A world without order?

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Clingendael Monitor 2015
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The attack by two men on the satirical weekly Charlie Hebdo in Paris shocked the whole of France and the rest of Europe. It was seen as an attack on freedom of speech. Here, at the Place de la République in Paris, many people gathered to show their support and demonstrate for freedom of expression.

Photo: Groume
A world without order?

Introduction

The purpose of this report is to provide an outline of the situation in the world in terms of stability and the balance of power, particularly as regards the Netherlands and the European Union, based on developments and events since the publication of the Clingendael Monitor 2014. To that end, the report discusses the relevance of recent events for the coming 5 to 10 years using the scenario model that was also used in previous editions of the Clingendael Monitor as a frame of reference.

Together with two in-depth studies that have yet to be published, this summary report constitutes the Clingendael Monitor 2015. The in-depth studies referred to discuss ‘deterrence as a security concept against non-traditional threats’ and ‘economic vulnerability’. The Clingendael Monitor is published each year as part of the Strategic Monitor of the Dutch government.

Key conclusions of the previous Clingendael Monitor

1. The shift in the balance of power is continuing and the West’s dominance is decreasing. Because of political, social and economic problems in emerging countries, however, this process is characterised by great uncertainty.
2. Concurrently, tension is increasing between the great powers on the world stage, particularly in terms of Sino-US relations and Russia’s increasingly assertive stance.
3. The global/multilateral system of consultation and cooperation is functioning even less effectively and is more dependent on agreement between the great powers.
4. There is growing disagreement about the structure of the global system in terms of the rules, values and principles on which dealings between states are based.
5. There is a more complex and dynamic ‘hybrid’ spectrum of conflict in the ‘belt of instability’. A highly diverse range of state, quasi-state (ambiguous) and non-state threats has emerged in the Russia-Ukraine and MENA regions – in other words, in the EU’s immediate environment – and with it a greater risk of spill-over effects. This situation shows the close relationship between internal and external security.
6. The risk of indirect confrontations between the great powers is higher.
7. There is an ongoing trend towards a hybrid world in which state and non-state actors operate in a network model.

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The scenarios were originally developed for and presented in the Ministry of Defence’s 2010 ‘Verkenningen; houvast voor de krijgsmacht van de toekomst’ (http://www.defensie.nl/documenten/rapporten/2010/03/29/eindrapport-verkenningen-2010).

In the previous and current Clingendael Monitor, this group includes the US, the EU, Japan, Russia, China, India and Brazil.
8. The international system is shifting towards a more geopolitical world in which economic interdependence and interrelatedness (role of institutions, NGOs and so on) operate as shock absorbers and make conflict management and cooperation necessary.

9. Relative to the scenarios set out in the 2014 Monitor, it has shifted towards the multipolar quadrant, even though the international system is still in the multilateral quadrant. Fragmentation is therefore a risk.

Recent developments

The following developments and events in 2014 and the beginning of 2015 are relevant to international stability and the balance of power, specifically with respect to the position of the Netherlands and the European Union (EU).4

1. Conflict in Ukraine

The civil war in Ukraine and the corresponding deterioration of relations between Russia and the West are causing greater instability at the EU's eastern borders. Russian military support for Ukrainian separatists, the covert Russian military presence on Ukrainian territory, Russia's annexation of the Crimea, the Malaysia Airlines flight MH17 disaster above Eastern Ukraine and the lack of clarity about the circumstances in which it occurred, the economic sanctions imposed by the US and the EU on Russia and Russia's counter-sanctions, and the increase in violations of EU and NATO airspace by Russian military aircraft5 have caused the greatest tensions between Russia and the West since the end of the Cold War. Against this backdrop, there are increasing concerns in Europe about potential Russian influence in EU member states through Russian-speaking minorities and support for political parties or civic organisations, and the use of dependence on Russian gas supplies to exert political pressure. The growing divide between Russia and the West has been accentuated by the shift in Moscow's diplomatic and economic focus towards Asia. This shift was reflected in 2014 by, among other things, the formation of the Eurasian Economic Union (with Belarus and Kazakhstan; Armenia has since also joined) and the signing of two major gas supply agreements with China.

2. Ambiguous warfare in Eastern Europe

Ambiguous warfare – the use of military personnel and other means of pressure in an initially anonymous way – is a key part of Russian action with respect to the conflict in Ukraine. Action of this kind creates uncertainty among other actors about Russia's underlying intentions. Given Russia's status as a great power and the proximity of the operations, such action is very unsettling to NATO and EU member states. In addition, it is difficult for them to determine an appropriate response. Agreements made in OSCE and other contexts are no longer respected by Russia, which has made Russian action increasingly unpredictable.

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4 This study went to the printer at the end of January 2015.
3. The attacks on Charlie Hebdo and a kosher supermarket in France

Twelve people were killed in the attack on the head office of Charlie Hebdo, a French satirical weekly, in Paris at the beginning of January 2015. A police officer was subsequently killed and a further four people died as a result of a hostage-taking situation at a kosher supermarket. These events shocked France and were perceived throughout Europe as an attack on the freedom of speech. The attacks revealed the vulnerability of open, democratic and diverse Western societies. In addition, the attacks, for which al-Qaeda in Yemen claimed responsibility, again showed how closely the dimensions of internal and external security are intertwined.  

4. Resilience of democracies

The Paris attacks and other events revealed in no uncertain terms the vulnerability of open, Western democracies. This vulnerability is twofold. First, open democracies are more susceptible to threats like returning jihadists, propaganda that serves to undermine, economic pressure, and cyber domain threats. Second, it is difficult to find an appropriate response to these ambiguous and hybrid threats. As long as they comply with their own laws and remain true to their fundamental values, open democracies are often restricted in terms of the means that can be used to neutralise such threats. This is clearly shown by the cyber domain, which, on the one hand, has become an integral part of all aspects of society while, on the other, is largely international and open in nature. It is inherently difficult to determine the nature and magnitude of a cyber security threat and the perpetrator of a cyber-attack. The importance that democracies attach to openness of the cyber domain limits the options available to governments to deal with national and international security threats in this area. Put very generally, governments in democratic societies tend to be more reluctant to use force and gather information for the purpose of security than governments in non-democratic countries.

5. Destabilisation in parts of the Middle East and North Africa

The civil war in Syria acquired a new dimension when the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS) proclaimed a caliphate. There is strong sectarian polarisation in both countries and jihadist extremism is advancing rapidly. In a short space of time, ISIS has developed into an extremely violent group that controls a substantial territory that attracts fighters from across the world. The risk of instability spreading in Syria and Iraq as a result of vast numbers of refugees fleeing to Turkey, Lebanon and Jordan has increased. In Yemen too, where al-Qaeda has a strong presence, there is the threat of chaos due to advancing Shia rebels. In addition, the Gaza-Israeli conflict in the summer of 2014 and efforts on the part of the Palestinian Authority to gain international recognition of the State of Palestine showed that Israeli-Palestinian relations are again on a knife-edge. Instability may increase in North Africa as a result of the chaos in Libya, a country that increasingly seems to be on the verge of becoming a safe-haven for Islamic extremists. The country is at risk of becoming a failed state and may become a new base for ISIS, since there is virtually no central authority and arms, drug and human trafficking are taking place on a massive scale. Various attacks by terrorist groups in countries such as Mali, Kenya and Somalia (al-Shabaab), as well as Nigeria (Boko Haram) indicate current or potential destabilisation in sub-Saharan regions. The social and economic disruption caused by the Ebola epidemic in a number of West African countries is contributing to this instability, which is resulting in large flows of refugees to Europe.

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6 The interrelatedness of internal and external security was one of the in-depth studies of the 2014 Clingendael Monitor.
6. The West's use of economic pressure and military assets in Eastern Europe and the Middle East

The West took various measures in response to political and security developments in Eastern Europe and the Middle East. First, the EU and the US reacted to Russia's annexation of the Crimea by imposing economic sanctions. Although the sanctions and Russian counter-sanctions are causing economic damage to both sides, it is unclear whether Western sanctions will actually change Russia's behaviour. A second response of the West with respect to Russia was to set up a Readiness Action Plan (RAP) during the NATO summit in Wales in September 2014. This plan provides for, among other things, a Very High Readiness Joint Task Force. As a result, NATO troops are permanently present in Poland and the Baltic states. Third, operating with other actors, the West responded to the rise of ISIS by intervening militarily, mainly in the form of a US-led air campaign.

7. Accelerated formation of partnerships with a central role for China and greater pressure on the Western and European positions in the international system

In 2014, China played a leading role in strengthening various partnerships that focus mainly on the Eurasian and Indian Ocean regions. Examples in this regard include the Conference on Interaction and Confidence Building in Asia (CICA, held in Shanghai in May) and China's 'Silk Road' initiative, which is aimed at developing land and maritime routes in the zone between the EU and China. In connection with this strategy, China set up a Silk Road Fund worth USD 40 billion and took the initiative in the formation of a multilateral Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB), which has capital amounting to USD 100 billion. The AIIB is in part an alternative to the Asian Development Bank (ADB), in which Japan and the US are the key players. Regarding the Asia-Pacific region, as host of the APEC summit in November, China promoted the idea, which had been in existence for some time, of a free trade agreement for the entire Asia-Pacific region, including the US, and argued in favour of the agreement's accelerated introduction. This agreement for a Free Trade Area of the Asia-Pacific (FTAAP) would include a greater number of countries than other regional free trade agreements, such as the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP), a US-led initiative, currently being negotiated. At the global level, the BRICS countries created the New Development Bank, which has its headquarters in Shanghai, and a new reserve fund in 2014. Each has capital amounting to USD 100 billion. These new institutions are alternatives to the Western-dominated World Bank and International Monetary Fund. There is therefore greater pressure on Western countries to reform existing financial institutions and to give a greater say to emerging countries. Without such reforms, it seems highly likely that large emerging countries will continue to develop new organisations that may be attractive alternatives to Western-dominated institutions. The West's ability to promote Western values through multilateral institutions has in any case decreased. China also strengthened its international position bilaterally by concluding a gas supply agreement with Russia and not taking part in economic sanctions against Russia, and by concluding a climate agreement with the US. This agreement had a major impact on the multilateral climate negotiations in Lima.

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8 Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation.
8. Crisis of confidence within the EU

Elections to the European Parliament took place in May 2014. Citizens indicated their dissatisfaction with the EU in two ways. First, turnout was a record low. Only 43% of those entitled to vote actually did so. Second, those who did vote clearly expressed criticism of the EU. Although support for the Dutch Freedom Party (PVV) dropped in the Netherlands, the French *Front National* won 25% of the votes and the UK Independence Party achieved a major victory. The question raised in the 2014 Monitor as to whether the EU will be able to overcome this crisis of confidence and legitimacy in order to remain a credible power factor both in its own region and at global level, has therefore become more pressing.

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Following on from the previous versions, the Clingendael Monitor 2014 concluded that although the world was still in a multilateral scenario in terms of order, it was shifting further towards the multipolar scenario.9 This conclusion was based on the continuing power shift and the increasing difficulty with which global consultative structures are functioning.

In addition, the 2014 Monitor referred to the risk of fragmentation within the international system.

The events that have taken place since the publication of the Clingendael Monitor 2014 give no reason to adjust these expectations. The global power shift is continuing and international consultations are dominated by strained relations between the US and the EU on one side and Russia and China on the other, with other emerging countries in the background. The multilateral system is not being revived. As a result, it is difficult to determine whether and the extent to which the world is still in a multilateral scenario (like in the previous versions). For one thing, the picture is characterized by increasing regional diversity and complexity. Whereas South and North America and Oceania are stable and peaceful, certain Central American countries are characterised by fragility and criminality. Instability and internal conflict prevail in the Horn of Africa and parts of sub-Saharan and West Africa. In the MENA region, countries are at risk of collapsing as a result of religious and political sectarianism. Conflicts in this region also acquire international dimensions. In East Asia, Afghanistan and Pakistan, the potential for conflict remains limited for now to heightened tensions. In the eastern part of Europe, on the other hand, ambiguous confrontation involving the use of force is taking place in a way that is causing some to fear that we are on the verge of a ‘new Cold War’. The level of security and stability in the rest of Europe, particularly in EU countries, is high. The EU’s immediate environment is characterised by instability, conflict and tensions, however.

This regional variation underlines the fact that global and regional conflict management and prevention capabilities are under considerable pressure because of the sheer number of tensions and conflicts.10 In addition, although not as yet in direct confrontation, the great

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9 Scenarios developed in the context of ‘Verkenningen: houvast voor de krijgsmacht van de toekomst’, a study into the armed forces of the future published in 2010, are used to characterise the international system in terms of order. For an explanation of the scenarios, see also Jan Rood, ‘Een wankele wereldorde’ in Jan Rood (final editor), *Een wankele wereldorde: Clingendael Strategische Monitor 2014*. The Hague: Clingendael Institute, 2014, pp. 59-63.

10 It must be noted in this regard that the international agenda includes other issues that require a joint approach, such as climate change and water scarcity. If these issues are not dealt with jointly, they could in time threaten regional stability and security.
powers, including the EU, are directly or indirectly involved in a number of the current or potential conflicts referred to. This applies particularly to East Asia, the MENA region and regions that border Russia. Moreover, as a result of the great powers’ involvement in conflicts, and their inability to reach agreement, the international community has up to now proved incapable of finding an adequate answer to these conflicts and tensions.

These considerations lead to the conclusion that, aggregated to global level and viewed from the perspective of the scenarios used in the 2014 Monitor, the world is in transition from a multilateral to a multipolar scenario (see Figure 1).

The foregoing seems to suggest, above all, that today’s world is dominated by the ‘forces of disorder’ rather than the ‘forces of order’. The perception of a world teetering on the edge of chaos is expressed in, among other things, a number of concepts that are frequently used at present. First, there is the assumed ‘return of geopolitics’; in other words, a world dominated by the traditional struggle to dominate territories and seas and, in this context, define spheres of influence. In the view of many, it is the return of a world that appeared to have ended following the end of the Cold War and rapid economic globalisation. It is a world that has been revived by a Russia that is asserting itself in the eastern part of Europe and by Chinese territorial claims in neighbouring waters. Many therefore fear that we are entering a new Cold War, a period dominated by sharp differences between the great powers based on ideology and power politics. This fear is fed mainly by Russia’s actions in its near abroad. These actions seem to be aimed at restoring or establishing a Russian sphere of influence and are accompanied by vehemently anti-Western rhetoric. Above all, the actions referred to give the impression that the emerging powers, particularly Russia and China, are ‘revisionist powers’ that do not wish to maintain the status quo and are seeking first and foremost to strengthen their positions at the expense of the West’s position. Finally, there is the ‘1914 scenario’, which is based on a fear that, in this climate, an incident may lead to a direct conflict between the great powers as a result of uncontrolled escalation, just as an incident led to the outbreak of the First World War over a century ago. At first glance, these fears appear to be realistic in that Russia is less willing to adhere to the rules of the game established during the Cold War for the purposes of preventing a ‘hot war’ and there is no multilateral mechanism capable of building trust in Asia.

In conjunction with the assumed multipolarisation regarding the global balance of power, these perceptions are in keeping with the traditional view of international relations as an anarchic system in which, in the absence of mutual trust, power politics and rivalry dominate, with all the risks of escalation and conflict that such a situation entails. In a world of this kind, the West’s efforts to strengthen its own post-war liberal and internationally oriented order,

14 See, for example, Niall Ferguson, ‘Nu vooral niets stoms meer doen’. In: NRC-Handelsblad, Saturday, 9 August 2014.
Figure 1  From a multilateral to a multipolar world order

Source: The axes and scenarios were developed in 'Verkenningen: houvast voor de krijgsmacht van de toekomst'. The Hague: Ministry of Defence, 2010
For an explanation of the scenarios used, see the appendix.
basically a system based on rules and procedures, human rights, democracy, the rule of law and market economies and free trade, would be in opposition to the forces of revisionist power politics.\textsuperscript{16} As argued below, however, qualifications must be made.

**A fluid, hybrid and layered world**

While the preceding section provides enough reasons for bleak reflections about the further development of the international system – reasons such as increasing tensions, regional instability and a growing East-West divide –, a simplistic look at today’s complex world on the basis of historical analogies must be guarded against. History shows that multipolar international systems can provide international peace. Examples in this regard include the Concert of Europe established by the Congress of Vienna following the Napoleonic Wars, a system that ensured peace in Europe until the outbreak of the First World War, and the guaranteed stability in East-West relations, partly based on nuclear deterrence, during the bipolar period of the Cold War. In other words, a multipolar system is not automatically an unstable one.

More importantly, however, a one-dimensional look at the world fails to take its layers and complexity into account and therefore fails to recognise the differences between the present and the past. At present, for example, there is no worldwide conflict in the sense of the Cold War – a time in which two sides, armed to the teeth, faced each other, which left the other nations basically two options: alignment or non-alignment. The current conflict between Russia and the West is essentially a regional one. Leaving anti-Western rhetoric aside, the current confrontation is not one of ideologies that have global pretensions as was the case during the Cold War. In a world in which nations such as China, India and Brazil are being more assertive on the basis of their own interests, strains in relations are not based on bipolarity and therefore do not compel other parties to choose sides. Furthermore, Russia’s actions are not actively supported by non-Western countries, particularly other emerging ones, in any significant way. Similar qualifications apply to the assumed return of geopolitics and the ‘1914 scenario’. Geopolitics runs counter to the interest that Russia and China also have in terms of access to international markets for goods, raw materials, energy and capital. The ‘1914 scenario’ is less credible because, in 2015, there is no structure of alliances comparable to that of 1914. In addition, actions taken, even those of Russia, are characterised by restraint and the wish to avoid direct military confrontation.\textsuperscript{17} It must be noted in this regard that Russia’s much worsened economic position as a result of Western sanctions, the low oil price and a weak rouble may affect the country’s internal stability and may therefore affect its foreign policy.

The foregoing demonstrates first and foremost that the international system is multi-dimensional and can be described as fluid, hybrid and layered. The current state of affairs is fluid in the sense that there are no hard ideological dividing lines of the kind that existed at the time of the bloc structure of the Cold War, a structure expressed economically during that period in the division between first, second and third worlds and accompanying relationships of dependency and subordination. Religion, ethnicity and nationalism remain important.

\textsuperscript{16} For this view, see in particular Kaplan, The Revenge of Geography and Mead, ‘The Return of Geopolitics’, pp. 69-79.

\textsuperscript{17} See, for example, Richard Katz, ‘Mutual Assured Production: Why Trade Will Limit Conflict Between China and Japan’. In: *Foreign Affairs*. 92 (2013) 4, pp. 18-24.
sources of political and ideological mobilisation and identity politics. Nevertheless, although these phenomena manifest themselves regionally and within fragile states, they do not do so at a global level as a dominant political frame of reference. To the extent that there is a global ideological confrontation, it is taking place in the context of ‘soft power’ and in terms of cultural and political attractiveness, in respect of which China and Russia are incapable of offering an alternative to the Western model that has global appeal.18 Even if not global in appeal, however, China offers a model that may be attractive to many developing countries. China’s rise suggests that there is a development route that differs from the liberal one that originated in the West. For many non-Western countries, it is therefore an example of successful economic development and a current or potential partner in resisting Western dominance. In contrast to present-day Russia, China has soft power in this respect, especially in the non-Western world.

In addition, the world is hybrid in a number of ways. First, regarding the state dimension, in addition to a diverse palette ranging from democratic to authoritarian and from stable to fragile and failing states, a multiplicity of non-state actors are manifesting themselves, either in cooperation with or in opposition to these states. In connection with the role of international institutions, international regimes and the process of economic globalisation, this phenomenon reflects the emergence of a network world in which, partly as a result of technological developments in communication and transport, time and place are becoming less determinative in terms of the location and nature of activities.19 Second, as a result of market integration, globalisation and transnational issues like climate change, scarcity and so on, states are becoming increasingly intertwined with the international system. This process has affected the policy autonomy of states. In a world of this kind, sovereignty is by definition relative. It is a world in which the traditional hierarchy with the state as the main constituent element of the global system and the traditional separation between domestic and foreign policy are becoming less relevant.

This development illustrates the layered nature of the current global system. In addition or complementary to the geopolitical world of states, there is a network world dominated by interdependence in which parties depend on cooperation with other state and non-state actors for their own security and prosperity. Moreover, both worlds are inextricably intertwined, particularly because of transnational challenges, which include climate change, cyber issues and crime, and transnational processes like communication, trade and capital transactions.

The foregoing considerations temper the alarmist connotations of concepts like a ‘new Cold War’ and ‘the return of geopolitics’. They show that there are other dimensions that put the perceived notions of rivalry, confrontation and conflict into proper perspective and show that these can have a moderating effect. Above all, they point to a world in which there is a substantial demand and need for international cooperation because of interdependence. In addition, this is a world in which it is possible to find new partners and enter into new

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cooperative arrangements and coalitions because of the absence of sharp dividing lines and clear blocs.

This applies, for example, to relations with the BRICS countries, a group that is not a coherent whole and whose members largely act on the basis of individual interests. The same is true with respect to other emerging, non-Western powers that are key players in their regions. Some of these countries, which, in addition to India and Brazil, include Indonesia and Turkey, are referred to by US researchers as ‘global swing states’ because, like Western countries, they are democratic and market-oriented. Their stances could therefore have a major impact on the extent to which the global system remains based on liberal values in the future. At present, however, it seems that these countries are led primarily by their own regional interests and are steering pragmatic courses that are independent of the West and independent of the main challengers to the West (China and Russia).

At the same time, given the many uncertainties and vulnerabilities, this is also an unpredictable world. The uncertainties are the result of the continuing power shift and the difficulty with which existing partnerships are functioning. These partnerships are functioning less smoothly because of the sheer number of transnational issues and regional conflicts that have to be dealt with. It is therefore a world in which the risk of a major conflict, an armed confrontation, between the great powers is limited but the risk of ‘small’ regional conflicts is high. In addition, it is a world in which vulnerabilities exist because of the ‘openness’ and hybrid nature of the global system. Western societies are particularly at risk in this regard.

**What order will emerge?**

What order will emerge from this amorphous and diffuse amalgamation of forces and developments? Will it be a world of geopolitics dominated by revisionism and revanchism, or will the emerging powers, out of self-interest, subscribe to the principles of the liberal international order as responsible stakeholders and thereby strengthen it?

In answer to these questions, it is important to bear in mind that the structure of the international system has not yet crystallised. The world is no longer bipolar. The period of US hyperhegemony, the unipolar moment, has passed. The current situation is not one of actual multipolarity in the sense of an international system that consists of a limited number of more or less equal parties. The power shift will continue, however, as a result of which the West’s power and influence in the non-Western world will decline. The structure of the international system in terms of the degree of polarity will probably be determined by the further rise of Asia as an economic and financial and therefore a political and military giant in the world (see Figures 2 and 3).

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20 See, for example, Philip Stephens, ‘India’s Narendra Modi joins the great power game’. In: *Financial Times*. 21 November 2014.


Since China is the largest of the emerging powers and has the potential to become a global superpower, its stance will decide the nature of the international structure and order. A key factor in this regard is China’s ability, based partly on soft power (see above) to channel resistance in the non-Western world to the West’s traditional dominance. This ability and its economic size mean that China’s potential to function as a game changer is greater than Russia’s. In this context, Chinese foreign policy will be crucial: will this policy be revisionist and aimed at driving back the West (the US) and establishing a strategic sphere of influence in East Asia, or will China be prepared to operate within a reformed multilateral system in which it acquires a dominant position like the US did following the Second World War? The fact that in 2015 China’s own direct investment abroad will exceed foreign direct investment in China for the first time (see Figure 3) indicates an increasing Chinese interest in international stability and properly functioning multilateral institutions.

In addition, the world order will in the coming period be characterised by a mix of rivalry and cooperation. The dimension of conflict will be dominated by regional hot spots. The MENA region, the eastern part of Europe and East Asia will be the focal points in this regard. Cooperation will be possible in cases in which there is a commonly perceived threat or a shared transnational interest. However, such cooperation will largely depend on agreement being reached between the great powers.

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Moreover, in addition to their own immediate interests, the willingness of emerging powers to cooperate will be determined by the conditions under which such cooperation takes place; in other words, by the values, principles and rules of the game that govern the process. Given the declining power and influence of the West, particularly the EU’s, the growing power of emerging countries and the need to involve these countries in dealing with a number of global and regional problems, it is unlikely that the international order will continue along liberal, internationally oriented lines. China and Russia in particular criticise the liberal notion that promoting democracy and political human rights at the international level applies as a positive standard. Emerging countries that have democratic systems are also much more reticent than their Western counterparts when it comes to actively promoting liberal values in an international context. The global order and applicable rules and forms of conduct will change. This change may in time also affect the way in which international legal frameworks are interpreted. At the same time, in the light of the considerations set out above regarding the structure of the international system and mutual dependencies, it is also unlikely that the ‘great power game’ will be determined entirely by geopolitical forces.

As concluded earlier, the world is in between a multipolar and a multilateral scenario. The most likely possibility is therefore the emergence, in the coming period, of a global order that has elements of the multipolar and multilateral scenarios (see Figure 4).

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24 Idem.

In other words, the situation will not be one of disorder but, rather, one of an order that will largely depend on the positions adopted by the great powers in terms of the way in which it functions. To the extent that cooperation takes place, it will be less multilateral. The degree to which emerging powers consider that they have a sufficient interest in cooperation will be decisive, and opportunism will be a dominant feature. It is unclear whether the West is prepared to adapt to the new global balance of power in such a way as to ensure that the new international order also reflects the opinions of emerging countries. The opinions of these countries must be taken into account if a somewhat effective and legitimate global order is to be created. This implies that the world order will inevitably be less Western.
The EU and the BRICS countries, with the exception of Russia, have strong multilateral instincts and tend to be willing to cooperate. Nevertheless, whether a somewhat practicable world order will develop depends to a large extent on the positions adopted by the US and China. During the APEC summit in Beijing, the G20 summit in Brisbane and the climate change conference in Lima, it became clear that cooperation on the part of these two countries is decisive to the functioning of the multilateral system.\(^{26}\) US-China relations are characterised by the simultaneous existence of rivalry and cooperation. The situation is therefore different from the one that prevailed during the Cold War, when there was virtually no cooperation between the US and the Soviet Union.

Within this scenario, cooperation will take on different forms and will be less structured. The intensiveness of joint action will differ according to area, for instance in the case of international economic issues and global public goods. If direct political and security interests are at stake, particularly in a given nation’s own environment or sphere of influence, agreements to leave each other alone or confidence-building measures to prevent conflicts will be the most that can be achieved. In addition, cooperation will be more ad hoc and ad hoc coalitions will therefore be formed more frequently. It will be less institutionally and multilaterally rooted and will therefore be ‘messy’. In the words of Richard Haass, ‘Multilateralism in the 21st century is, like the century itself, likely to be more fluid and, at times, messier than what we are used to.’\(^{27}\) Finally, cooperation will more frequently take place in groups that change in terms of composition or within regions or regional partnerships. In this context, the size of the group will largely be determined by the problem being addressed, something also referred to as the arrival of the ‘G-x world’.\(^{28}\)

**A world of cooperation and rivalry**

In terms of the international order’s prospects in the coming years, it can be said that they will increasingly be conditioned by the state of relations between the great powers, of which the US, the EU, Japan, Brazil, India and China are the main ones. Tensions run high in some cases. Russia’s relations with the US and the EU are strained, as are China’s relations with the US, Japan and India.\(^{29}\) Nevertheless, these tensions often coexist with cooperation, particularly in the economic sphere. This mix of rivalry and cooperation also characterises relations between the US and China, the set of relations that will have the greatest impact on the functioning of global, multilateral institutions. The Clingendael Monitor 2014 concluded that the world order was faltering. It stated that the power shift was continuing. Regional instability was increasing and tensions between the great powers were rising. Cooperation, whether or not in a multilateral context, was proceeding with difficulty. This update gives no reason to adjust these conclusions. At the same time, however, this update shows that a certain order is possible within the framework of evolving global relations, even if this order differs from the Western one that developed after the Second World War.

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29 There are also relations, those between the US and the EU and the US and Japan, that are not characterised by major tensions because of close cooperation.
Appendix

See below for an explanation of the scenarios, as used in figure 1.

**Multilateral scenario:** Continuing globalisation applies in this scenario. Multilateral rules and agreements successfully adapt to the shift in the global balance of power. The West still has a strong position alongside emerging countries like China, Brazil and India.

**Multipolar scenario:** In this scenario, international relations are dominated by rivalry between the great powers. Different power blocs form and the situation is characterised by economic regionalisation, protectionism and competition for scarce resources. Cooperation proceeds with difficulty and largely depends on relations between the great powers.

**Network scenario:** In this scenario, the world order is non-polar and unpredictable. A diverse range of non-state actors dominate the world both economically and politically. These actors play an important role in transnational networks. States lose autonomy as a result of globalisation, and are considerably less significant.

**Fragmentation scenario:** Anarchy dominates in this scenario. The absence of international leadership and functioning global institutions means conflict and rivalry between states. The driving forces within the international system are self-interest, nationalism and preservation of identity. There is no cooperation. It is an unsafe world of fragile, isolationist states that is dominated by conflict.