

09.01.20

## THE FUTURE IS NOT ENOUGH. KEY EXPECTATIONS FROM 2020



**We are already accustomed to the fact that every new year brings more and more unpredictable events. The uncertainty of events in the international arena is intensifying. But at the same time, an understanding has emerged that the catastrophic nature of these changes is decreasing. And although the overall media landscape is becoming more nervous, people continue to live in a well-fed and relatively safe world. Poverty is diminishing, incomes are rising, and the number of victims of military conflicts is declining. In general, not only are spontaneous negative changes occurring in the world, but also unexpected positive ones.**

If you focus on the key trends of the coming year, you can distinguish seven which are among the most noticeable.

First, the inflation of power continues within the liberal international order. The current balance of power following the results of the Cold War, when many of the current leaders of this world order obtained this power for free - without a military victory or significant casualties on their part; this system has begun to deteriorate and crumble. The new rules of the game, where real power, backed by material resources, is coupled with ambitions and a willingness to use force to protect one's own interests, have formed a new race of great powers for a better place in the 21st century. The dimensions of this rivalry are military, political, economic, and technological ones.

In essence, Russia waited until the strengths of its strategy appeared in demand, and soft power became an increasingly less relevant concept. In the medium term, a large-scale economic crisis is likely to end the era of derivatives, including political ones.

A second key international trend is growing populism. There is substantial reason to

believe that the incumbent president Donald Trump will win again in the 2020 US presidential election. US Democrats are disorganised and cannot yet offer a compelling platform capable of opposing the president. Leading Democratic presidential candidates are not younger, but older than Trump and have fallen into the same rut of the liberal mainstream. If Democrats are unable to offer a young, energetic, and persuasive candidate to challenge Trump, and if an economic crisis does not begin on the horizon for the next 9 months, Donald Trump is likely to retain his pot US president. The third key trend is the increasingly sovereign mindset of international relations. An increasing number of countries are opting against classic alliances and multilateral commitments. The deconsolidation of some institutions leads to the strengthening of others. The list of countries that have shown disobedience and violated allied solidarity for the sake of freedom of manoeuvre or to strengthen their positions continues to grow. These are the USA, Turkey, Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Uzbekistan, Great Britain, Hungary, Poland, France, Italy ... the list continues. There will probably be more in the coming year.

For many of these countries, Russia represents a significant alternative, which also acts as a means of strengthening sovereignty. Russia, in fact, helps all countries striving for subjectivity in international relations - as in the case with the S-400 being supplied to Turkey or agricultural exports to Egypt, the creation of a nuclear power plant in Hungary, and the strengthening of the political positions of France and Italy in Europe.

The fourth key trend is the consolidation of Greater Eurasia, where Russia is building a security and economic infrastructure. Russia's long-term goal is not to assemble an alternative to the Western bloc, but to create conditions that will prevent a major conflict in Eurasia, ensure its stability, create a single market and, in the future, help establish an alternative financial system. The challenge for this process is that although the key players of Eurasia - China, India, Iran, Turkey - have a list of common interests, they compete with each other on some issues. The demand for leadership in pan-Eurasian matters is obvious, and this leadership cannot exist without an ideology as its conceptual basis. Whether Russia will be able to work out this idea or not depends on the effectiveness of the Greater Eurasia experiment.

The fifth key process is the ongoing erosion of European security, and for several reasons. On the one hand, there are the increased appetites of Eastern European countries, which, using the Ukrainian crisis as an excuse, seek to draw the United States into an arms race in the region. On the other hand, there is an emerging understanding among Western European elites about the need for strategic autonomy from Washington, which is behaving more and more inconsistently. In the last several months of 2019, French President Emmanuel Macron proposed creative and constructive initiatives, meaning a new European partnership with Russia. However, the Ukrainian crisis limits Macron's initiatives; in fact, it imposes restrictions on the independence of France. These initiatives have not yet yielded understanding among the French bureaucratic system, which is not yet convinced that this notion will have a systemic continuation.

Russia is inclined to accept France's help and once again raise the question of creating an inclusive security regime in Europe. However, much will depend on how Macron can secure his power in France and consolidate his role as a true leader of European processes.

The sixth key trend is the increasing competition among techno-economic platforms. The



United States, China, the European Union and Russia are exploring the new contours of digital sovereignty. Most of them have solved the problem: understanding what is it like to be an analogue power in the digital world, and what happens if you are late in implementing internal changes. Each of the parties has its own competitive advantages, but the task is to develop a strategy that will allow them to manage best. Properly, this field will turn out to be instrumental from the point of view of determining the balance of power in the 21st century, and Russia is focusing its efforts on making its own strategy the most effective one.

Finally, the seventh trend is the politicisation of the environment. In this era, the political sphere has obtained a new dimension. The strength and potential of each country has begun to be perceived through the prism of ecology. The ecological potential of a country, its ability to achieve sustainable, ecologically friendly development which does not lead to catastrophic climate change, has become one of the most important components of its power. This new context provides a new dimension for Russia's energy leadership. The export of food, as one of the instruments of Russian foreign policy, is becoming more important due to increasing competition in world food markets. All these factors have yet to yield clarity in perceiving Russia's national potential in the field of ecology, but it is obvious that 2020 will see the beginning of a period when this particular dimension of power crystallises into a separate category.

The trends of the 2020 are expected to be very different from the trends of the 2000s or 2010s. The speed of change in the world is increasing. But there is a basis for optimism. Countries are no longer on the verge of a catastrophic conflict. There are more and more well-fed people in the world who want to live a long and safe life, which means that the competition between the leading powers will take milder and more indirect forms.

*Original publication* [valdaiclub.com](http://valdaiclub.com)

*Source:* **The Future Is Not Enough. Key Expectations from 2020**



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