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[Tom Ricks's Inbox](#)

Article | Retired Gen. Barry McCaffrey predicts what lies around the bend in international relations. It made me wonder why anyone would want to be president.

## Looking Towards the Future

*Retired Gen. Barry McCaffrey has long had a reputation for audacity, both on the battlefield (during 32 years in the Army, he received three Purple Hearts, two Distinguished Service Crosses and two Silver Stars) and in his thinking. Here, in a briefing for a military audience last week, he predicts what lies around the bend in international relations. It made me wonder why anyone would want to be president.*



## LOOKING TOWARD THE FUTURE

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- The U.S. economy will continue to do extremely well in the global marketplace – despite the looming U.S. recession caused by: the credit market meltdown, oil price increases, trade balance deficits, tax revenue/expenditure shortfalls, and a grossly weakened U.S. currency.
- U.S. – Japanese economic, military, and political cooperation will grow even more intense.
- Saudi Arabia will continue to modernize, maintain stability, and greatly improve the capabilities of their Armed Forces and internal security.
- Relations with Europe will dramatically improve with the next Administration.
- Political and economic relations with China will continue to remain strong even as the PRC emerges as a major Pacific naval and air force military power.
- Political and economic relations with India are now immeasurably better than pre-9/11.
- The situation in Pakistan is unstable. Our position in Afghanistan would be untenable without Pakistani support.
- U.S.-Russia relations will grow more hostile -- but will avoid dysfunctional military/political/economic confrontation.
- North Korea will come apart. We must facilitate a soft landing for this dangerous regional nuclear power.
- Terrorists will strike at America during the next Administration's first term.
- The crisis in Iraq will stabilize and U.S. forces will largely withdraw in the first 36 months of the next Administration. (34,000 U.S. killed and wounded -- \$12 Billion per month).
- The next five years in Afghanistan will be dangerous. The situation may improve with massive new U.S. resources. Our Allies will not step up to the challenge.
- The death of Castro -- meltdown of repression – 250,000 refugees within 36 months.
- Confrontation with Chavez -- instability and oil. We have no U.S. Latin-America regional foreign policy strategy.
- Iran will go nuclear – instability in the Persian Gulf. The Sunni Arabs will create a nuclear-military coalition.