



Turbulence Levels for our
Socio-Political Context:
Helping to set priorities

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The State of Our Security

Level of Turbulence	General Definition	Applied to this Situation
Extreme	Structural Damage to the Current Order	General outbreak of global war
Severe	Sense of Crisis	Threats of war. Regional outbreaks of war. Violence at all levels. Serious impact on personal lives throughout the world.
Moderate	Widespread Awareness of Serious Issues	Tensions exist but are largely controlled at local, regional and international levels.
Light	Little or No Disruption	Few tensions exist. Violence is low as is crime in general. Safety seems assured throughout the world.

Synopsis: We are cycling back and forth between moderate and severe turbulence in the area of Security.

There is a fractured perspective of what we mean by “we” and “us” when we consider security issues. **International relations are destabilized with the fading of the post-WWII world order and without its replacement in place.** Series of cascading problems keep tensions high but still manageable for now. This is threatened by nuclear proliferation, cyber and physical terrorism and general insecurity due to poverty in the developing world.

Impact of the Economy

Level of Turbulence	General Definition	Applied to this Situation
Extreme	Structural Damage to the Current Order	Depression including massive unemployment and suffering. Economic and social collapse.
Severe	Sense of Crisis	Regional breakdowns. Record unemployment, national animosity, exploitation of people in affected nations.
Moderate	Widespread Awareness of Serious Issues	Newly thriving national economies. Uneven recovery from downturns. Continued high unemployment. Growing income distribution gap. Mistrust of markets along with growing reliance on them rather than governments.
Light	Little of No Disruption	General prosperity. Wealth/Poverty gap diminishing. National and international economies healthy levels of competition including reasonable pressures to innovate. Power balance between public and private interests. New definitions of wealth considered.

Synopsis:

Our economic situation is cycling between moderate and severe levels.

The concept of “we” and “us” is defined in polarizing ways so that we envision rich versus poor nationally and internationally in a kind of see-saw metaphor. For one to be up, the other must be down. This is destabilizing since we seem to disagree on a balance between equity of opportunity and equity of results. Stabilizing international agreements that formed the basis of the Post WWII economic order such as the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (coming from the 1944 Bretton Woods Conference) seem to be breaking down. Debts of sovereign nations are an issue but austerity measures seem to lead to new recessions. Regional agreements such as the Euro Zone have internal cascading potential, thereby threatening more wide-spread cascading of tensions.

The Role of Technology

Level of Turbulence	General Definition	Applied to this Situation
Extreme	Structural Damage to the Current Order	Industries undone by tectonic changes. Rates of change seem to accelerate. Leadership and power positions transitory at best. Constant claims of novelty but are they real?
Severe	Sense of Crisis	“Borders” redefined in many dimensions. Space and place redefined. Massive wealth transfers. New imperative for change in traditional institutions.
Moderate	Widespread Awareness of Serious Issues	New ways of working through technology emerging. Early adopters foreshadow potential of coming changes. Rising but arithmetic demand for change in processes.
Light	Little or No Disruption	Small, incremental changes leading to sequential adjustments in the current way of doing things. Inter-generational continuity is common.

Synopsis: We seem to be cycling between severe and extreme turbulence, with the edge given to extreme levels.

There is nearly ubiquitous access to transformative technology in the form of smart phones but not in other areas of technology. As in other areas reviewed in this chapter, definitions of “we” and “us” vary widely leading to differing positions in technology use and availability. National governments able and willing to use technology against citizens, always the case but this opportunity is enhanced with ever greater levels of technology available. Privacy issues abound as well as questions of who gets to benefit from technology. Substance of technological changes is at issue. Destruction of the old order, in publishing for example, are numerous. Stability is a thing of the past. Cascading, accelerating change is the norm.

Threats to our Environment

Level of Turbulence	General Definition	Applied to this Situation
Extreme	Structural Damage to the Current Order	Irreversible damage to the environment causes destruction to all life forms, threatening cycles of mass extinction
Severe	Sense of Crisis	Positive feedback loops of global warming in place. Water shortages at critical but not irreversible state. National energy disparities causing conflict. New energy options exist but are inadequate.
Moderate	Widespread Awareness of Serious Issues	Global warming acknowledged. Serious movement toward sustainable and equitable use of resources debated but possible. New non-fossil fuels on line and practical. Serious work on species protection underway.
Light	Little or No Disruption	Balance between use and protection of the environment is the norm. Sustainable development found in local, national, regional, and international levels. Natural systems are thriving and working agreements are update to include 7 th generation type of thinking.

Synopsis: We cycle from severe to extreme levels of turbulence, currently leaning to severe levels.

Although elements of moderate turbulence exist, these are largely at the discussion stage. Meanwhile, damaging action is occurring to the environment due to post industrial forces in the US and Europe and the rising industrial economies of China and India. Again “we” and “us” are defined nationally and as the purview of the current generation rather than internationally and across generations and species. The earth sustains all life, not simply human life but such overarching concepts seem beyond the pale. The destabilizing forces continue to pressure the environment including over-use of fossil fuels and depletion of water resources and species. While cascading events, in the form of positive feedback loops accelerate ecological destructions.