



SCENARIO #7: Newshound Notebook

Excerpts, 2013-2018

24 Jun 2013 - China's economic growth continues to astound. I just checked with the Hypernet for earlier forecasts, and it turns out that a few years ago (in 2007), people were predicting that China would exceed the U.S. as the world's #1 economy by around 2025. Now, the common wisdom is that it will happen no later than 2018. Amazing!

19 Sep 2013 - A lot of reports are coming in about big problems in China with parts of their population who have not benefited from the country's economic boom. By some accounts, as many as a billion Chinese have effectively been left behind...and they're not happy about it.

25 Oct 2013 - Huge numbers of disaffected Chinese are now taking part in organized protests, often resulting in clashes with police and military riot squads. By "organized," I don't necessarily mean planned and announced in advance. Flash mob actions are far more common; people tell each other by mobile phone and t-pad (texting) where they're going to meet and then, suddenly, thousands are there. Sometimes tens or even hundreds of thousands. The government tries to stay ahead of these events by monitoring civilian electronic communications and by using sophisticated satellite image analysis to predict the direction of mob flows, but it doesn't always work.

9 Dec 2013 - Reports are sketchy, scattered, and hard to confirm, but it looks like the protests/riots in China are getting worse, that is, larger and more violent. They're also spreading so fast that no one seems able to determine how many there actually are. It's a big country, in both area and population, so there are literally hundreds of places, scattered over millions of square kilometers, where huge crowds can gather almost instantly. This kettle is boiling hot -- will it explode?

19 Jan 2014 - The Chinese government is coming down hard on dissident activists, not only using the full force of the military to disrupt protests and arrest thousands at a time, but also publicly and summarily executing alleged "criminal terrorist leaders" by the hundreds, day after day for more than a week.

23 Jan 2014 - The public executions in China are triggering a huge backlash among students, intellectuals, professionals, and even large segments of the growing middle class. Very few people there seem willing to accept the government's claim that all those who have been executed are "terrorist criminals." The Hypernet is showing vids of people, apparently ordinary Chinese, who say they are outraged by what's happening and are no longer willing to accept it.

2 Feb 2014 - News reports (recorded and broadcast by illicit minivideocams) about the ongoing riots in China -- not stemmed at all by the thousands of arrests and executions -- are also now revealing the terrible economic conditions and health care deprivation for tens of millions of Chinese working in manufacturing plants. I guess we've known about this all along, or at least suspected it, but now it's all coming out in the open. No wonder so many people are protesting!

6 May 2014 - Follow-up investigations (again mostly by underground reporters) have shown the devastating impacts of pollution in Chinese cities, towns, and countrysides that no one has previously seen; truly massive protests in the major population centers against these appalling revelations are provoking even more swift and bloody government crackdowns; and this in turn leads to more investigative reports, more riots, more deaths, and more unrest. Can China hold together?

5 Jul 2014 - It looks like the Chinese government is falling part.

23 Aug 2014 - The People's Republic of China has ceased to exist. The largest nation in the history of the world is imploding before our very eyes. Taiwan has moved in to claim some territory, pieces of the Chinese Red Army are holding onto certain areas, while mass anarchy prevails across most of the country. It's being called "The Crash." No one can say how many thousands -- millions? -- will suffer, starve, or be killed in this horrific turn of events.

6 Jan 2015 - Given China's former preeminence as the world's major center for manufacturing of consumer goods, it's not surprising that a severe global recession followed last summer's Crash. We're all facing bad times today.

10 Feb 2015 - Now, this is interesting. It turns out that China started a secret government program back around 2010 to develop "desktop nanofactories." Nobody knew about it, or knew how close they were getting, until after The Crash.

30 Mar 2015 - As far as I can tell, virtually no one knew about the secret program in China that was rushing toward the development of molecular manufacturing. So, when the country fell apart last year, suddenly there were a few hundred well-trained Chinese experts, with all or parts of this ambitious and nearly completed plan in their heads and on their computer hard drives. Where will they go to continue their work?

1 Jun 2015 - Some of those Chinese molecular manufacturing experts reportedly have approached the United Nations, but the response there has been underwhelming: too little money, too much bureaucracy, and too little ability to focus on achieving grand challenges.

29 Jun 2015 - The latest news is that a large number of the Chinese nanofactory planners have come to the United States, where, not surprisingly, they found their best reception at the Pentagon. Reports are that most of them are now working at the Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency (DARPA).

12 Aug 2015 - There is a rumor going around that some of the Chinese nanotech experts have landed in Russia, where they found lots of ready cash to support their work, but with the proviso that most of the focus would be on secret military projects. Others reportedly have ended up in Europe, and a few more in Singapore, India, Australia, Africa, South America, and the Middle East. Some pundit has tagged this "The Great Nanotechnology Diaspora."

11 Feb 2016 - Maybe the Nanotech Diaspora will turn out for the best. Some of those Chinese experts have put together a small group to work on winning the \$25 million Virgin Earth Challenge prize, for developing a method to scavenge 100 billion tons of CO₂ a year from the sky in an effort to reduce global warming. Others have hooked up with the Gates Foundation and started in on water filtration, solar power generation, increased agricultural efficiency, and similar programs to benefit the world's poorest peoples, including their former fellow citizens in China. Still others are trying to use molecular manufacturing to advance medical diagnostics and treatment regimes, offering the promise of radically improved health care at very low prices.

15 Jan 2017 - Looking back, I guess I was overly optimistic. It seems clear now that the greatest sums of money, by far, and the strongest emphasis for advanced nanotech development are

being placed on military applications of the technology. The Ultranet is buzzing with leaked reports about the United States making use of molecular manufacturing to build a complete defense infrastructure including production facilities for raw material, feedstock, energy, and transport systems, all to be built with nanofactories.

20 Jan 2017 - Supposedly the biggest spending on military nanotech is in the U.S. and in Russia, but it's hard to know for sure. Also, various analysts are saying that a relatively small but well-organized nanofactory development program could succeed just as easily almost anywhere, and that once the first general-purpose nanofactory is created, it's a comparatively small step to a robust, massive-scale manufacturing capability. Some are even speculating that non-state actors could get into the game.

15 Mar 2018 - Very bad news this morning. Just a few hours ago, the "first shots" were fired. Tens of thousands of small nano-built UAVs (unmanned aerial vehicles) attacked and largely destroyed two cities in Pakistan, resulting in thousands of deaths, many more injuries, and half a million people left homeless.

16 Mar 2018 - No word yet on who built or who launched those weapons.

26 Mar 2018 - World leaders, predictably, have decried the terrible attacks on Pakistan (still untraced and unclaimed), but seem incapable or unwilling to take any meaningful steps toward nano arms control efforts. Plenty of words, but no action.

29 Apr 2018 - Israel and Iran have erupted into open warfare, mostly conducted with weapons produced by nanofactories. It seems all but certain that the war will spread to neighboring countries and perhaps much farther.

7 May 2018 - Many cities have been destroyed. The death toll is uncountable, but surely it is in the millions by now, and still climbing. Whole infrastructures lie demolished, dismantled, or abandoned, leaving tens of millions more starving, dying of disease, and often fighting hand to hand for survival.

22 May 2018 - It's funny, in a sick sort of way, how quickly things can spin out of control. It reminds me of what I learned in high school about the start of World War I, where seemingly sensible people allowed events to carry them away, thinking that each little escalation would be the last, and not realizing that once begun, the cycle couldn't be stopped. History repeats itself, I suppose, and now we've gone from the promise of nanotechnology helping us to control climate change and defeat poverty and cure illness to the brink of global war in just a few short years.

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