

**Beyond Tomorrow: Four Scenarios for the World of 2050**  


*This week, I'm passing the pen to Nikolaus Lang, managing director and senior partner at BCG and global leader of the BCG Henderson Institute.*

—Christoph

How can leaders plan for the long term? At a time of near-constant volatility, high-frequency social media posts, and geopolitical shocks, this question comes up time and again in my conversations with CEOs. If they do manage to look ahead, what will they find? An AI-powered paradise with material abundance and near universal basic income? Or a global collapse, due to major military conflicts and cyberwarfare?

Such extreme outcomes could happen, but they're tail risks and should not be the anchors of a company's strategy.

So, what long-term futures should leaders prepare for? Answering this question is at the core of our mission at the [BCG Henderson Institute](#). For our new report, [Beyond Tomorrow: Four Scenarios for the World of 2050](#), we have developed four distinct visions of the future, from across a spectrum of probable but highly differentiated worlds.

To develop our scenarios, we analyzed more than 100 megatrends, drew on a century of historical data, and spoke to dozens of experts. The resulting versions of the future are grounded in 20 metrics that make them tangible:

- **AI Abundance.** In this future world, exceptional productivity growth and plentiful low-carbon energy emerge from the explosive rise of AI technologies and global cooperation on strict regulatory standards. Global GDP triples by 2050, the equivalent of 5% annual GDP growth over 25 years—an unprecedented boom. At the same time, the average employee works 25% fewer hours than today.
- **Battling Blocs.** A tense stalemate forms among economically decoupled and mutually distrustful alliances. The volume of international trade falls back to Cold War levels: down to 35% of global GDP, from 57% today. Meanwhile, global defense spending rises to 7%, from 2.4% today, reflecting elevated tensions.

- **Climate Coalition.** An onslaught of extreme weather shocks drives nations to prize resilience over unbridled economic growth, and to a multilateral agreement on carbon standards. The share of energy from fossil fuels plummets from 81% today to 35% in 2050. By 2050, advances in health, biotech, and diagnostics add five healthy years to the average global lifespan, increasing it to 68.
- **Digital Darwinism.** Governments competing to attract leading tech players engage in a race to the bottom on regulation. Advances in AI and virtual/augmented reality double annual global spending on information and communication technology, from 4% of GDP today to 8% in 2050. Corporations dominate a society in which inequality soars: the richest 1% hold nearly half of global wealth, a share not seen since the industrial societies of the early 1900s.

Of course, there could be black swan events, such as breakthroughs in nuclear fusion or the advent of the AI Singularity (AI accelerating beyond human control); or physical catastrophes, like a war in space that disrupts global communication. It's not possible to adequately prepare for all these low probability, extreme shocks, nor do we recommend it. But preparing for a future that resembles one or more of our four scenarios is possible—and it should start with these five low-probability moves:

- **Enhance structural resilience**, rebalancing supply chains and manufacturing footprints toward redundancy.
- **Reimagine talent for AI and demography**, including more flexible and augmented roles, and intergenerational work.
- **Build digital flexibility and resilience**, taking a modular approach to tech and data stacks and ensuring adequate tech supply.
- **Sharpen sensing capabilities**, developing awareness across regulations, geopolitics, resources, and technology—along with the readiness to act.
- **Embrace a broader societal role**, preparing to shoulder more responsibility for workers' well-being, local resilience, crisis management, and community needs.

Only by having a fully formed perspective on the future can leaders shape the near-, mid-, and long-term strategy of their organizations. Decisions made over the next five years will have an impact on the next 25, and these scenarios will provide orientation for the choices to be made.

I invite you to explore them in detail—through our interactive view of each scenario, and the rich analysis, data, and timelines in the full report.

Warm regards,



Nikolaus Lang  
Managing Director & Senior Partner  
Global Leader, BCG Henderson Institute

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## Further Insights



### [Beyond Tomorrow: Four Scenarios for the World of 2050](#)

Long-term thinking can seem like a luxury. But understanding the possibilities can provide lessons for addressing today's challenges.

[Explore the Scenarios](#)



### [What Companies that Excel at Strategic Foresight Do Differently](#)

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### [For Most Countries, AI Sovereignty Is an Illusion. Resilience Is Real.](#)

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