It has been hypothesized that the prognostications of the Oracle at Delphi were driven by local effusions of ethane from the ground beneath the temple. It is probably safe to assume that the real power of the Oracle derived not from hallucinations but from a deep understanding of human nature and that the future would be much like the present or at least follow the same rules.

In *The World in 2050* Laurence Smith has provided a very readable, thoroughly-researched, realistic appraisal of the likely future course of the planet's northern quarter. Despite often very personal accounts of his Arctic experience, Smith adroitly avoids the sentimentality and flimsy opinions that mar many other works on global change. Throughout the book he remains cautiously optimistic while at no time downplaying the seriousness of the challenges that face the human race.

The author posits four over-arching forces that he claims will inevitably shape the next four decades - demographic change (especially clustered population growth); natural resource limitation (both organic and inorganic); globalization of markets; and climate change. Of these four, Smith sees only one - globalization - to be in any doubt. Modifying these four forces, he lists four "Rules" (boundary conditions) that guide his analysis - No Silver Bullets and No Catastrophes (no *deus ex technica*, plagues or meteor impacts); no World War III; and, Computer Model Predictions are Fine. To these I would add a fifth unstated Rule which guides much of this text - People are People; human nature is not going to change overnight and what is best and worst in human nature will shape the future just as it shapes the present.

Perhaps the only limitation of this text is that, as clearly stated in the subtitle, its focus is on the Arctic and the North. It begs extension to the rest of the world. How will the inundation of Bangladesh unfold? What will be the immediate and societal impacts of the next Katrina on New Orleans? How will Africa's economy evolve within the confines of climate change?

The World in 2050 is an outstanding contribution to the literature of global change. It clearly establishes a standard, direction and theme for future analyses and prediction.

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