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Future Trends Series - GR:REEN Project

Title of the report

Global Trends 2025: A Transformed World

Area

General

Reporter

US National Intelligence Council

Type of the Reporter

Government

Periodically updated?

Yes

First issued year

1996

Latest update

2008

Official website

www.dni.gov/nic/NIC_2025_project.html

Language available

English

Short summary

The international system - as constructed following the Second World War - will be almost unrecognizable by 2025 owing to the rise of emerging powers, a globalizing economy, a historic transfer of relative wealth and economic power from West to East, and the growing influence of non-state actors. By 2025, the international system will be a global multi-polar one.

In terms of size, speed, and directional flow, the transfer of global wealth and economic power now under way - roughly from West to East - is without precedent in modern history. This shift derives from two sources. First, increases in oil and commodity prices have generated windfall profits for the Gulf states and Russia. Second, lower costs combined with government policies have shifted the locus of manufacturing and some service industries to Asia.

Resource issues will gain prominence on the international agenda. Unprecedented global economic growth - positive in so many other regards - will continue to put pressure on a number of highly strategic resources, including energy, food, and water, and demand is projected to outstrip easily available supplies over the next decade or so.

Climate change is expected to exacerbate resource scarcities. New technologies could again provide solutions, such as viable alternatives to fossil fuels or means to overcome food and water constraints.

Terrorism, proliferation, and conflict will remain key concerns even as resource issues move up on the international agenda. Terrorism is unlikely to disappear by 2025, but its appeal could diminish if economic growth continues and youth unemployment is mitigated in the Middle East.

The trend toward greater diffusion of authority and power that has been occurring for a couple of decades is likely to accelerate because of the emergence of new global players, the worsening institutional deficit, potential expansion of regional blocs, and enhanced strength of non-state actors and networks. The multiplicity of actors on the international scene could add strength - in terms of filling gaps left by aging post-World War II institutions - or further fragment the international system and incapacitate international cooperation. By 2025 the US will find itself as one of a number of important actors on the world stage, albeit still the most powerful one.

Key trends

1. A global multi-polar system is emerging with the rise of China, India, and others. The relative power of non-state actors - businesses, tribes, religious organizations, and even criminal networks - also will increase.
2. The unprecedented shift in relative wealth and economic power roughly from West to East now under way will continue.
3. The United States will remain the single most powerful country but will be less dominant.
4. Continued economic growth - coupled with 1.2 billion more people by 2025 - will put pressure on energy, food, and water resources.
5. The number of countries with youthful populations in the "arc of instability" will decrease, but the populations of several youth-bulge states are projected to remain on rapid growth trajectories.
6. The potential for conflict will increase owing to rapid changes in parts of the greater Middle East and the spread of lethal capabilities.
7. Terrorism is unlikely to disappear by 2025, but its appeal could lessen if economic growth continues in the Middle East and youth unemployment is reduced. For those terrorists that are active the diffusion of technologies will put dangerous capabilities within their reach.

Suggestions

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Methodology

Survey, research from secondary sources and modelling

Reference to other trends reports? If yes, which reports?

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