

IAFF 6186.25 Forward Engagement and Anticipatory Governance

Fall 2013 Scenario

In Washington, a group of retired officials has been meeting off and on for years, mainly to keep current with ongoing events (mainly crises of one sort or another). On this occasion, however, they have decided to try a shift of focus: from the near past and present, to the more distant future. They are aware that the marquee issues of the day will continue to dominate attention in the "public space." They are also aware that, in the more distant future, there are inevitably forces that will become the dominant concerns of later times. They are, in addition, concerned that these forces are very fast-moving: too fast, they feel, for the ability of governance to adapt. This combination of high-speed, complex developments and lagging public response is something they feel needs attention. They decide to launch a private effort to do something different: to look at major drivers of change, and associated consequences, and to consider ways to improve the adaptive capacity of society, including government -- and the broader concept of governance. If the study turns out to be any good, they may decide to use their considerable influence to draw attention to its findings. The retirees know that their own accumulated experience, though immensely valuable, can also become an impediment to understanding. So they decide on a novel compensation for age and (often) sad experience: youth. Specifically, they decide to select a small group of very bright young interns (Washington is full of them, and they work of a song) to whom they will turn over the project. Their reward? An open invitation to grapple with immensely interesting questions, and to present their conclusions in the form of a collective paper and briefing to be delivered to a high-powered group of influentials. The "youngsters" -- as the elders refer to them -- have now been recruited, and given their mandate, as follows:

Your paper and report both need to be developed in two sections. First, a review of major findings about the longer term future, to be found in numerous publications but especially in the National Intelligence Council's work- Global Trends 2025 and Global Trends 2030; second, a discussion of how to upgrade systems of governance to maximize chances for early recognition of oncoming patterns of change; and for planning and decision-making designed to promote strategic behavior in the presence of such trends and possibilities. There are numbers of works on this subject, but for this purpose special reference should be made to Anticipatory Governance, etc.