

## Prospects for 2010

The year 2010 brings to an end the first decade of the new millennium that has been witness to major disruption throughout the international system. From the “9/11” mass murder episode to the financial meltdown that resulted in mass unemployment the past decade has plunged the post-Cold War world into new levels of uncertainty.

In the immediate term addressing the continuous security challenge of terrorism will continue to be a priority. The persistent effort to blow up innocent civilians on jetliners or in city squares demands that the global war on terror will continue even if under another name.

Throughout 2010 all political efforts will remain focused on shoring up the fragile economic landscape that has been through one of its most unstable periods in contemporary history. Avoiding a double dip recession and reforming the international banking sector will dominate such efforts.

The economic slowdown throughout the West has happened at the same time as China has emerged as an economic superpower. Ten years ago the US GDP was more than eight times that of China's. Today it is barely four times larger and could supersede the United States by 2030. The significant economic gravitational shift to the East is one of the most significant trends of the first decade of the twenty-first century.

Coupled together, the BRICS countries (Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa) have become a formidable force in international affairs, a fact recognized by their prominence at the G20 forum. The emphasis to strengthen multilateralism in international relations is also indicative of the more diverse diffusion of power that is taking place and the more international nature of challenges facing humankind.

2010 will see South Korea assume the chair of the G20 leading industrial and developing economies from Britain. Canada takes over the presidency of the G8 leading industrial nations from Italy. Yet the multiplication of multilateral initiatives should not be seen as a sign of success in itself. The true benchmark of such initiatives is their effectiveness in addressing the sources of instability they are confronting.

Bold leadership will also be necessary to ensure that the follow up to the Copenhagen Climate Change proceedings does not result in complete disarray. The same strategic decisiveness will be required if the nuclear non-proliferation review conference to be held at the United Nations in May is to be successful.

President Obama's first year in office has seen him manage to avert an international economic meltdown and also adopt a more open style of international diplomacy. Yet several potential pitfalls lie ahead. Domestically, the American economic recovery remains fragile. Internationally, instability continues to resonate in Iraq, Afghanistan, and Pakistan. The expected American-Russia accord to replace the 1991 Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (START) that recently expired, and the nuclear security summit that the United States hosts in Washington in April offer President Obama with clear opportunities to demonstrate his leadership credentials to create a more cooperative strategic landscape in line with his Nobel Peace Prize status.

Turning to the Middle East a number of indicators will signal the extent to which a positive turn of developments will be possible. First, a more direct American honest broker engagement in the

Israeli-Palestinian conflict is necessary. Special envoy George Mitchell's campaign to promote peace must be supplemented by a more focused effort by Secretary of State Hillary Clinton to bring the protagonists to the negotiating table. President Obama must also seek to improve Arab-Israeli relations by adding substance to the impressive speech he delivered in Cairo last June.

Second, peace talks will only be possible if the Netanyahu government is prepared to seriously entertain a two state solution to the conflict. Third, reconciliation between the Palestinian factions is necessary and a national unity or consensus government would facilitate the negotiating process.

In the European Union the post Lisbon Treaty era will bring an end to the system of rotating presidencies as we know it. But this will not disappear completely. The Spanish presidency will be responsible for commencing implementation of the Lisbon Treaty provisions, a process that is likely to continue during the subsequent Belgian presidency. Rotating presidencies will continue when it comes to the General Affairs Council, specialized Council gatherings and COREPER.

In the Euro-Mediterranean context revitalizing the Union for the Mediterranean (UfM) initiative will be the Spanish Presidency's priority. The setting up of a UfM Secretariat in Barcelona will add further coherence to management of Euro-Med relations. The project driven nature of the UfM in key strategic areas will ensure that more tangible results are achievable. Spain is also determined to raise significant funding for such projects from the private sector and to enhance mobility across the Mediterranean by improving visa processing mechanisms.

As the world commences the second decade of the new millennium managing the plethora of sources of instability, insecurity and uncertainty will require a strategic rethink that so far has alluded the global community. The emerging multipolar world must recognize the responsibility that their increasing affluence and influence create. This is the main challenge in the decade ahead.

**Professor Stephen C. Calleya,**  
**International Relations Analyst,**  
extends his very best wishes for the New Year to all visitors of his website.