military was supposed to ship helicopter batteries to Taiwan, but instead sent fuses used as part of the trigger mechanism on Minuteman missiles</i>" -- China concerned over missile parts mistake in Taiwan.</p> <p>Nothing sinister in China support: Fiji -- "<i>Fiji's coup-installed government says there is nothing sinister about its support of China's crackdown on protesters in Tibet</i>".</p> <p>German Chancellor Angela Merkel sets a precedent that is "<i>not a boycott</i>" that may be followed by others -- Merkel won't attend Olympic opening, minister says.</p> <p>Tibet, the 'great game' and the CIA -- "<i>after the Indo-China War of 1962, the CIA developed a close relationship with the Indian intelligence services in both training and supplying agents in Tibet.</i>"</p> <p>East Turkestan: Uyghur leaders supporting Tibetans -- "<i>exiled leaders of the Uyghur ethnic group, the other large, restive minority in western China, are expressing support for protesting Tibetans ...</i>"</p> |
| <p>India news list forecast</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • India's strategic thrust in S. E. Asia-before and after 9/11 [scholarly backgrounder] The Maoist threat: lies, white lies and statistics -- "... a mere 14,000 villages out of a |
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total of 650,000 villages are Maoist-affected, which accounts for just two percent of the total number of villages in the country".

Violence up in India's northeast -- "... the security situation in the region has continued to worsen for the past five years. Among the seven states in the northeast, **Assam** and **Manipur** witnessed the worst **militancy-related violence**".

Khalistan forces trying to stir sectarian violence -- "These **Sikh militant forces** include the **Khalistan Commando Force (KCF)**, the **Babbar Khalsa International (BKI)**, the **Khalistan Liberation Force (KLF)**, and the **Bhindranwale Tigers Force of Khalistan**".

China's designs on India's northeast -- "India spends about US\$26 billion and has a lukewarm **military modernization** program that is frequently bogged down in **parliamentary debates** and **approval processes**. Hence the Chinese are way ahead in military buildup, although they are short on sophisticated arms technology".

India cuts a deal with Burma's Junta -- "India's **northeast**, which is almost cut off geographically from the rest of the country by Bangladesh, comprises eight states surrounded by **Nepal, Bhutan, Tibet, Burma and Bangladesh**".

In the face of growing **US** impatience: *Indian official says no time frame on nuclear deal* -- "at this juncture, it is difficult for me to indicate any time frame by which we will be able to complete this process".

India worries over inflow of fake currency -- "... **smugglers** were bringing in both crude and highly sophisticated counterfeits into the country".

see: **Health** (Medical tourism is waste of resources if poor not treated: Health Secretary)

Indonesia
[news list|forecast](#)

- *Indonesia, Thailand to step up cooperation to end conflict* -- "Samak said that his country expected Indonesia could help settle the crisis and Indonesian President Susilo Bambang **Yudhoyono** expressed Indonesia's availability for it".

Move to use Islamic boarding schools to counter extremism -- "We call on clerics from all **pesantren** to refresh their nationalistic points of view" [Comment: Indonesia's very healthy **Islamic nationalist movements** are in counterpoint to the "foreign" pan-Islamic movement.]

see: **Terrorism** (Indonesia criticizes Dutch film critical of Islam)

Iran
[news list|forecast](#)

- *Iran extends influence [Analysis]* -- **Tajikistan, Iran** and **Afghanistan** have planned a summit that may culminate in the establishment of the **Persian Economic Alliance**. [The **Tajik language** is a variant of **Farsi**]

Iran Moves to Join Shanghai Cooperation Organization -- "Iran has lodged a bid to join the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) that comprises **Russia, China** and the four ex-Soviet **Central Asian states** ..."

Russia
[news list|forecast](#)

- *Kyrgyzstan says Russians will retain military presence* -- "... Russia annually pays some \$4.5 million to Kyrgyzstan for the **military bases** and also provides Bishkek with military and technical **equipment** ..."

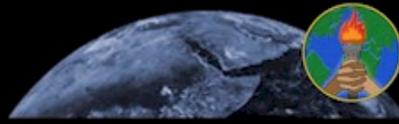
Russia to double production of conventional weapons by 2015 -- "Russia is pursuing a government **armament program** for the period up to 2015, which envisions the procurement of weaponry for all branches of the **Armed Forces**".

Venezuela
[news list|forecast](#)

- *Venezuela Chavez basks in needed glory of Exxon win* -- "... a **British court's reversal** of a \$12 billion freeze on Venezuelan assets awarded to Exxon ..."

The Coming War on Venezuela -- The neoconservative **National Endowment for**

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Democracy (NED) and the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID)

...

The Latin crisis [A view by Kay Bailey **Hutchison**, chair of the **Republican Policy Committee**.]

Chávez announces new oil tax – “They’re [**foreign oil investors**] earning money that they haven’t accounted for [due to **world oil price**].... Those large additional earnings aren’t a product of any extraordinary effort.... It isn’t that they’ve **invested more**”.

Wild Cards

[news list](#)[forecast](#)

- *see: Iran (Iran extends influence [Analysis])*

Tribal chiefs warn visiting US officials against direct action -- "... [**Pakistan**] **tribal chiefs** also warned the **Americans** that any **direct action** by the **US** would have **disastrous consequences**".

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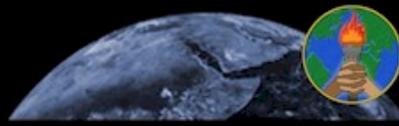
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New Book Reviews by Robert Steele (#1 Amazon Reviewer for Non-Fiction, #35 Over-All)

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