

Predictions regarding international actors up to the year 2030

Abstracts

1. The United States of America

The world will no longer be a “unipolar” one by 2030, but rather the United States of America will be playing its role of a leading superpower within a multipolar global system. The major factors responsible for this change of status will have been the stalemate reached in Iraq, increased criticism of the unilateral aspects of US policy on the part of its allies, the rise of Russia, and still more prominently of China, and public sector financial difficulties within the USA itself. The US government can be expected to react to these pressures by raising its intervention threshold, setting out in a new manner to construct extensive networks of international understanding and placing increased value on a system of permanent relations with its allies rather than on a “coalition of the willing”. The global war on terrorism will not occupy such a central position in US foreign policy as it does at present, even though international terrorism will still pose a serious threat.

Its technological investments, flexible social and economic structures and expanding population will ensure the US of good economic growth on average, and this will form a foundation for retaining its position of military superiority. On the other hand, the capacities of its allies to join it in conducting conventional warfare will have declined. It will be obliged to reduce its network of international bases but will succeed in maintaining a global presence. Its number of unmanned weapons systems will increase markedly, and there will be a steady growth in the exploitation of precision weapons technology. The nuclear deterrent will preserve its existing role.

In the event of more favourable development than predicted, this “unipolar moment” in US history may persist for longer and decline more slowly than it is reasonable to forecast on current evidence, largely on account of the country’s economic strength and its success in bringing the situations in Iraq and Afghanistan under control. In the event of a turn for the worse, economic problems, the rise of China and Russia and chaos in Iraq could eat away at US power to a greater extent than can be assumed at present.

It can be predicted that Finland will join the US-led NATO alliance some time after 2010 and will adopt policies that lay more stress on transatlantic relations.

2. China and East Asia

It is probable that China will remain unified and relatively stable until 2020. Whether or not China remains stable will hinge upon the ability of its leaders to pursue policies that maintain rapid economic growth. The future role of China in international politics will depend on both China's degree of stability and the way with which the leadership tries to reform the agenda and procedures within international institutions and multilateral forum to better suit China's interests. The main factors likely to slow down economic growth are social unrest due to growing inequality and unfairness within society, the limitations of electricity generation capacity, environmental degradation, and ageing of the population. It is likely that China's leaders will pursue a more active role for China in the international arena but will ardently avoid confronting the United States in the period before 2030.

The Korean Peninsula and Taiwan will continue to be potential regional flash-points during the period under scrutiny. In addition China's ambition to become East Asia's major power at some point around or after 2030 presupposes a US withdrawal from the region, which in the late 2020s could cause friction. The manner with which US security interests in East Asia evolve over the next 20 years will provide an indication of how Chinese-American relations are likely to develop beyond the year 2030.

The prognosis is likely to be better than expected if China's rapid economic growth continues and its leaders implement genuine political reforms. A less favourable outcome is likely if Chinese leaders mismanage an unforeseen crisis, especially one related to health. In the event that the middle class decides to oppose the present leadership together with unemployed and generally dissatisfied segments of society, years of instability could follow. The impact of China on Finland will filter through the EU, although in the economic sphere political instability would have direct consequences on Finnish companies.

3. Russia, Belarus and Ukraine

By 2030 Russia will be a world power economically, politically and militarily. Its position of authority in the international community will be based on its ability to exploit its vast natural resources. Its aim will obviously be to provide a counterbalance to the US domination of world politics, and with this in mind it will be ready to develop its relations with the EU, China, India and Japan. Its political system will nevertheless possess some of the features of an authoritarian regime.

Russia will look on the expansion of NATO as being contrary to its national interests and will oppose Finnish membership. When Finland does join NATO, however, this will not detract from its relations with Russia in any permanent sense. Increased shipping in the Baltic Sea may heighten tension in the area, but a military conflict

is unlikely, as it would be to the advantage of all the countries and commercial actors in the region to solve the problems by negotiation.

Under an improved scenario Russia would have developed into a democratic civil society operating according to the rule of law, so that it can be regarded as belonging to the community of western nations. As far as Finland is concerned, this would offer above all opportunities for Finnish industries to benefit from the powerful economic growth experienced in Russia. The larger Russian companies can nevertheless be expected to direct their interests towards the more voluminous markets elsewhere.

A less favourable scenario would be one in which the trend in authoritarian government in Russia were to lead eventually to a dictatorship and the internal situation would come to reflect a more powerful dichotomy with the western bloc. The emergence of a dictatorship would be extremely damaging to Finland, which would be forced to prepare to defend its territory against military pressure, and even the possibility of a surprise attack. NATO membership would give Finland some protection against such pressure.

While Belarus will in all probability be still more closely allied with Russia by 2030, two scenarios are possible for the Ukraine. The better alternative would be for it to be successfully integrated with the west and oriented towards membership of the EU and NATO, while the poorer alternative from its own point of view would be for Russia to have strengthened its grip on the predominantly Russian-speaking east of the country, including the Crimean Peninsula. This would effectively split the Ukraine in two: a European-oriented west and a Russian-oriented east.

4. South Asia

South Asian scenarios will mainly be conditioned by India, i.e. her economic and societal development and her relations with other South Asian countries, most notably Pakistan. It is likely that Indian economic growth will continue, but not without heavy foreign and domestic investment in infrastructure and the energy sector. Positive economic development will gradually ease poverty and other societal problems, and other South Asian countries will benefit from Indian success in this respect.

India and Pakistan are likely to find a pragmatic solution to the Kashmir dispute, and similarly India and China should be able to settle their border disputes. Climate change may seriously affect the South Asian communities as storms, floods and other disturbances become more common. The most seriously affected areas will be beside the Bay of Bengal, where large numbers of people are living on relatively low lands close to the coast. The already underdeveloped infrastructure and health care system will be put under heavy strain as people lose their homes and means of livelihood and as epidemics spread.

Positive development in South Asia may be threatened if relations between India and Pakistan turn violent. This could happen on account of domestic unrest in Pakistan if militant Muslims, the Army or tribal fractions seize power from the central government. Alongside the Kashmir dispute, the question of control over Pakistan's nuclear weapons would then be of greater interest. This could in a worst-case scenario result in foreign intervention, by either India or the United States, but even a lesser subcontinental conflict would jeopardize the positive economic and societal development. This could in turn encourage the domestic separatist and radical movements that operate in all South Asian countries.

As many Finnish and other European companies have transferred their businesses to South Asia, any major economic decline or politico-military conflict in the region will negatively affect the Finnish economy.

5. The Caucasus and Central Asia

The legacy of the Soviet Union will no longer determine developments in the Caucasus and Central Asia during this period, but instead security policy in the region will be influenced by all the major powers in the multipolar world. NATO can be expected to expand into Georgia and Azerbaijan, and the United States to shift the focus of its military interests from Eastern Europe to the South Caucasus, while the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) will strengthen its position in the countries of Central Asia.

Major threats to security in the region are the prospect of a revival of the conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan over Nagorno-Karabakh, the dispute between Russia and Georgia, internal struggles for power in Central Asia and Azerbaijan and attempts by Islamic extremist movements to seize power. Other risk factors affecting the region are organized crime, terrorism, the competition for water resources and the rapid spread of HIV.

A more favourable scenario than the above would entail continued stability in the region, diversification of the opportunities for energy exports and increased NATO and EU influence, while a less desirable one might involve an outbreak of war between Georgia and Russia, a continuation of the dispute between Armenia and Azerbaijan and the continued dependence of the energy producers in the region on Russia. The risks existing in the region would be communicated to Finland through their impact on the EU and NATO, and continued instability there would also be reflected throughout Europe in an intensification in the spread of drugs and HIV and a substantial flow of refugees.

6. The Middle East and North Africa

The dividing lines in matters of security policy during this period are likely to run more distinctly than ever between Iran and its allies on the one hand and the more “moderate” Arab countries (together with Israel) on the other. North Africa will probably remain more stable all told. The emergence of a multipolar international system will allow the countries of the Middle East to seek military support from different world powers, and it is fairly probable that at least Iran and Saudi-Arabia will have acquired nuclear weapons by 2030. Terrorism will remain more or less a regional phenomenon during this period.

Given a more favourable trend than predicted, it is possible that stability may be maintained in the region and that the most authoritarian of the regimes may revert to a semi-authoritarian mode of government and the semi-authoritarian ones take at least some steps towards democracy. In the worst case the Middle East could become the arena for a new “energy cold war”, the spread of nuclear weapons could get out of hand and the political culture of many of the countries in the region could veer in a more authoritarian direction. The countries of the Middle East and North Africa will not pose any major military threats to Europe, but if integration attempts fail, the flow of immigrants from this region could constitute a significant internal instability factor throughout Europe.

7. Sub-Saharan Africa

Developments in Sub-Saharan Africa during the period in question will depend on the nature of relations between the world powers and on whether African political and military elites are prepared to act genuinely in the best interests of their country or merely to their own advantage. The countries in the southern part of the continent, developing in the wake of South Africa, have the best prospects, while the future is less promising for Central Africa. Organized crime, along with environmental challenges is likely to become a threat to security in East Africa, while otherwise positive development in West Africa can be slowed down by periodic resurgence of internal strife.

A more favourable trend than that predicted here would require a significant financial contributions and political cooperation, thus presupposing some degree of agreement between the world powers to relieve the situation in Africa. Factors that could precipitate a worse course of events could be increased neomercantile competition by the great powers for natural resources, bad local leadership and a decline in the state of the environment, in the worst case a combination of all of these. Threats from Africa would extend to Finland only in situations where they had already become global in scale (e.g. a pandemic). If instability and violence in the region increases the European Union may feel pressure to increase military assistance across the continent, this could lead Finland to neglect some of her

national defence needs on account of the ensuing pressures to participate more extensively in crisis management operations.

8. Latin America

The trends in world politics that are likely to dictate the course of development in Latin America are preservation of the leading role of the United States and the rise of Brazil as a major power on the regional level. The crucial issue will be whether Brazil chooses to strengthen its position as part of the US hegemony in the region or to adopt a more independent role, especially as the latter policy could involve developing its own nuclear deterrent.

Organized crime can be expected to continue to detract from economic development in the region and to disturb the peace within society. In particular the border areas between Brazil, Argentina and Paraguay are likely to remain as one of the nodes of international crime and terrorism. The abundance of natural resources may prove capable of keeping the successors of authoritarian left-wing governments in power in many of these countries over the period examined here.

The most optimistic scenario would be one in which Latin America opens itself up to a freer form of interaction with the west and Brazil abandons its pursuit of nuclear weapons, while the most pessimistic would be a spread of neo-leftist ideology, the postponement of free trade agreements with the west and a new period of insecurity in the region brought about by nuclear armament in Brazil. The situation in Latin America will impinge on Finland largely through the EU's external relations and economic cooperation programmes. The possible entry of Brazil into the nuclear club would have global repercussions by altering the international balance of power.

9. The Nordic and Baltic Countries

One of the biggest issues that the Nordic and Baltic countries face in the coming decades is ageing of the population. This will put pressure on health care and social services, reduce the supply of labour and by and large demand more financial and other resources. An implicit division of labour will take place as the economies become more specialized. Although climate change will increase the frequency and intensity of local storms and floods, its overall effect will be positive for these countries, as plants and forest trees will grow faster and to greater size.

The countries concerned will be members of all the major western political, economic and security/defence organizations by the end of the 2020s and will participate fully in their activities. The financial resources allocated for defence will at best remain at the same relative level, thus increasing the need for economies and

the demands for international and regional cooperation. It will not be possible to sustain any comprehensive national defence capability, and instead burden sharing will take place between the defence forces in the region.

As the energy resources in the North Sea diminish, oil and gas production will be intensified in the Arctic Ocean and Barents Sea areas. If Norway and Russia cannot resolve their open border dispute, this could become, if not the only political, or even military conflict capable of destabilizing Northern Europe, at least the most likely one. Although western organizations would inevitably be involved in any such conflict, the actual confrontation would remain local. For Finland, this would at a minimum call for a firm commitment to western goals and an increase in air surveillance in Lapland.

10. NATO

NATO will retain its role as a political and military alliance with the collective defence of the territories and interests of its member states as its principal purpose. The Fifth Article will continue to be of political and military significance as the major force holding the alliance together, and the United States can be expected to continue to be strongly committed to NATO activities.

The alliance's main duty beyond the provisions of the Fifth Article will be the maintenance of stability in areas of strategic importance, so that crisis management operations in regions outside Europe will strengthen their position as NATO's principal activity. These operations will also involve a civilian component.

It is probable that by 2030 the European members of NATO will have adapted their armed forces to the demands posed by the new threats, since NATO will have become the principal influence shaping the military capabilities of its member states.

Russia's attitude towards NATO can be expected to remain tinged with suspicion until well into the 2020s, on account of the expansion of NATO and the spread of individual military systems into Eastern Europe. Notwithstanding this suspicion, Russia will intensify her cooperation with NATO.

Membership of NATO will be extended during the period in question to include many of the current militarily non-aligned countries of Western Europe, the states of the Western Balkans and such countries as the Ukraine, Georgia and Azerbaijan. Finland will be accepted as a NATO member some time after 2010.

11. The European Union

The EU can be expected to forfeit some of its economic power to the rising actors in the international system but to remain on average reasonably dynamic in terms of economic growth. The principal problems will lie in the demographic structure and rigidity factors in the national economies. Close cooperation with the United States of America will continue. The EU will also have developed its military and civilian crisis management capacities substantially, the focus in the military sphere being on operational command, intelligence, surveillance and strategic air and sea transport capabilities. Its emergence as an entity capable of independent military action will nevertheless be restricted by the continued powerful position of NATO. The EU will not attempt to transform itself into a military alliance but will offset this by acquiring broad-based crisis management facilities and a wide range of modes of operation.

The EU will have expanded by 2030 to include Turkey, Macedonia, Albania and Croatia, in addition to which Serbia, Montenegro, Bosnia-Herzegovina and the newly independent Kosovo may have joined by that time and Norway probably towards the end of the period in question. The pace of integration will have slowed down, however, and the union will have preserved its confederative character and will not have developed into a federal state. The EU will have profited from the general advance in economic globalization, but its dependence on imported sources of energy will have increased its susceptibility to crisis situations. The strengthening of its identity and increase in its authority will open up a new route for the diminution of the role of the nation-states within it: their gradual dissolution under the influence of the EU umbrella organization.

Under a more favourable scenario, both cooperation with NATO and internal integration will advance more powerfully and Turkey will not be admitted to membership, which will foster cohesion within the EU. A less favourable scenario, however, would involve a major decline in the US commitment to Europe, leading to a crisis within NATO. In such circumstances the EU's own military capacity would not suffice to fill the gap and foreign and security policy differences between the member states would be accentuated.

EU membership will prove advantageous for Finland over this period, and membership of NATO could be expected to strengthen the country's role within the EU as well. '

12. The United Nations and global security

As globalization advances the transnational sector is likely to gain in power and the relative role of the United Nations as an organization diminish. The western hegemony will weaken and the transition to a multipolar world system will be reflected in a questioning of the UN's liberal agenda.

The major powers will not be so eager in the coming decades to entrust the leadership of interventions requiring the extensive use of force to the UN, but the organization will retain its powers to grant legitimacy to such interventions. The main targets for UN-led crisis management will be minor wars in developing countries, mostly in Africa, whereas the organization's role in the management of other global problems is likely to be seen most clearly in the creation of frameworks, norms and warning systems, the approval of sanctions and the calling of conflicting parties to the negotiating table.

In a worst-case scenario it is possible that the UN could become polarized internally and be partly replaced by a "concert of democracies" headed by the United States. A more favourable scenario might entail a strengthening of multilateral cooperation, a geographical expansion of the democratization process and the successful accomplishment of a reform of the UN itself. Finland can help to promote the achievement of this latter scenario by lending active support to the EU's UN policy and increasing her contribution to crisis management operations.

13. The Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe

By 2030 the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) will have developed a more sharply defined profile than ever as an instrument for handling internal conflicts within states and "soft" security issues. There will also have been a geographical shift in focus towards the south and east, which will have meant a decline in activity in the western participant countries.

One outstanding feature of this organization's future activity will be continuity. Its existence as an institution will probably not be threatened in any way during this period, and its principal features, most notably its wide membership and undeniable, albeit restricted, usefulness as a multinational forum for discussions and negotiations between a heterogeneous group of participants will guarantee its survival for the next twenty years or so. Similarly it is difficult to conceive of it being ousted entirely by any other global or regional security organization.

On the other hand, one cannot expect the OSCE to increase in importance to any appreciable extent. Although it seems likely to retain at least as comprehensive a participant base as it has at present, the heterogeneous nature of these participants and the consensus principle governing its decisions are apt to detract

from its efficiency and prevent any substantial growth in its influence. The OSCE is destined to prove incapable structurally of emerging as a more powerful actor in the European security system than it is at the moment.

Given a more favourable trend than predicted, the OSCE could gain the status of an international actor accepted by all its participant states and able to command a wider credibility than either NATO or the European Union, for instance. Under less favourable circumstances, however, it is possible that the OSCE could disintegrate completely in the face of worsening disputes between Russia and the western participant states. The various fates of the OSCE are likely to affect Finland most of all through the European Union, as a viable OSCE constitutes a useful forum for encountering states that are not EU members. If the OSCE were to disband because of increased international tension, this would reduce the EU's scope for action in matters of security policy. A more favourable situation than predicted would, on the other hand, mean a distinct increase in activity for Finland and a diversification of its contribution in an OSCE framework, possibly at the expense of activity channelled via the EU.