

Four Alternative Global Futures

In September-October 1999, the NIC initiated work on *Global Trends 2015* by cosponsoring with Department of State/INR and CIA's Global Futures Project two unclassified workshops on *Alternative Global Futures: 2000-2015*. The workshops brought together several dozen government and nongovernment specialists in a wide range of fields.

The first workshop identified major factors and events that would drive global change through 2015. It focused on demography, natural resources, science and technology, the global economy, governance, social/cultural identities, and conflict and identified main trends and regional variations. These analyses became the basis for subsequent elaboration in *Global Trends 2015*.

The second workshop developed four alternative global futures in which these drivers would interact in different ways through 2015. Each scenario was intended to construct a plausible, policy-relevant story of how this future might evolve: highlighting key uncertainties, discontinuities, and unlikely or "wild card" events, and identifying important policy and intelligence challenges.

Scenario One: Inclusive Globalization

A virtuous circle develops among technology, economic growth, demographic factors, and effective governance, which enables a majority of the world's people to benefit from globalization. Technological development and diffusion—in some cases triggered by severe environmental or health crises—are utilized to grapple effectively with some problems of the developing world. Robust global economic growth—spurred by a strong policy consensus on economic liberalization—diffuses wealth widely and mitigates many demographic and resource problems. Governance is effective at both the national and international levels. In many countries, the state's role shrinks, as its functions are privatized or performed by public-private partnerships, while global cooperation intensifies on many issues through a variety of international arrangements. Conflict is minimal within and among states benefiting from globalization. A minority of the world's people—in Sub-Saharan Africa, the Middle East, Central and South Asia, and the Andean region—do not benefit from these positive changes, and internal conflicts persist in and around those countries left behind.

Scenario Two: Pernicious Globalization

Global elites thrive, but the majority of the world's population fails to benefit from globalization. Population growth and resource scarcities place heavy burdens on many developing countries, and migration becomes a major source of interstate tension. Technologies not only fail to address the problems of developing countries but also are exploited by negative and illicit networks and incorporated into destabilizing weapons. The global economy splits into three: growth continues in developed countries; many developing countries experience low or negative per capita growth, resulting in a growing gap with the developed world; and the illicit economy grows dramatically. Governance and political leadership are weak at both the national and international levels. Internal conflicts increase, fueled by frustrated expectations, inequities, and heightened communal tensions; WMD proliferate and are used in at least one internal conflict.

Scenario Three: Regional Competition

Regional identities sharpen in Europe, Asia, and the Americas, driven by growing political resistance in Europe and East Asia to US global preponderance and US-driven globalization and each region's increasing preoccupation with its own economic and political priorities. There is an uneven diffusion of technologies, reflecting differing regional concepts of intellectual property and attitudes towards biotechnology. Regional economic integration in trade and finance increases, resulting in both fairly high levels of economic growth and rising regional competition. Both the state and institutions of regional governance thrive in major developed and emerging market countries, as governments recognize the need to resolve pressing regional problems and shift responsibilities from global to regional institutions. Given the preoccupation of the three major regions with their own concerns, countries outside these regions in Sub-Saharan Africa, the Middle East, and Central and South Asia have few places to turn for resources or political support. Military conflict among and within the three major regions does not materialize, but internal conflicts increase in and around other countries left behind.

Scenario Four: Post-Polar World

US domestic preoccupation increases as the US economy slows, then stagnates. Economic and political tensions with Europe grow, the US-European alliance deteriorates as the United States withdraws its troops, and Europe turns inward, relying on its own regional institutions. At the same time, national governance crises create instability in Latin America, particularly in Colombia, Cuba, Mexico, and Panama, forcing the United States to concentrate on the region. Indonesia also faces internal crisis and risks disintegration, prompting China to provide the bulk of an ad hoc peacekeeping force. Otherwise, Asia is generally prosperous and stable, permitting the United States to focus elsewhere. Korea's normalization and de facto unification proceed, China and Japan provide the bulk of external financial support for Korean unification, and the United States begins withdrawing its troops from Korea and Japan. Over time, these geostrategic shifts ignite longstanding national rivalries among the Asian powers, triggering increased military preparations and hitherto dormant or covert WMD programs. Regional and global institutions prove irrelevant to the evolving conflict situation in Asia, as China issues an ultimatum to Japan to dismantle its nuclear program and Japan—invoking its bilateral treaty with the US—calls for US reengagement in Asia under adverse circumstances at the brink of a major war. Given the priorities of Asia, the Americas, and Europe, countries outside these regions are marginalized, with virtually no sources of political or financial support.

Generalizations Across the Scenarios

The four scenarios can be grouped in two pairs: the first pair contrasting the "positive" and "negative" effects of globalization; the second pair contrasting intensely competitive but not conflictual regionalism and the descent into regional military conflict.

- In all but the first scenario, globalization does not create widespread global cooperation. Rather, in the second scenario, globalization's negative effects promote extensive dislocation and conflict, while in the third and fourth, they spur regionalism.
- In all four scenarios, countries negatively affected by population growth, resource scarcities and bad governance, fail to benefit from globalization, are prone to internal conflicts, and risk state failure.
- In all four scenarios, the effectiveness of national, regional, and international governance and at least moderate but steady economic growth are crucial.
- In all four scenarios, US global influence wanes.

Matrix: Drivers in the Global Futures Scenarios: 2000-2015 | JPEG 351kB [IMG](#) PDF 9kB [PDF](#)

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