

Futurecast: How Superpowers, Populations, and Globalization will Change the Way You Live and Work by Robert J. Shapiro

* What assumptions and prejudices does this author bring, and throughout the discussion of the following questions, what other interpretations can be brought to his facts?

Chapter 2, The Demographic Earthquake

* The New York Times claimed that over half of children born today in developed countries will age to be 104 or older. What affects will that have on the structure of society and culture?

* Why does modernization result in a baby boom and a baby bust, and will the cycle continue?

* What will happen when the money available to support retired people dries up?

* As European countries experience great strains from their age-heavy demographics, and more people are forced into poverty, will their "level of development" decrease?

* Is there a limit to Kuznets's and Boserup's view that greater populations provide support for greater prosperity?

* To what extent should developing countries protect their investors' interests?

* The author discusses baby booms and busts on only a society-wide scale. Is it important to concede which segments of the population are producing greater and fewer babies?

* Why would a decreased population result in less growth and lower per capita product?

* What kinds of technological improvement could improve the lot for Europe and Japan?

* If technology provides for the leisure of such large sectors of society, is there any harm in people taking advantage of that potential?

* The author claims, "The price of all the regulations and barriers is less competition, so European and Japanese businessmen feel less pressure to come up with new products and more efficient ways of conducting their business-- and, directly or indirectly, that's what drives modern economies to create jobs." Do you agree?

* Should Europe decrease its workers' rights in exchange for the greater competition their businesses will be able to muster?

* Do we believe economics? Demographics? Is growth important for societies? Is youth?

* What can social movements do to respond to national and worldwide economic situations?

* Can Chinese communism survive the next 20 years?

Chapter 7, The Coming Crises in Health Care, Energy, and the Global Environment

* As the problems in each of health care, energy, and the environment reach a critical point, pivotal clashes will occur. What will those pivotal clashes be like?

* "The American superpower will try to oversee [everything], maneuvering to contain China's ambitions, deflect those of the Russians, and maintain the Middle East as a stable energy supplier for the world." Can it?

* How old will people live in 50 years, and with what kinds of medical conditions?

* What will happen to worldwide medicine if the US can no longer pay as much as it currently does?

* What do you think the long-term solution to health care is? Does it require a shift of our attitudes toward health?

* Will China expand its healthcare? Why?

* What will happen to healthcare when demand greatly exceeds accessibility?

* Are you convinced that peak oil is not an issue?

* What side-effects will unconventional extraction methods have?

* What will be the effects of eastern countries relying more on Middle Eastern oil, and America relying less? What will change when China is in a position to compete in the Middle East?

* What will the future version of the Kyoto protocol look like, and what kinds of international relations will be behind it?

* What will finally precipitate global climate change policy?

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