**Short-term variables**  
  
**• Battlefield success/escalation**  
  
Effects on both sides’ morale  
Tactics  
Supply chains, including Kherson bridge and Western supplies  
Leadership — Russia top-down deficient  
  
• **Western solidarity**  
  
Finland and Sweden strengthen NATO  
Germany is the weak link now  
Assume continued U.S. commitment  
Ukrainian or Russian success?  
  
**• Russian sociopolitical solidarity**  
  
So far, battle has largely been fought by Asian-based units and some mercenaries. Worst atrocities committed by 64th Motor Rifle Brigade from Khabarovsk in Far East. Volunteers to age 60 and bonuses suggest limited enthusiasm  
  
Socioeconomic breakdown of support  
  
Kremlin crackdown more reminiscent of Stalin’s NKVD than Soviet KGB  
 **• Russian economy**  
  
Oil prices and income are holding up in a hot European summer, although China and India are paying discount prices  
  
Any immediate Saudi or other major producer moves? Unlikely  
  
Foreign currency reserves, per Bill  
 **• Assistance to Russia**  
  
Only China is equipped to provide much, and it hasn’t. If anything, Beijing has tempered even its public support for the invasion  
  
**• U.S. politics**  
  
In an inflationary period, how durable is the current level of support as November approaches?  
  
Socioeconomic breakdown of support vs. voting patterns  
  
• **Black swans**  
  
Zelensky’s survival, although killing him could backfire, and Kyiv’s mayor could succeed him as the face of the resistance  
  
Putin’s health — his appearance has changed, and although CIA Director Burns has said the Russian leader’s health is not an issue, consider the implications of suggesting he may be ill. If the Agency does have intelligence on Putin’s health, revealing it could endanger human and/or technical sources  
  
A Ukrainian strike on targets in Russia

**Longer-term Variables**

“*The greatest warriors are time and patience.”  
— Tolstoy*  
  
• A new Cold War?  
• Economic trends  
• Western solidarity  
• Russian solidarity  
• China/Taiwan  
• Energy trends and sources  
• U.S. and allied leadership/foreign policies  
• Cyber

**Broader Issues**

*“Geopolitics is no longer national; it is transnational, and the world to be managed, not transformed”  
— Aaron David Miller, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace*  
  
The greatest danger may be that, assisted by what I call technologically-induced ADHD, the war in Ukraine and possible crises elsewhere will obscure the greatest dangers we face.  
  
**• Political divisions**

Will the competition for diminishing resources that Bill described make international cooperation more difficult, or even impossible in some cases? One thing to watch might be how much of Africa responds to the shortage of grain caused by the Ukraine war.  
Among developed nations, how will the competition for rare earths and other minerals essential to modern technology affect international relations?   
  
**• Climate change**

Natural disasters, public health threats, but above all, perhaps, mass human migration that could dwarf what we’ve seen on our southern border and in the Mediterranean.  
  
**• Global health**

Others here are far more qualified than I am to discuss this and what’s required for an interconnected world to combat new pandemics  
  
**• Political alignments**  
  
If international relations are governed largely by competition for resources and economic growth, rather than by political ideologies, how durable is the U.S.-led post-World War II order?  
  
Again, following Bill, how durable are NATO, the EU and international trade agreements such as GATT, the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade?  
  
**• The rise of populism**  
  
Domestic populism has been a long time coming, and both political parties, a great deal of corporate leadership and much of the national news media paid little attention to what was happening to a broad swath of Americans. Not too long after we left here, Bruce Springsteen described it:

“*They’re closin’ down the textile mill  
“Across the railroad track  
“Foreman said these jobs are goin’ boys  
“And they ain’t comin’ back”*

Rather than listening to the lyrics, many of our generation have been dancing in the dark.  
  
Not confined to the U.S., but nowhere is branding your political opponents “enemies” conducive to good policy decisions.  
  
I would be a further disgrace to the English Department if I didn’t end with a little poetry other than Springsteen, in this case Yeats. He wrote this in 1918, in the aftermath of World War I, in the middle of a pandemic that almost killed his pregnant wife and in the early years of Ireland’s fight for independence:  
  
“*Things fall apart; the centre cannot hold;  
Mere anarchy is loosed upon the world;  
The blood-dimmed tide is loosed, and everywhere  
The ceremony of innocence is drowned;  
The best lack all conviction, while the worst  
Are full of passionate intensity . . . “*