

**Ask A Genius 79 – Present-Day America (2)**  
**Scott Douglas Jacobsen and Rick Rosner**  
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**Scott: That's the political system with some commentary on the economic and technological impacts of the declining attractiveness of America for the talented.**

Rick: Oliver Stone has a series on Netflix, where he talks about the secret history of the US. I have been thinking this is the most bullshit election since Rutherford B. Hays around 1880s or 1890s. If you believe the Oliver Stone deal, the election of 1944 was bullshit.

In that, people knew that Roosevelt may not live through his fourth term as president, and who became vice president would become president. There was chicanery at the Democratic National Convention to elect a completely unqualified Harry Truman to be VP.

That led to him being the one who decided to drop the bomb, and also belligerently escalate our relationship with former ally Russia into a Cold War that would determine the course of our world for the next 40 years or more.

The previous VP would have maybe been able to handle relations that wouldn't have put the world into a state of war for the next 4 decades. The Trump election is the most bullshit election in at least 72 years.

Much more so than we thought was the most bullshit election in our lives, which was Bush v. Gore, and that looks like a happy picnic compared to the present. Right now, 2 weeks into Trump, the national politics is a mess. I like to trace everything back to the BJs that Bill Clinton got in the Oval Office.

He wasn't a bad president, or he was a lucky president. We didn't have that many serious things going on and things were largely good in the country, and he got BJs. Gore gets pissed that Clinton has sullied the office of the presidency. Gore doesn't get elected.

So, Bush and Cheney take us into this unnecessary war in Iraq. Anyway, things have been crap since then. Yes, Obama was great, but Obama was not aggressive enough. He believes the best about people and was not aggressive enough with the Republicans, at the least the ones who hold national office.

So, he didn't get as much done as he would have liked. So, it has been a pretty solid 16 years of terrible national politics. But! In the meantime, we continue to excel in technology. The future continues to arrive in ways that are pretty great, even as we're wringing our hands about our awful president and the dominance of a bunch of Republican yahoos.

People talk – I'm on Twitter a lot – the end of America, or the world. Most of the jokes are facetious, but there's a real fear behind the comments. We can talk about the ways in which we might have things that might be considered disasters.

Trump likes to talk about the world and the US as a disaster, but he's basing that on terrorism, ISIS in the Mid-East trying to build a Caliphate (which they can't) or at least cause terror in the US and the West.

The deal is, when you look at terrorism statistically, our current situation is preferable to being in a war, at least a giant world conflict. We are still in war in Afghanistan and in the Mid-East, but these are low-level conflicts, at least in terms of what we have to do compared to what we had to do in WWII to do our part in the fight against ISIS, the Taliban, and associated warlords.

In the past 1,000 days or 3 years, the US has flown 13,000 or 14,00 sorties or bombing runs against ISIS and knocked down their territory by about 50%. That's really expensive to drop those bombs on ISIS every day, but it doesn't kill that many of our troops. Also, it is well-away from most Americans' attention. Most could not tell you that we've run so many sorties. If you listen to the Republican politicians, they make it sound like Obama did nothing.

It is a small war against tens of thousands of fundamentalist Islamic assholes, who use their ethnic and religious background to commit tremendous acts of aggression and cruelty, but there are only about 30,000 of these soldiers over there.

It's not like WWII, counting everybody up, where we lost easily 100 million people in the various aspects of it. Hitler kills 11 million in the camps. 30 million, at least, Russians died. At the end, it comes out to about 100 million. It is reasonable to view WWII as a world disaster.

It caused suffering that persisted for decades. The terrorism we have, which kills 100s of people a year and some suffering, does not compare to WWII by a factor of a few hundred thousand to one. Things could be worse.

We could move from these small-scale rolling wars in Syria and Northern Iraq with us vs. ISIS, and our action in Afghanistan, into hotter conflicts with Iran and North Korea. It doesn't mean the rest of the world is fine. Syrians are suffering and getting killed by the hundreds of thousands.

There are the African rolling genocides that kill hundreds of thousands. We're still not in a World War. It is unlikely Trump will get us into a conflict that will get us into a World War, but it is more possible with him than it would be with an experienced politician like Clinton. That's one way it could be the end of America.

We get into more belligerent conflicts or the terrorism ramps up. Any nuclear weapon being detonated in the US, and to a lesser extent anywhere, where a clean fission bomb with a nuclear reaction or a dirty bomb that spreads radioactive materials all over a city center.

It is still the end of something. The reactions to any kind nuclear bomb, whether it actually fissions or not would be the end of a peaceful, safe era in the US. Of course, the exchange of more than one nuclear weapon anyplace in the world – any nuclear exchange – would be the end of a safe era.

Other things that can be seen as the end of America via catastrophic struggle are ecological disaster. Where any ecological disaster that we have will not reduce the world to a wasteland that Denzel Washington walks through in a black leather trench coat. There's no *Mad Max* deal.

That's just laziness on the part of writers and movie makers. There are countries that have experienced ecological disasters. Some of the Eastern Bloc countries that didn't put a lid on pollution for 30 years.

You don't get the whole world dying, or living in grossly polluted areas and lifespans and quality of life being reduced because people are being poisoned or otherwise harmed by their environment.

So, as far as global warming and pollution go, we might see gradual reductions in our quality of life because we haven't put adequate controls on pollution and climate change. Even under a different president, the controls wouldn't be adequate. We're still going to see the consequences of climate change and the other consequences of the pollution we've caused.

Although, the benefits may continue to outweigh the consequences, but it is more likely that we'll see fewer positive consequences and developments of less stupid and less polluting technologies under Trump than under a different administration.

The consequences will be different for America than for the rest of the world because we have more ways of dancing away from the consequences. In other areas of the world, you might see wars over climate change. Some of the ways ongoing now are probably exacerbated, to some not great extent, by climate change.

That will continue to increase. Other problems might be new diseases or new forms of old diseases becoming more virulent and causing more deaths and problems. If Ebola is able to be transmitted through the air, then you could lose tens of millions of people around the world.

That could be seen as not the end of the world or the end of America, but the beginning of an era of a new type of massively killing diseases. It probably won't happen. I don't know if the chances of that happening will change under Trump, but, of course, Trump is running an anti-science administration.

Where the science is fine, but we're not going to pay for that kind of frippery, Republicans don't like paying for that stuff as much.

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