

## MILLENNIALS: RENDEZVOUS WITH DESTINY?

BY

COLONEL FREDERICK L. FAHLBUSCH  
United States Air Force

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USAWC CLASS OF 2008

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U.S. Army War College, Carlisle Barracks, PA 17013-5050

## Report Documentation Page

*Form Approved*  
*OMB No. 0704-0188*

Public reporting burden for the collection of information is estimated to average 1 hour per response, including the time for reviewing instructions, searching existing data sources, gathering and maintaining the data needed, and completing and reviewing the collection of information. Send comments regarding this burden estimate or any other aspect of this collection of information, including suggestions for reducing this burden, to Washington Headquarters Services, Directorate for Information Operations and Reports, 1215 Jefferson Davis Highway, Suite 1204, Arlington VA 22202-4302. Respondents should be aware that notwithstanding any other provision of law, no person shall be subject to a penalty for failing to comply with a collection of information if it does not display a currently valid OMB control number.

1. REPORT DATE <b>15 MAR 2008</b>	2. REPORT TYPE <b>Strategy Research Project</b>	3. DATES COVERED <b>00-00-2007 to 00-00-2008</b>			
4. TITLE AND SUBTITLE <b>Millennials Rendezvou with Destiny?</b>		5a. CONTRACT NUMBER			
		5b. GRANT NUMBER			
		5c. PROGRAM ELEMENT NUMBER			
6. AUTHOR(S) <b>Frederick Fahlbusch</b>		5d. PROJECT NUMBER			
		5e. TASK NUMBER			
		5f. WORK UNIT NUMBER			
7. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES) <b>U.S. Army War College ,122 Forbes Ave.,Carlisle,PA,17013-5220</b>		8. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION REPORT NUMBER			
9. SPONSORING/MONITORING AGENCY NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES)		10. SPONSOR/MONITOR'S ACRONYM(S)			
		11. SPONSOR/MONITOR'S REPORT NUMBER(S)			
12. DISTRIBUTION/AVAILABILITY STATEMENT <b>Approved for public release; distribution unlimited</b>					
13. SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES					
14. ABSTRACT <b>See attached</b>					
15. SUBJECT TERMS					
16. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF:			17. LIMITATION OF ABSTRACT <b>Same as Report (SAR)</b>	18. NUMBER OF PAGES <b>36</b>	19a. NAME OF RESPONSIBLE PERSON
a. REPORT <b>unclassified</b>	b. ABSTRACT <b>unclassified</b>	c. THIS PAGE <b>unclassified</b>			

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USAWC STRATEGY RESEARCH PROJECT

**MILLENNIALS: RENDEZVOUS WITH DESTINY?**

by

Colonel Frederick L. Fahlbusch  
United States Air Force

Colonel Lee Deremer  
Project Adviser

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U.S. Army War College  
CARLISLE BARRACKS, PENNSYLVANIA 17013



## **ABSTRACT**

AUTHOR: Colonel Frederick L. Fahlbusch  
TITLE: Millennials: Rendezvous with Destiny?  
FORMAT: Strategy Research Project  
DATE: 5 March 2008      WORD COUNT: 7,207      PAGES: 36  
KEY TERMS: Generational Theory, Globalization, Future Trends  
CLASSIFICATION: Unclassified

The Millennial Generation (born between 1982 and about 2002) is showing characteristics and tendencies that lead generational theorists to believe that this generation will become America's next "Hero" generation. However, the post-Cold War/post-9/11 "globalized" world of the future will be replete with challenges that will demand complex, adaptive learning coupled with patient yet tenacious execution across multiple disciplines.

This paper provides a generational profile of the Millennials and examines where this current generation of young Americans "fits" into generational cycle theory. The primary challenges facing the Millennials in the future (specifically, by the year 2025) are examined as a generic planning roadmap. While current research reveals an overall positive assessment of this generation there are potential generational flaws that could derail the Millennials. Finally, Millennial success will be highly dependent on the interaction with their preceding generations (Baby Boomers and Generation X). Recommendations are provided to effectively understand and mentor young Millennials.



## MILLENNIALS: RENDEZVOUS WITH DESTINY?

“To some generations, much is given, of other generations, much is expected. This generation has a rendezvous with destiny.” The poignant quote delivered by Franklin Delano Roosevelt (FDR) in his second inaugural address set the scene for a generation faced with an economic depression and looming clouds of war abroad. The landscape has changed dramatically. However, FDR’s powerful prognostication is conspicuously salient for our current generation of young adults dealing with the volatility, uncertainty, complexity, and ambiguity of the aftermath of a post-Cold War/post-9/11 world. A world that Howe and Strauss characterized in their 1997 book *Generations* as “triggered by a crisis and followed by a 25 year chain reaction of unyielding responses and further emergencies.”<sup>1</sup>

What are these challenges that confront the largest generation in U.S. history?<sup>2</sup> What issues do my two Millennial children and their cohorts need to contemplate, debate, study and act upon now and in the not-so-distant future to help make our world a better, safer place to live in? Are they collectively prepared for these challenges? What could cause them to become derailed? What can their predecessors (Generation X and the Baby Boomers) offer that may help them with their daunting quest?

### Millennials: A Generational Profile

Who are these Millennials that are facing such daunting challenges? There are a plethora of birthdates and labels used to brand this generation. Zemke, Raines and Filipczak label them as Generation Y with birthdates between 1980-2000.<sup>3</sup> Dr. Pete Markiewicz in *Who’s Filling Y’s Shoes* describes this generation as those children born between 1981-1995.<sup>4</sup> The often-cited *The Millennials: Americans Born 1977 to 1994*



obviously uses 1977 to 1994 as their birth period for the Millennials.<sup>5</sup> Neil Howe and William Strauss are two of the most respected generational theorists in the world and they categorize the Millennial Generation as those children born between 1982 and approximately 2002.<sup>6</sup> Howe and Strauss are recognized for their comprehensive studies of generational dynamics and as John Reilly has stated regarding credibility in this area, “Strauss and Howe are in a somewhat unusual position for long-term prophets: their predictions tend to be right.”<sup>7</sup> The term Millennial Generation appears more appropriate as a descriptor for this generation because “Generation Y” suggests a natural succession from Generation X (born 1961-1981). Data indicate that this generation doesn’t want to be known as Generation Y and that Millennial attitudes and behaviors represent a sharp break from Generation X (and are running exactly counter to trends launched by the Boomers (born 1943-1960)).<sup>8</sup> Furthermore, when they were queried in an abcnews.com survey, the term “Millennials” was the clear winner.<sup>9</sup>

Perhaps more pertinent than birth year delineation, Howe claims that a rule of thumb for generational change is that the new generation tries to excel in areas where their parent generations have fallen short.<sup>10</sup> He asserts that the Millennials have seven distinguishing traits that differentiate them from Generation X and the Boomers.

- **Special.** Older generations have inculcated in Millennials a sense that they are, collectively, vital to the Nation and to their families.<sup>11</sup> They have come to believe and accept that they are a generation who has been hovered over by their parents yet they feel a sense of obligation for making our Nation and our world a better place.

- **Sheltered.** Americans have been tightening the security net around Millennials since they first arrived utilizing technology from V-chips to “smart lockers” to bedroom spy cams.<sup>12</sup> Tragedies such as the Columbine and Virginia Tech shootings are events that have caused the security net to further tighten. Interestingly, and which makes this a key delineator is that this generation accepts the net with little resistance, compared to how previous generations would have reacted.
- **Confident.** Nine out of ten teens say they are personally happy and excited about their future, a figure that has been rising over the past fifteen years.<sup>13</sup> Millennial teens are taking a longer view of the future and have faith that their generation can make the world a better place, not only for themselves, but for their children.<sup>14</sup> This collective sense of confidence and optimism should serve them well in their journey for global peace.
- **Team-Oriented.** Millennials are developing strong team instincts and tight peer bonds through collaborative sports, community service, and technology such as IM chatting and cell phones. This sense of collaboration will be critical to workplace/international relations success and marks a rapid departure from Generation X’s competitive individualism.<sup>15</sup>
- **Conventional.** Millennials are taking pride in their improving behavior and are more comfortable in their parents’ values than any other generation in living memory.<sup>16</sup> Millennials are seeing the hope and benefit of social rules. This trait will serve them well for building trust and confidence throughout the world especially when they talk about good governance and the rule of law.

- **Pressured.** Millennials are pushed to study hard, excel in structured team sports and avoid personal risks. This has resulted in a “trophy kid” pressure to excel.<sup>17</sup>
- **Achieving.** With accountability and higher school standards rising to the top of America’s agenda, Millennials are on track to become the best-educated and best-behaved adults in this Nation’s history.<sup>18</sup>

In addition to the seven distinguishing traits mentioned above, Millennials as a collective force are demonstrating other characteristics that could serve them well if in fact they have a “rendezvous with destiny”. First, they are well versed with technology, keep up quite well with its advances and want to be part of technological solutions to problems.<sup>19</sup> Roughly 84 percent of young adults (18-29) use the Internet and the Internet as a backbone of globalization is changing the way young and middle-aged adults interact with the world.<sup>20</sup> Second, the Millennials have become the most ethnically and racially diverse group in American history.<sup>21</sup> One of every three members of the Millennials is in a minority group. As a result, Millennials are very tolerant of the diversity around them where working and interacting with people outside their own ethnic group is the norm and acceptable.<sup>22</sup> Third, Millennials are adaptable and comfortable in various situations.<sup>23</sup> Fourth, Millennials as a learning-oriented generation have a great ability to grasp new, complex concepts.<sup>24</sup> Fifth, they are efficient multi-taskers.<sup>25</sup> Additionally, one of the most redeeming qualities of this new generation is their emphasis on values and character. When asked whether “values and character” will matter more or less to their own generation when they’re parents, they answer “more” by a two-to-one margin.<sup>26</sup> Furthermore, Millennials appear to be much more

empathetic and willing to volunteer their time for worthy causes than their predecessors. As Dr. Daniel Egeler states in *Mentoring Millennials: Shaping the Next Generation*, “it seems that a new Millennial service ethic is emerging, built around notions of teamwork, support for civic institutions, and participation in good deeds.”<sup>27</sup> Additionally, surveys show that five of every six Millennials believe their generation has the greatest duty to improve the environment and they would impose extra civic duties on themselves, including taxes, to achieve results.<sup>28</sup> Finally, this generation will be known for its reversal of most trends measuring poor behavior, including violent crimes, suicide, sex and alcohol and illicit drug use.<sup>29</sup> Many of the traits, desires, and trends mentioned above seem to posture the Millennials well for dealing with the daunting challenges that lie ahead.

### Generational Theories and America’s Newest Heroes

In their book *Generations*, Howe and Strauss contend that American history is marked by a regular succession of four generational types, each of which dominates for about 22.5 years.<sup>30</sup> The entire cycle takes about ninety years and Howe and Strauss contend that the four generational types have recurred in a fixed order (with one exception) throughout American history.<sup>31</sup> The four generational types are: Idealist (*Prophet*), Reactive (*Artist*), Civic (*Hero*), and Adaptive (*Nomad*).<sup>32</sup> The Idealist is characterized by “an inner-driven, moralistic generation which comes of age during a period of spiritual awakening and develops a new creedal passion.”<sup>33</sup> An example of the Idealist type is the Baby Boomer Generation (born 1943-1960) who worked relentlessly in pursuit of goals, often at the expense of marriages, family and personal lives.<sup>34</sup> The Reactive is characterized by “an alienated, cynical generation which

challenges the ideals of their parents and develops into pragmatic, risk-taking adults.”<sup>35</sup> Generation X (born 1961-1981) epitomizes the Reactive type who developed a cynical, pragmatic, survivor mentality as they experienced a world much less idyllic than their predecessors.<sup>36</sup> The Civic is characterized by “an outer-driven, morally complacent generation which institutionalizes many of the ideals of the previous generations.”<sup>37</sup> An example is the G.I. Generation (born 1901-1924) who repudiated the cynicism displayed by their next elders and offered a fresh-faced optimism and civic spirit to the nation.<sup>38</sup> Finally, the Adaptive is characterized by “a hypocritical generation which coasts along on the accomplishments of the civics, laying the groundwork for a new idealist era.”<sup>39</sup> For example, the Silent Generation (born 1925-1942) was born too late to be heroes of WWII, too early to impact the Consciousness Revolution and grew up watching older people make great sacrifices on their behalf.<sup>40</sup>

Many of the challenges (specifics discussed later) and actions required to confront these challenges will require cogent national-level, political leadership. *The Washington Post* recently ran an article called “Just in Time: A Generation of Doers, not Dreamers” that details Millennial political tendencies. Regarding politics, the article states that Civic generations (G.I./Millennial) show a tendency to react against Idealist generation (Baby Boomers) efforts to advance their own moral causes and focus instead on reenergizing social, political and government institutions to solve pressing national issues.<sup>41</sup> Additionally, they contend that Civic generations are committed to political involvement and believe in using and strengthening political and government institutions.<sup>42</sup> It’s refreshing to see an emerging Millennial political style similar to that of the G.I. Generation in the sense that they aren’t combative or confrontational the way

Boomers have been.<sup>43</sup> Furthermore, their rhetoric doesn't reflect cynicism and alienation like that of Generation X.<sup>44</sup> And since Millennials are so hyper-connected they seek to build consensus and look for candidates who can unify the country and heal the Nation's divisions.<sup>45</sup> As a result, Millennials may represent this country's greatest hope for restoring domestic and international trust and confidence in the U.S. government and our political processes. The following indicators show promise: unlike Boomers, Millennials want to strengthen our political system; most Millennials disagree that the federal government is wasteful and inefficient; Millennials are more likely than older generations to believe that politicians care what people think and are more concerned with the good of the country than of their political party.<sup>46</sup> Finally, a 2006 survey by Frank N. Magid Associates showed that Millennials, more than their elders, believe that U.S. political institutions will deal effectively with concerns the Nation will face in the future.<sup>47</sup>

Do the Millennials have what it takes to become a "Hero" generation alongside our "Greatest Generation"? Howe and Strauss believe that they do and in *Millennials Rising* they contend that throughout U.S. history there have been four "Hero" generations. They are the Glorious ("Empire-builders" born 1648-1673), Republican ("Nation-founders" born 1742-1766), Progressive ("Grand-Victorian modernizers and systemizers" born 1843-1859), and G.I. ("Globe-conquers" born 1901-1924) generations.<sup>48</sup> Comparisons between these generations and the Millennials show many similarities. Specifically, Howe and Strauss claim that within the childhoods of each of these generations were common themes that are being resembled today in the Millennial Generation. First, "a hero generation arrives just after an era of societywide

upheaval in values and culture that many historians call a ‘spiritual awakening’”.<sup>49</sup> Next, “a hero generation directly follows a youth generation widely deemed to be disappointing...and fills a void left by the passing of an elder generation known for civic purpose and teamwork.”<sup>50</sup> Lastly, “a hero generation, early in life, becomes the target of passionate adult efforts to protect the childhood world, promote child achievement, and attach a new sense of destiny to youth.”<sup>51</sup>

Furthermore, they describe five patterns that emerged in their analysis of young adults of the four “Hero” generations. They contend that Millennials also fit these patterns. First, “the special treatment and protections follow them into young adulthood and blossom into a sense of collective confidence and power.”<sup>52</sup> Second, “they and their elders declare a new determination to rid society of dangers that had ravaged the prior youth generation, but which only now are deemed intolerable.”<sup>53</sup> Third, “entering young adulthood, they undergo a heroic trial, a climactic moment in history in which their courage and fortitude are tested.”<sup>54</sup> Fourth, “in midlife, they create powerful and enduring institutions, build big new infrastructures, craft a new modern world, and dominate politics and economics deep into their old age.”<sup>55</sup> Last, “entering elderhood, they reveal a hubris that sparks angry quarrels with their own children, who challenge their parents’ social discipline and secularism.”<sup>56</sup>

There are many pattern similarities between Millennials and former “Hero” generations. Particularly noteworthy is the need for a “Hero” generation to be tested under fire by some heroic trial. Howe and Strauss authored *Millennials Rising* in September 2000 prior to the tragic events of 9/11; however, in their discussion of generational cycles and historical rhythms they prognosticated that, “sometime around

the middle of 2000-2009, maybe a few years before or after, a spark of history will ignite a public response quite unlike what it would have touched off in most earlier decades.”<sup>57</sup>

Perhaps 9/11 was their spark.

As one measure of merit with respect to responding to this heroic trial, military leaders from all services have been overwhelmingly effusive with their immense praise regarding the performance of Millennials in operations in Iraq and Afghanistan. In many ways this praise mirrors that given to the G.I. Generation during WW II. Furthermore, many respected news providers, educators, business leaders and generational experts believe the Millennials are in fact emerging as the next “Hero” Generation. For example, Kantrowitz and Naughton of *Newsweek* focus on Millennial cultural diversity and empathy and argue in their article “Generation 9-11” that the Millennials are uniquely positioned to understand and respond to the “hero trial” of the clash of cultures that culminated in 9-11. They note how high school history lessons of past generations concentrated almost exclusively on Western Europe while the Millennials have learned about Chinese dynasties, African art, and Islam.<sup>58</sup> Additionally, they illustrate that this generation is much more likely to have friends from many economic and ethnic backgrounds, given the demographic diversity of their campuses.<sup>59</sup> Anna Quindlen also of *Newsweek* predicted in the late 1990s that, “this next century will be remarkable because its history will be shaped, and written, too, by a group of what promises to be remarkable human beings--the Millennials.”<sup>60</sup> Furthermore, regarding 9/11, Judith Rodin, the president of the University of Pennsylvania, concluded, “I think they realize more than the adults that this is a clash of cultures, something we haven’t seen in a thousand years.”<sup>61</sup>



## Millennial Challenges

As previously indicated, generational theorists as well as many Boomer and Gen X leaders believe the Millennials have the right stuff to become our next “Hero” generation. Current statistical data also appear favorable. What can their elders offer the Millennials in terms of a possible roadmap that may help to vector this generation to achieve their “rendezvous with destiny”? What will our world look like in 2025? The year 2025 is used because it represents a common temporal reference point in futurist studies. Additionally, the oldest members of the Millennial Generation will be over 40 and their collective imprint will be felt domestically and internationally. By 2025, Millennials will comprise roughly 20 percent of our national leadership and will be at their peak of cultural influence.<sup>62</sup> They will be fully versed in the rewards, challenges and dangers of a post-Cold War, post 9/11 globalized world. If we envision, expect and accept that America will still be the world’s global leader what will be their greatest challenge? Futurists earn their money and reputations by predicting long-term changes, not immediate reactions to traumas. Many futurists believe that the growing disparity between the world’s “have’s” and “have not’s” is the greatest challenge for the future. Thomas Barnett states in *Blueprint for Action* that the greatest challenge will be diminishing the size of the world’s “Non-Integrating Gap” (aka the “Gap”) to move toward universal inclusiveness and ultimately some semblance of global peace.<sup>63</sup> This is illustrated by the fact that “globalization has spread to encompass two-thirds of the world’s population, defined as the global economy’s Functioning “Core” while “one-third of humanity remains trapped outside the peaceful sphere in regions that are weakly connected to the global economy—the “Gap”.”<sup>64</sup> According to Barnett, today’s “Gap” is comprised of the Caribbean Rim, Andean South America, virtually all of Africa, portions

of the Balkans, the Caucasus, Central Asia, the Middle East, and most of Southeast Asia.”<sup>65</sup> Since the end of the Cold War, all the wars, civil wars and genocide have occurred within the “Gap”.<sup>66</sup> Therefore, despite the vernacular that may be used to describe this “Gap” (“failed/failing states”, “ungoverned spaces”, etc.), Barnett believes that ending wars and achieving some sort of semblance of global peace begins with shrinking the “Gap” and ends with true globalization where disconnectedness is eradicated.<sup>67</sup> This is indeed a Herculean endeavor; however as JFK said, “all this will not be finished in the first hundred days. Nor will it be finished in the first thousand days, nor in the life of this administration, nor even perhaps in our lifetime on this planet. But let us begin.”<sup>68</sup>

How can Millennials work to shrink the “Gap”? Specifically, are there common areas they can focus on now to avoid dire consequences by 2025? The Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) Seven Revolutions Project identifies seven specific areas that must be dealt with between now and 2025: population, resources, technology, information, integration, conflict and governance.<sup>69</sup> Joint Forces Command’s Joint Operational Environment (JOE) briefing describes four trends that will dominate the 2025 world: human geography, governance and legitimacy, resources and economics, and science, technology, and engineering.<sup>70</sup> The future challenges described below utilize the CSIS framework while incorporating the JOE as well as other futurist indicators.

**Population.** As of January 2008, the world’s population is approximately 6.7 billion people.<sup>71</sup> By 2025, global population will probably reach 7.9 billion<sup>72</sup> with 66 percent living in urban areas along coastlines.<sup>73</sup> The challenge with this population

growth is that by 2025, 80 percent of the world's population growth will occur in those countries least capable of supporting it politically, economically, and environmentally—the “Gap”.<sup>74</sup> However, in stark contrast, much of the developed world (the “Core”) will face static or negative population growth.<sup>75</sup> By 2030 almost one in four Western Europeans will be over the age of 65, while in Sub-Saharan Africa the over 65 population will represent less than four percent of the total population.<sup>76</sup> These great demographic disparities with concomitant infrastructure stresses will increase the size of the “Gap” and place additional strain on the “Core”. Europe and the U.S., for example, will be required to focus significant financial resources to care for their large elderly populations. What are some of the Millennial challenges? How will these demographic disparities affect immigration and the politics of the recipient countries (most likely “Core” countries)? What can be done to avoid overwhelming these systems which could lead to xenophobia and ultimately conflict? Obviously, Millennial leaders can't change previous decision making that has led to low generational birth rates throughout Europe. However, Millennials need to be looking into creative ways now to proactively deal with these demographic disparities between the “Gap” and the “Core”, coupled with increased urbanization and the inevitable detrimental effects on aging infrastructure.

**Resources.** Despite significant developments in food productivity around the world, troubles still lurk, especially with respect to water availability and management. Population Action International predicts that by 2025, an estimated 54 countries, home to four billion people, or nearly half the world's population, will face serious constraints on their ability to meet water demands.<sup>77</sup> Water shortages and water rights will have the potential to spiral into conflict. Additionally, poor land management and the overuse of

fertilizers are causing land degradation, soil erosion and desertification on a massive scale.<sup>78</sup> Continued worldwide expansion of agricultural productivity gains and biotechnology must be pursued. Furthermore, despite a lack of universal consensus, multiple sources indicate that the global demand for hydrocarbons will not diminish by 2025.<sup>79</sup> In the paper, *A Grand Strategy for an Uncertain World*, the authors believe that global demand for oil will increase 2 percent through 2025.<sup>80</sup> CSIS predicts that by 2025 OPEC will account for up to 50 percent of the world supply of oil.<sup>81</sup> Goldman Sachs estimates that the number of cars in China could rise from 12 million in 2004 to 500 million by 2050 and India could go from 5 million to 600 million in the same period.<sup>82</sup> What are some of the challenges for the Millennials? If these predictions pan out, the ravenous worldwide consumption of resources may result in geopolitical conflict exacerbated by significant environmental degradation. Millennials need to make alternative energy, agricultural irrigation technology and biotechnology a priority in their studies and professional pursuits. Furthermore, the Millennials need to be informed and persuasive within the United Nations to initiate bold actions such as crafting a universally-accepted code of conduct for equitable water use and distribution.

**Technology.** “We tend to overestimate short term change and underestimate long term change.”<sup>83</sup> Information, Nano and Bio technologies are merging.<sup>84</sup> These technological breakthroughs present both new opportunities and dangers. Nanotechnology has the potential to detect and destroy cancer cells at the molecular level and the National Cancer Institute believes that nanotechnology is vital to its stated goal of “eliminating suffering and death from cancer by 2015.”<sup>85</sup> The National Science Foundation predicts that “the worldwide annual industrial production in the nanotech

sectors is expected to exceed \$1 trillion 10-15 years from now, which would require two million nanotechnology workers.”<sup>86</sup> Furthermore, more and more people around the world are getting and using computers and computer technology due to decreased costs, more user-friendly interfaces, and smaller, lighter, less expensive materials.<sup>87</sup> What are some of the Millennial challenges? With the promise of hope in genetics, biotechnology and nanotechnology also lurks the possibility of nefarious intent such as irresponsible cloning, severe restrictions to personal privacy, and high technology transfer to irresponsible actors to name just a few. What about a possible backlash and widening of the “Gap” if they are not the recipient of technology’s hope and promise? Millennials will have to be forever vigilant regarding the ethics of this technology. Millennials will have to harness the power of their technology and technological prowess for good and enhance universal connectiveness while recognizing its potential for devastation when placed in the wrong hands. Additionally, Millennials will need to perform detailed system-of-system analyses to understand linkages and the cascading effects of technology. For example, what are the second and third order consequences to world population, immigration, environmental degradation and infrastructure if cancer is eradicated and life spans increase dramatically?

**Information.** One of the key enablers of globalization is the nearly seamless flow of information. Entrepreneurs from developing countries today and more so in the future will be much less constrained by geography and their country’s level of development.<sup>88</sup> However, to remain relevant in this dynamic environment, leaders at all levels will need to be highly adaptable and comfortable with constant change. Additionally, in this ever-constant explosion of information the pursuit of “truth” is

becoming more elusive. With so many sources of information, many of which have questionable ethics and specious journalistic integrity, ascertaining the “truth” will become more difficult. Therefore, groups that in the past were marginalized due to a lack of funding or minimal political clout can now transmit messages that immediately resonate with the populace and impact politics and decision making. This challenge will only increase as sources of information continue to expand. Not only is the issue of “truth” a challenge in the information realm but also the marked disparity in “Core” versus “Gap” connectivity. The less developed states of the “Gap” are far less connected with respect to information than the developed states with the least connected societies in the world found throughout the Middle East and Africa.<sup>89</sup> China represents an interesting example of a rapidly-emerging superpower that is selectively connected. The People’s Republic of China has 50,000 government workers monitoring and censoring the internet<sup>90</sup>; however, most indications are that the Chinese Communists Party’s attempts to filter “unapproved” information are failing.<sup>91</sup> What are the challenges to the Millennial leaders? How can they get the “Gap” more connected without provoking non-cooperative states and their leaders? How will the “truth” emerge from all the other noise? How will they counter terrorist groups and others who are technically savvy and aren’t concerned with the “truth”? What will the internet explosion mean to states with a free and open press where anyone with a cell phone, camera and computer can set up a blog or a web page and become an immediate source of information? How will this influence policy makers, governance and strategic decision making in the future?

**Integration.** According to the UN Development Program, the accumulated wealth of the 225 richest individuals in the world is equivalent to the combined annual earnings of the 2.7 billion people in the bottom of the global income ladder.<sup>92</sup> Like Barnett, CSIS also believes that, “globalization’s greatest enemy is not its absolute success, but its relative concentrations.”<sup>93</sup> While global GDPs have risen over the last 25 years and poverty rates have fallen, global income inequalities have also grown.<sup>94</sup> Most of the global direct investment goes to regions outside the “Gap”: North America (24 percent), Europe (39 percent), and South and East Asia (21 percent).<sup>95</sup> This represents 84 percent of the total investment. The “Gap” areas of former Soviet bloc states receive about 3 percent, the Middle East and Africa receive about 2 percent each and about 9 percent goes to Latin America.<sup>96</sup> Summarizing these numbers, around one-third of the world’s population (the “Gap”) has had to get by on nearly one-twentieth of the money made available by the global economy for long term investment.<sup>97</sup> There may be some valid reasons for this lack of investment such as tenuous security environments, geopolitical considerations, inadequate infrastructure, etc.; however, the fact remains that such flagrant economic disparities are fueling collective backlashes against globalization’s benefactors (primarily the U.S.). What are the Millennial challenges? Millennials will face many obstacles in this battle against global economic disparity; however, the challenge is significant and must be addressed. This disparity provides a fertile breeding ground for opportunists such as Al Qaeda and other extremist groups as well as the Hugo Chavez’s of the world ready and willing to exploit “economic repression” for their cause. How can future Millennial policy makers continue to encourage the global benefits of economic liberalization while recognizing that Multi-

national Corporations (MNCs) virtually control economic integration (two-thirds of international trade is accounted for by just 500 corporations<sup>98</sup>)? As we continue to globally expand manufacturing to “Gap” countries how will the Millennial leader balance cultural differences on such issues as states rights, perceived colonialism, western labor laws, and environmental considerations against the pressing need to shrink the global economic delta?

**Conflict.** Based on the events of 9/11 and the “long” wars still being waged in Iraq and Afghanistan there seems to be a growing shift toward asymmetric warfare against the U.S. and its allies. Asymmetric warfare characterized by a mix of state and non-state actors, transnational threats and wars of ideas marked by information warfare. Additionally, Al Qaeda has publicly proclaimed their desire to obtain and use WMD against the U.S. In 2000 there were more than 500 incidents of illegal transportation of nuclear and radioactive materials across the Russian border.<sup>99</sup> The threats are full spectrum, potentially catastrophic and will require a proper blending of technological means and perhaps more importantly new, highly adaptive cognitive skill sets. What are some of the Millennial challenges? How much spending is appropriate to counter these current and future threats? How will you prioritize defense spending? Millennials need to contemplate these spending facts from 2005: the U.S military spending was almost two-fifths of the global total; the U.S. military spending was almost 7 times larger than the Chinese budget, the second largest spender; the U.S. military budget was almost 29 times as large as the combined spending of the six “rogue” states (Cuba, Iran, Libya, North Korea, Sudan and Syria); and the six potential “enemies”, Russia, and China together spent \$139 billion, 30 percent of the U.S. military budget.<sup>100</sup> Will the



millennial leaders need to radically transform the military and our interagency process to deal with these threats? If we continue to spend at this rate what will not get funded (infrastructure upgrades, education, health care, foreign aid, etc.)? How will they carve out the budget between the DoD and the myriad other players who are growing in importance (for example, Department of State)? CSIS claims that asymmetric violence has historically accompanied eras of global economic expansion and rapid technological change.<sup>101</sup> How can the Millennial leader recognize this and try to properly balance and moderate these second and third order effects that seem to widen the “Gap” and lead to conflict? How do asymmetric, transnational threats affect the concept of state sovereignty and international law? Will the Millennial leader have the confidence, patience and trust to relinquish more roles and functions to the UN, Non-governmental Organizations (NGOs), and MNCs? Should they?

**Governance.** In terms of the vitality of the Wesphalian state concept, the world of 2025 needs to be examined through all the lenses previous mentioned plus the role of MNCs and NGOs. Wal-Mart Corporation, as a powerful MNC, had revenues in 2006 over \$351B<sup>102</sup> which makes it the twenty-third largest economy in the world between Indonesia and Saudi Arabia (in terms of their gross domestic products).<sup>103</sup> Interestingly, 13 of the top 50 economies in the world are companies, not countries.<sup>104</sup> The NGO sector is now the eighth largest economy in the world—worth over \$1T a year globally.<sup>105</sup> Additionally, it employs nearly 19 million paid workers, not to mention countless volunteers and the sector spends about \$15B on development each year, about the same as the World Bank.<sup>106</sup> Furthermore, as of 2007 there were over 40,000 internationally registered NGOs with an estimated 400,000 in Russia and 1-2 million in

India alone (most of these NGOs are not registered).<sup>107</sup> If predictions pan out the number of NGOs and MNCs wielding their influence throughout the world will continue to expand. The challenges for the Millennials in this arena are manifold. What impact will this explosive growth have on state sovereignty and the ability to wield a state's power? What about the clash between good corporate citizenship and the financial bottom line? Corporate citizenship data show mixed results: in 2004 eight in ten Americans said that corporate support of social causes won their trust in a company—a 21 percent increase in this response since the survey in 1997.<sup>108</sup> Plus, Americans, 18-25 years old, are significantly more likely to consider a company's citizenship practices when making purchasing, employment, and investment decisions.<sup>109</sup> However, a recent report from the World Economic Forum finds that the mainstream financial community places little emphasis on social, environmental, and ethical issues in its investment decisions.<sup>110</sup> What ramifications will attitudes like that have on attempts to shrink the "Gap"? MNCs and NGOs represent very real sources of power and influence and their capacity is expanding. Millennials will have to ensure they understand the role of the two and can properly balance these forces with international and domestic institutions to expand global connectivity and wealth distribution without causing a backlash due to real or perceived exploitation.

These seven areas, while not an all-inclusive list and obviously open to debate, represent a fairly universal framework of challenges facing Millennials and the world in 2025. However, like the events of 9/11 there is always the possibility that a catastrophic wild card could catch us by surprise and cause the Millennials and perhaps the world to refocus their priorities. A pandemic, massive WMD attack, significant natural disaster or

a host of other events could dramatically alter the 2025 world and the challenges faced by all of mankind.

### Derailing the Heroes

The Millennial challenges are great, the expectations are high and the price of failure is potentially catastrophic. Fortunately, many of their traits, characteristics and tendencies such as greater diversity, desire for civic action, cultural empathy, teamwork and technological prowess appear to have them postured for becoming the fifth “Hero” generation in American history. With the proper mentoring combined with diligent study and prudent action they may achieve their “rendezvous with destiny” and move the world closer to universal connectiveness and global peace by 2025. At the same time, generational theorists and the rest of us watching the Millennials have to wonder what actions, events or generational flaws could derail their efforts. Specifically, what vulnerabilities do they have in their generational “make up” that could collectively cause this generation to miss the mark and not succeed in their pursuit of greatness?

Howe and Strauss believe that the mix of “old Boomers, midlife Gen Xers, and young-adult Millennials is a lineup of maximum power and civic risk.”<sup>111</sup> They go on to state that, “this constellation thus represents both a danger and an opportunity that literally comes along but once in a long human lifetime, every eighty to one hundred years.”<sup>112</sup> In the case of the Millennials, as they come of age and assume or acquire positions of prominence in society they will seek to “solve problems that Gen Xers couldn’t, by fashioning a new sense of community out of 1990’s-style individualism.”<sup>113</sup> Additionally, Millennials will work to fill the vacuums and correct the mistakes made by Boomers “by placing positivism over negativism, trust over cynicism, science over

spiritualism, team over self, duties over rights, honor over feeling, and actions over words.”<sup>114</sup> However, if in fact this constellation is so volatile how will it be able to effectively absorb then systematically respond to some sort of catastrophic event such as a massive terrorist WMD attack on the U.S., an economic crisis or natural disaster much greater in scale than that of Hurricane Katrina? Additionally, will this constellation have the collective tenacity, fortitude, vision and unity of purpose to work the myriad challenges that are more insidious and may not manifest themselves for many years? As stated above, Millennials will seek to correct mistakes and fill vacuums. The more often Millennials witness their elders mis-stepping on major decisions involving life and death (e.g., WMD justification for Iraq war, uncoordinated and slow response to Hurricane Katrina, etc.) the greater the chances for disproportionate Millennial response. In a crisis would they use their technological alacrity to “solve the problem” in an overwhelming, disproportionate fashion? How easy would it be to trip their red line with respect to a “technological Pandora’s Box” (akin to the G.I. Generation’s use of nuclear weapons on Japan)? How far will their spirit of team and conventional rule following take them if the U.S. is attacked again by terrorists? Would they be more willing than their elders to surrender more liberties and freedoms in the name of collective security to the point where their technological capabilities allow for near-constant situational monitoring by the government? Would they have a greater propensity to gravitate to an authoritarian state if there was a nexus of a crisis and a charismatic leader? Millennials are more mindful of authority than their elders were and much less concerned about individualism. While these are generally considered positive generational attributes, in times of crisis they could serve as the bane of the

generation (e.g., Hitler's rise prior to WW II). What may appear to be the strength of a generation may in fact result in its derailment if the generation is not mentored, guided and vectored to ensure a generational constellation's unity of purpose.

### Generational Constellations: Listen, Learn and Mentor to Greatness

At the time of this writing, the oldest Millennials are 25-26 years old and starting to challenge the Boomers and Gen Xers for power and influence. Naturally all generational constellations morph as the older generation concedes power and authority while the other two vie to fill the power vacuum. The oldest members of the massive Baby Boomer Generation are on the edge of retirement. Sixty percent of all Federal workers are Baby Boomers<sup>115</sup>, many of whom will need to be replaced soon.

What can the Baby Boomers and Gen Xers do to ensure the constellation dynamic results in great opportunity and strength to help solve the vexing challenges of the future? Since Boomers and Gen Xers are so much different than Millennials, they need to first understand the Millennials. Myriad analyses and profiles have been done that describe Millennials. In addition to the seven distinguishing traits discussed earlier, Boomers and Gen Xers need to appreciate that Millennials have been shaped by the following messages:

- Be smart—you are special.
- Leave no one behind.
- Connect 24/7.
- Achieve now!
- Serve your community.<sup>116</sup>

Generational theorist Claire Raines who has studied Boomers, Gen Xers and Millennials extensively believes there are six principles that leaders/managers need to follow in order to optimize the interaction of this generational constellation. First, **be their leader**.<sup>117</sup> She contends that since this generation has grown up with so much hovering and supervision there is an opportunity for the Boomer/Gen X leader to utilize this to their advantage. However, Millennials are looking for empathetic, competent, honest leaders with integrity. If their leaders are lacking in any of these areas they will lose the support and allegiance of the Millennial very quickly. Old paradigms of hierarchical leadership that were ingrained in Boomers and Gen Xers don't work very well with the Millennials. Second, **challenge them**. Millennials want to be challenged with new and exciting opportunities and ways to learn and contribute to the team. Several surveys have shown that "trying new things" was their most popular work-related item.<sup>118</sup> Since they are so well connected, impatient and accustomed to instant gratification, they need to face new challenges on a fairly regular basis or they lose focus and become detached. Third, if at all possible, **let Millennials work with their friends**. Millennials have a massive circle of cohorts who they stay connected with via chat, text, video or other means. Maintaining contact with their friends in every aspect of their life is important to them and helps to raise their productivity, morale, and retention. Some companies are now interviewing and hiring groups of friends.<sup>119</sup> Fourth, **let them have fun**.<sup>120</sup> Millennials perform best when there is an environment of irreverence and humor. They want their work environment to have some of the "playfulness" that their leisure time has. This may be difficult for Boomers and Gen Xers to accept since their generations view this "playful" attitude as "not committed", "not

focused” or “unprofessional”. However, these leaders need to focus on Millennial results and utilizing environmental dynamics that maximize their output. Fifth, **respect them**.<sup>121</sup> Millennials are young yet they are confident, blunt, and expressive. This combination may be difficult for many Boomer/Gen X leaders to understand and tolerate because the Millennials haven’t “paid their dues”. However, leaders need to look beyond this to discover and optimize the incredible talents they possess. Marginalizing Millennials because of their youth is a bad approach. Provide them with constructive criticism and feedback and show them respect or they will look elsewhere. Finally, **be flexible**. Millennials have been inundated with structured extra-curricula activities throughout their lives. As a result, non-work activities are vitally important to them. Boomer/Gen X leaders need to be as flexible as possible by utilizing flex schedules, work from home and other techniques to accommodate their needs. A rigid schedule is one of the sure-fire ways of losing a Millennial employee.<sup>122</sup>

Raines offers the Boomer and Gen X leaders in any field of endeavor the following tips to prepare for the onslaught of Millennials into the workplace. First, **be prepared for** high expectations and the possible involvement of parents. Second, **don’t** expect them to pay their dues and don’t try and squelch their enthusiasm. Finally, **do** encourage them, mentor them and learn from them.<sup>123</sup>

One of the most effective techniques being utilized in business today is the reverse mentoring program. Companies from Proctor and Gamble to Siemens to General Electric are assigning young Millennials to mentor Boomer/Gen X corporate leaders on new technologies.<sup>124</sup> This technique is truly “win-win” because the Millennials are afforded opportunities at an early age to interact with corporate leaders

to obtain vital leadership and management skills they normally wouldn't get so early in their careers.

The following quotes about and from today's Millennials effectively synopsize their outlook for Boomer/Gen X leaders:<sup>125</sup>

They pledge their hearts and souls to causes they believe in, which makes them very loyal employees...the key is to tap into those values without sounding hollow or patronizing.

Get me up to speed now, so that I can add value.

These kids want to know how to improve...but the strongest motivating technique may be to give Millennials room to do things creatively, to try and fail...and the best managers give directions, step back, give directions, step back.

## Conclusion

Globalization, the collapse of the Soviet Union, and 9/11 represent just three of the seismic shifts that have occurred over the last couple of decades. These changes and myriad others have resulted in a highly-complex, multi-polar world. Our wars in Afghanistan and Iraq have forced the U.S. to re-evaluate the utility of military power as a long term solution to very complicated problems.

Globalization, in particular, has been very good to the "Core" beneficiaries. Unfortunately, a large portion of the "Gap" continues to struggle. However, as we've witnessed with Afghanistan we can no longer ignore the "Gap" and risk doing so at our own peril. We must work to shrink the "Gap" through greater inclusiveness and interconnectedness if we hope to move our world closer to "global peace".

While the challenges over the next 15-20 years are daunting and may seem insurmountable, the good news is that the current generation of young Americans is showing signs that they are ready, willing and able to tackle these challenges.



However, success will only be possible if the current constellation of generations recognizes the challenges, understands and accepts generational differences and works with a sense of unity of purpose.

In his book *Blueprint for Action*, Thomas Barnett discusses changes that need to be made to the Pentagon in order to move us toward a “future worth creating”. He believes that, “the Echo Boomers (Millennials) couldn’t be a better fit, in many ways”<sup>126</sup> to confront these challenges. When looking out to 2025, he states that, “the Echo Boomers (Millennials) will constitute the generational follow through. If they can’t stay the course, then there will be no course.”<sup>127</sup>

Today’s young Americans offer great hope and promise for our future. The events of 9/11 may have been their “heroic trial” which as Howe and Strauss state “may be followed by a 25 year chain reaction of unyielding responses and further emergencies” or perhaps they haven’t faced their “heroic trial” yet. Either way, Americans of all ages should feel confident that this generation is well-prepared for their “rendezvous with destiny.”

## Endnotes

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