

Thoughts on Coming Apart and the Coming Great Reset



Turning and turning in the widening gyre
The falcon cannot hear the falconer

Kit Webster

Themes and Theses

Why I'm Contemplating Out Loud

(Initially formulated in the early 90s, following decades of reading history, philosophy, religion, psychology and a lot of contemplation,

particularly on the subject of cycles. In the end, this is a relatively straightforward story about human nature and of history rhyming.) The US will enter a period of crisis in the early 2000s. In the late 90s, I incorporated Strauss' and Howe's terminology of the Fourth Turning (without incorporating their generations paradigm) and agreed with Howe that the end stage of the crisis began with the Great Financial Crisis and would last into the early 2030s. We are now at the beginning of the end stage of the crisis.

The crisis will be serious and could be existential.

Internal strife will increase, up to and including secession and civil war. International conflicts will increase as the vacuum created by the weakening of the US is filled by other players.

There will be many threads to the crisis, but the primary thread will be debt, deficits and entitlements. Other factors include, eg, demographics, a loss of meaning and myth and a loss of self-discipline.

Politics will move leftward as citizens look for some refuge from the chaos. The US will become increasingly susceptible to a (man) on a white horse, who can come from either the left or the right.

Inflation, as the most likely way to address debt since austerity is not politically acceptable, will significantly lower standards of living, exacerbating the civil crises.

Eventually, the dollar will be inflated away and lose its reserve status. Once the old rot is cleared out, and assuming continuity, there will be the basis for the establishment of a new order.

There will be what Strauss and Howe calls a First Turning . It will be constructed out of the physical infrastructure, wealth, energy sources, thoughts and values in the culture at the time. At this point in time, those components are unknowable. We can anticipate that the next future will be increasingly chaotic. We can anticipate that there will be destruction, and then reconstruction from some level. We cannot yet anticipate the form of the reconstruction or the level from which it will begin.

(Added in the early 00s) While humans are contributing to global warming, policies implemented to address manmade global warming will

create a significant energy crisis, probably toward the end of the Fourth Turning.

(Added around 2020) The loss of faith by our youth in our founding principles means that the new order will at least partially be based on new principles. As yet, I have no visibility as to what those principles might be.

(Added in 2023) The lowering / elimination of standards in education, the judiciary, law enforcement, the military and other segments of our society will create a population unable to adequately comprehend, do or respond to the challenges of democracy and culture.

(Added in 2025) China has won - at least for the next 5-10 years. The US is dependent on China for the materials it uses to create defense items. We literally cannot fight China without China's help. China's industrial base is impressive; the US has to rebuild. China is out-innovating the US. China is turning out more engineers and scientists than the US by far. This does not mean that China does not face challenges - demographics perhaps being its primary challenge. The US military remains stronger than China's, but in an age of drone warfare, that statement means less than it has historically. The US still has bargaining chips and will need to use them to maintain any kind of status quo.

(Added in 2025) AI has the potential to profoundly affect human culture. However, AI faces several significant hurdles, including the demand for massive amounts of electricity, which may not be available, and a cultural revolt against its existence. Since it could be existential, and since China is pursuing it, the US has no alternative, at least in the short term.

(Added in 2026) Maneuvering for control of critical materials will be a primary driver of geopolitics for at least the next decade.

Voter ID

February 20, 2026

Quotes to Contemplate

**There is a legitimate reason to have a debate about things like migration. It went too far. It's been disruptive and destabilizing, and it needs to be fixed in a humane way, with secure borders that don't torture and kill people, and with a strong family structure, because it is at the base. -
Hillary Clinton**

The US has a choice to make. For the next decade, until it can get nuclear up and running, it can get the cheap, abundant energy it needs from coal. - paraphrasing Louis-Vincent Gave

Summary of Primary Thoughts To Contemplate In This Issue

Trump's tariff policy has underperformed, so far. Costs are up and the trade deficit is equal to that of last year.

Speaking of tariffs, the Supreme Court ruled against Trump. Big. Trump's primary cudgel has been compromised.

Today, AI is coming for white collar jobs. Blue collar jobs will be at a premium. In a decade, robots will come for the blue collar jobs.

Slow Week

I react to the news of the week and the thoughts in my head. This past week it seems there was a dearth of both.

Markets

Updated charts

Very worthwhile podcast on [MacroVoices](#). A lot to think about.

Worthwhile podcast on [Wealthion](#) about China, with Louis-Vincent Gave, who is always worth listening to.

No change in outlook.

So, You Say You Want A Revolution?

(I use em dashes as part of my writing style. I will explicitly note any use of AI throughout this newsletter. If there is no AI-note, you can assume it is either my writing or a quote from a news source.)

> The Supreme Court ruled against Trump and some of his tariffs. Since tariffs are a, maybe the, cornerstone of Trump's policy program, this is BIG. I don't know how many rationales Trump is using for tariffs, but there are more than one and the Supreme Court just took away one. He will try to use the others to move forward. Lots of deal renegotiating and filings for tariff refunds.

Imo, this was the correct legal decision, but boy does it stir the pot. Right on cue - Trump - "Effective immediately, all National Security TARIFFS, Section 232 and existing Section 301 TARIFFS, remain in place, and in full force and effect. Today I will sign an Order to impose a

10% GLOBAL TARIFF, under Section 122, over and above our normal TARIFFS already being charged..."

Ok, that is round 1 in at least a 3-round match. The authority he mentioned is limited to 150 days and would require Congress to keep the levies in place.

> Doomberg wrote a piece about California, the environment and regulations.

California has strong laws regarding the environment, it requires special blending of gasoline and it has made life sufficiently difficult for oil refiners that several have left the state. This all leaves California, particularly northern California, without a sufficient supply of refined products, which they are now having to get from overseas, since they have few pipelines connecting them to other states.

Keep an eye on this, because it is a wonderful example of being careful what you wish for, and because there is a chance that one of the architects of all of this, Gavin Newsome, will be the next president of the US.

> An issue most people miss, but which I addressed in my book, is that the demand for water is, and has been, greater than the supply in some areas of the US. The allocation of the flows of the Colorado River have been by an agreement that no longer works. Significant reductions in water usage are required, but no one is agreeing to that. At some point the federal government will likely step in. Regardless of the resolution, it will be ugly for the West.

Stay tuned.

> The struggles continues:

As AOC begins her run for the presidency, word salads begin to appear: "What we are seeking is a return to a rules-based order that eliminates the hypocrisies around when too often in the west we look the other way for inconvenient populations, to act out these paradoxes." She then

called for "class-based internationalism." I can't wait to find out what that is.

The Federal Aviation Administration is issuing a new mandatory rule that requires all commercial airlines in the country to formally commit to merit-based hiring for pilots, according to a Feb. 13 statement from the Department of Transportation .

Under the new mandate, all U.S. carriers must certify that the practice of airlines hiring based on race and sex has ended or face a federal investigation.

“When families board their aircraft, they should fly with confidence knowing the pilot behind the controls is the best of the best,” DOT Secretary Sean P. Duffy said.

“The American people don’t care what their pilot looks like or their gender—they just care that they are [the] most qualified man or woman for the job.”

Kayleigh Bush, the 2024 Miss North Florida champion, has been stripped of her title and barred from competing in the Miss America nationals because she wouldn’t sign a revised contract that essentially erases the biological definition of womanhood to include men who’ve undergone surgeries.

> Hillary is popping up everywhere. Wonder what's up? It looks like something resembling a presidential run, but she's 78 now and will be 80 if she runs for president. That's possible, but perhaps something else is afoot.

> This caught my eye because you know how I feel about history - The Trump administration must temporarily restore displays about slavery at a historic site connected to George Washington after a judge said the government did not have the power to erase historical truths.

> The tariff game - The US trade deficit jumped by almost 33% in December, rising for the second month in a row to \$70.3 billion. The data released Thursday by the Commerce Department's Bureau of Economic Analysis also provided an annual tally for 2025, totaling trade in both goods and services at \$901.5 billion. The total for 2024, the last year of Joe Biden's presidency, was \$903.5 billion. Trump is projecting a trade surplus some time during this year.

> The Bee comes through - New Yorkers Report Warmth Of Collectivism Feels Strangely Like Crushing Tax Hike. (Mamdani is playing a game of chicken with the State of New York. He has a multibillion dollar deficit on his hands. He wants to close it by taxing the rich, which requires the State's approval, which is not yet forthcoming. He has said that instead he will impose a 9.5% across-the-board property tax increase.)

> I really want Stephen A. Smith, an outspoken ESPN personality, to run for president. I have no idea whether I would support him, but the soap opera would be next level if he keeps up his no-nonsense style.

> Trump has ordered the Pentagon and government agencies to release files related to aliens and UFOs because of "tremendous interest".

> While speaking at the Board of Peace meeting, Trump said that he will decide whether to take military action against Iran "over the next probably 10 days."

> Trump banners are cropping up all over DC - this is the Department of Justice.





Tracy Shuchart (Chi) ✓
@chigr1

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USGS report

A new report by the US Geological Survey reveals that the United States has grown **more reliant on foreign imports of minerals over the past year**, highlighting the increased urgency to bolster its domestic supply chains.

In its annual mineral commodities summary, the USGS found that the country was 100% import reliant last year for 16 out of the 90 non-fuel commodities that it tracked. In addition, the US relied more than one-half of its apparent consumption for 54 of the minerals, the report showed.

In comparison, the 2024 data showed 100% import reliance for 15 commodities and more than one-half import reliant for 46 minerals, the USGS said. (Mining .com and USGS)

Voter ID

Sometime ago, I wrote a lengthy piece on rigging elections. It included two, contrary, principal thoughts:

1. Everyone in politics is trying to gain edges all the time, including rigging elections. It starts with gerrymandering and goes to walking-around money and just plain fraud. It also includes voting goodies for citizens while you are in office - another form of vote buying.

Sometimes it gets Lyndon Johnson elected Senator and sometimes it gets JFK elected President. Sometimes, "corrupt bargains" get presidents elected.

2. Mostly, but not always, the effects are minor and our elections are generally fair within the limitations of the system as a whole (I wrote another piece that discussed why the error bars inherent in our system mean that there is literally no way to know whether Al Gore or W won

their presidential race - our system does not produce sufficiently accurate, valid data). There is a lot of effort to nullify cheating by the other side and by people who are concerned about election integrity, so that the good guys and bad guys are roughly in equilibrium. But, sometimes the bad guys win.

Our culture has taken gaming the system to a high art - one driven by technology.

On top of that, we have interesting trends, such as, non-citizens should vote - again driven both by those who genuinely support doing that and those who think they will gain an edge.

Because so much money and power are involved, there is a significant motivation to cheat - to do whatever it takes.

So, we get early voting and mail-in ballots and other sub-optimal strategies. Every decision has trade-offs. For me, early voting is marginally bad and mail-in ballots are an invitation to manipulation.

However, if quantity of votes is deemed superior to quality, then they are valid approaches. If voter turnout is more important than accurate counting, then we are good (I would tend to go with quality).

Which brings me to voter id.

To me, the case for voter id is so obvious that I'm not going to belabor it, but will quickly summarize the pros:

Election integrity

Public confidence in elections

IDs everywhere - essentially everyone has an id

International norms - essentially every democracy requires a voter id.

Let's look at the case against.

Of course the primary argument against is my use of the word, essentially, when describing the ubiquity of ids. "Essentially everyone" is roughly equivalent to "some don't." Some don't translates into unfair, discriminatory or racist. And they are right, even though often overwrought. No matter how hard you try to get everyone an id, there will always be a group that cannot or will not get one - disproportionately low-income, elderly, minority, and young voters.

Data are all over the map, and there is a lot of propaganda. I will bracket the data with two statistics - only 1% of eligible voters do not have a government-issued id. That sounds pretty good until you run up against - 11% of eligible voters do not have an id that conforms to strict standards required in some places. So, given an eligible voting population of around 224 million, somewhere between 2 and 24 million people would be affected. (Voter turnout varies - since 1920, it has averaged about 57% for a presidential election; the most recent election was around 66%, and there is a high likelihood that those without id also do not vote in any event, so that the ultimate impact of requiring a voter id is complicated and perhaps unknowable.)

The next point against is that there really does not seem to be that much of a problem today. Yes, dead people vote, and yes, people vote twice, and yes, illegals vote. But in the grand scheme of things, all of this does not now move the needle.

(Rep. Wesley Hunt, a black, says about liberals, "They believe black and brown people are too stupid to get an ID to vote.." There is this wider issue of liberal whites patronizing people of color, but that is a discussion for another day.)

Also, one corrupt county in Texas got LBJ elected and one corrupt county in Illinois got JFK elected, so corruption does not have to be prevalent to be impactful.

However, the levels of outrage and gaming are rising, and it is imo likely that things will become much worse, creating turmoil around elections. There is a real possibility that 2028 will be a free-for-all. It is this concern that primarily leads to my support of voter id.

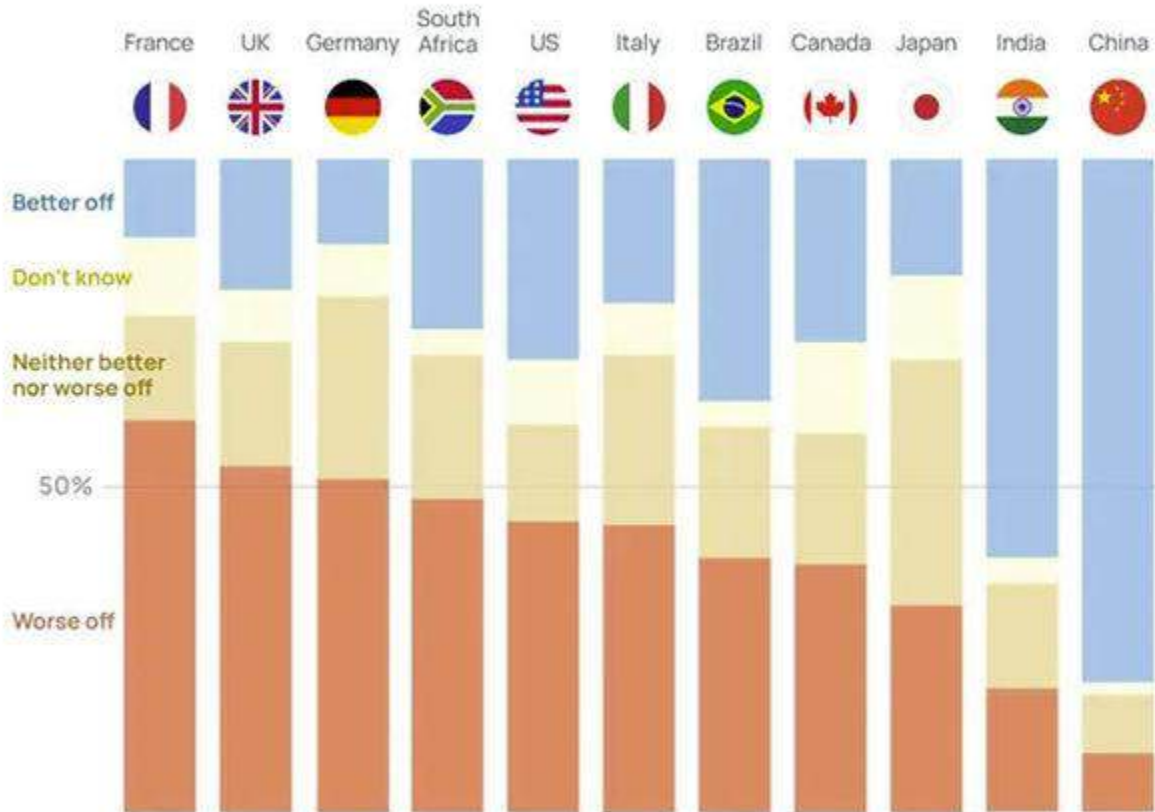
Claude sums it up as follows: "The debate ultimately turns on how one weighs the marginal security benefit against the marginal access cost — and on empirical disagreements about both the prevalence of fraud and the scale of disenfranchisement."

And there we are.

Gallery

Is government making peoples' lives worse?

Countries' evaluations of how their governments' policies will impact future generations, November 2025.



Respondents polled in G7 and BRICS countries (BRICS countries minus Russia).
Source: Munich Security Report 2026



Miscellany

Nothing this week.