

FYI from U.S. Global Leadership Coalition (USGLC)

As we head into 2024, I wanted to share **the 8 numbers that I'm watching** on the global front.

I've been reading all the latest global threat and risk reports – and trying to decipher what it could mean for global stability and American stability here at home this year. With Congress still working through the details of its latest budget deal, the big question I'm asking is how America and our allies are going to be responding to these challenges. That's the real story behind each of these numbers below.

Liz Schroyer, USGLC

8 Numbers to Watch in 2024

4 BILLION PEOPLE

- That's half the planet's population and half the world's economy going to the ballot box this year – the most in human history. With **more than 70 countries slated for electoral contests in 2024**, the stakes are incredibly high considering worldwide democracy has seen backsliding over the past 17 years, along with a rise in misinformation and election interference from our adversaries.
- **Which way will elections go?** One troubling signal from the end of 2023 emerged in the Dutch elections – the PVV, a fringe populist party, became the largest party in the parliament in what was considered “one of the biggest political [upsets](#) in Dutch politics since World War II.” The party, led by **Geert Wilders**, is now mainstream, campaigned for the elimination of the Netherland's investment in foreign aid. Let's hope that's an outlier.
- With all these elections, **IRI's Dan Twining** [argues](#) that this is a year to “celebrate” America's support for democracy around the world, while **Kristin Lord of IREX** suggests this an “unparalleled opportunity” to fight corruption and ensure free and inclusive elections globally, [recommending](#) strengthening USAID's efforts to support global elections this year.
- And as primary season kicks off in the U.S., **foreign policy has doubled in importance from this time last year – with 4 in 10 Americans prioritizing the topic** when asked for 5 issues that matter. And [see the op-ed](#) in the Des Moines Register from former **U.S. Ambassador to China** and current USGLC Iowa Co-Chair, **Terry Branstad** about what matters to Iowa voters.

2.4% PROJECTED GLOBAL GROWTH

- While fears of an outright recession have passed, the World Bank projects that **global GDP growth will slow to 2.4% in 2024** – now down from 6.2% in the pandemic rebound of 2021 – with **key questions looming** on how this will impact investments in global development around the world.
- On the positive front, **extreme poverty reached a record low in 2023** – a bit more than 8% of the global population, though it's becoming more acute in pockets around the world. And

new reports show rapid economic growth in Africa, now [home](#) to 6 of the 10 fastest growing economies with **Niger, Senegal, and Rwanda** topping the list.

- Even as China's projected growth is anticipated to slow **from 5.2% last year to 4.5% in 2024**, there's no question they are the formidable player on the global stage with Beijing's global development investments around the world **increasing by 525% over last 15 years**.

2 “+” WARS

- The key to this number is the **“plus” sign** with the growing concerns about **potential escalations and protracted conflicts** from the continuing wars in Ukraine and the Middle East, while keeping a close eye on **growing tension with China after this past weekend's elections in Taiwan**.
- **In Ukraine, the debate to provide resources from the U.S. and Europe continues** with Russia now controlling about 18% of Ukraine's territory. **President Zelensky**, in Davos this week, is pushing his 10-point plan, making the case once again that **the real threat of a Russian victory is where Putin goes next in Europe**. Following the **UK Prime Minister's visit to Kyiv** pledging new security assistance, experts are also watching to see if Ukraine will be able to mobilize 500,000 more troops and scale up domestic weapons production if Western aid runs dry.
- **In the Middle East**, while the **central conflict continues between Israel and Hamas**, concern grows over the proxy war between the West and Iran with attacks from Hezbollah on Israel in the North, from Houthi militants on U.S. and commercial vessels in the Red Sea impacting 15% of global trade, and from Iranian-backed militants in Syria and Iraq. Watch to see if supercharged shuttle diplomacy from **Secretary Tony Blinken** can de-escalate regional tensions.
- **Growing humanitarian escalation** – especially when it comes to **aiding civilians in Gaza** who are desperate for food and medicine – will require serious investments in humanitarian and diplomacy resources, making the National Security Emergency Package working its way through Capitol Hill that much more critical.

300 MILLION PEOPLE

- Nearly 300 million people are in need of humanitarian assistance, with the **International Rescue Committee's new [Emergency Watchlist](#) putting Sudan** at the top of its annual list with 6 million displaced and **25 million people** in need of assistance. In addition, for the first time, **8 out of the 10 countries on its watch list are in Africa**.
- Sadly, the number of displaced globally keeps hitting new record highs – largely driven by conflict, climate shocks, and food insecurity. The latest figures from the UN Refugee Agency count **108 million people forced to flee their homes** – the largest ever – and approaching double the number displaced during World War II.
- When it comes to global food security, a recent report from the World Food Program and the Food and Agriculture Organization identified **“18 hunger hotspots” across 22 countries** with more than **150 million people facing “acute food insecurity”**.

1/4 OF HUMANITY

- With 2023 marking the hottest on record globally, [a new report](#) estimates that nearly a quarter of humanity – or **1.84 billion people worldwide** – were living under drought conditions in 2022 and 2023 with the vast majority in low- and middle-income countries.
- Experts worry that this year’s El Niño weather pattern [will](#) have an immeasurable impact causing “even more extreme weather and climate impacts than 2023.”

40% OF JOBS WORLDWIDE



- Artificial intelligence will affect 40% of jobs worldwide, according to **IMF Chief Kristalina Georgieva**. Her message, as she heads to Davos, is that technology could “jumpstart productivity, boost global growth and raise incomes” or “replace jobs and deepen inequality.” Yikes.

13% OF CONGRESS

- As America’s signature global HIV/AIDS program, PEPFAR, marked its 20th anniversary last year, the number of lawmakers who remain in Congress since **President George W. Bush** announced the program in 2003 is now 13%.
- With mixed prospects for significant legislation before Congress – including the Farm Bill and the reauthorization of PEPFAR, the African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA), and the U.S. Development Finance Corporation – continuing to educate and engage new bipartisan champions on Capitol Hill becomes more important than ever.

24 MILLION PASSPORTS

- And one fun one! The United States issued **more than 24 million passports** between

October 2022 and September 2023 — the highest number ever in our nation’s history 


As we look ahead to the new year, the stakes have rarely been higher for policymakers to get it right when it comes to bolstering America’s capabilities to respond to the increasing and converging global threats.

It appears Congress has a path forward to avoid a shutdown at the week’s end with a Continuing Resolution to give more time to negotiate Fiscal Year 2024 spending bills with the new deadlines moved to March 1st and March 8th. Priorities to address the global front remain including **ensuring a strong topline level for the International Affairs Budget** and **passing the National Security Emergency Package** with support for Ukraine, Israel and Taiwan to counter China, Russia, and Iran, while bolstering America’s global humanitarian response, especially for civilians in Gaza.