

Language for talking about
the future

Who said it?

“In this world nothing can be said to be certain, except death and taxes.”

Nobody knows the future with certainty. We can, however, identify ongoing patterns of change.

Alvin Toffler (US author, 1928-2016)

If I knew for a certainty that a man was coming to my house with the conscious design of doing me good, I should run for my life.

Henry David Thoreau (US philosopher and writer 1817-1862)

A bird in hand is a certainty. But a bird in the bush may sing.
[a play upon the proverb: *A bird in the hand is worth two in the bush*]

Bret Harte (US short fiction writer, 1836-1902)

Express the following with varying degrees of probability and certainty, in as many different ways as you can:

It won't happen

It won't happen

It's unlikely to happen

It's doubtful that it will happen

I don't think it will happen

There's a good chance it won't happen

That it will happen is improbable / unlikely

It's bound / sure / certain to happen

It's not a likely outcome

I don't expect that it will happen. I'm not confident it will occur

Rate the following statements for certainty, on a scale from 1 (certain) to 5 (uncertain)

- 1.The referendum is unlikely to take place.
- 2.It seems not unlikely that the Social Democrats will win the next election.
- 3.It is highly likely that the outcome will be in favour.
- 4.The referendum has a low probability of taking place.
- 5.There is only a remote chance that the referendum will be held.
- 6.The outcome of the referendum is bound to be in favour of leaving the euro.
- 7.It is doubtful whether the current leader will win the election.

8. There is a strong possibility that the banks will impose higher interest rates for loans.
9. It appears improbable that US foreign policy will change much in the next US presidency.
10. A likely outcome of the process is a stalemate.
11. The most likely result is a negotiated settlement.
12. It is widely expected / anticipated that he will win.
13. In all probability, the government will continue with its policy of fiscal austerity.
14. As likely as not, the talks will fail.

Future in the past

Translate into English:

*Sembrava probabile che i Social Democratici **avrebbero vinto** le elezioni*

*Walter Isacson definisce Benjamin Franklin "il più dotato americano della sua era e colui che più influenzò il tipo di società che gli Stati Uniti **sarebbero diventati**."»*

*Il giovane **Benjamin**, spendeva tutti i suoi magri risparmi in libri, tanto che il padre diceva che **sarebbe diventato** un tipografo.*

*Sembrava probabile che i Social Democratici **avrebbero vinto** le elezioni*

It seemed likely that the Social Decomocrats **would win** the elections.

*Walter Isacsson definisce Benjamin Franklin "il più dotato americano della sua era e colui che più influenzò il tipo di società che gli Stati Uniti **sarebbero diventati**."*

Walter Isacsson defines Franklin as «the most gifted American of his era and who had the greatest influence over the type of society that the United States would become.»

*Il giovane **Benjamin**, spendeva tutti i suoi magri risparmi in libri, tanto che il padre diceva che **sarebbe diventato** un tipografo.*

The young Benjamin spent all his meagre savings on books, so that his father said he **would become** a printer.

Put these sentences in the past

It is highly likely that the outcome will be in favour.

There is only a remote chance that the referendum will be held.

It is doubtful whether the current leader will win the election

Put these sentences in the past

It is highly likely that the outcome will be in favour.

*It was highly likely that the outcome **would be** in favour.*

There is only a remote chance that the referendum will be held.

*There was only a remote chance that the referendum **would be held**.*

It is doubtful whether the current leader will win the election

*It was doubtful whether the current leader **would win** the election.*

Verbs for talking about the future

Verb

Noun

To forecast

To predict

To foresee

To prophesy

Verbs for talking about the future

Verb

Noun

To forecast

Forecast

To predict

Prediction

To foresee

*Foresight**

To prophesy

Prophecy

*Note that *foresight* is an uncountable noun:

The government showed much foresight in enacting this legislation

Some people are more gifted with foresight / foresighted than others

Marx's predictions about capitalism: make sentences using

to forecast, to foresee, to predict ..

with the words (or adaptations thereof) in 1-4 below, e.g.

1. *Marx predicted that the rich **would get** richer, and the poor **would get** poorer*

1. the rich get richer, the poor get poorer

2. «boom and bust» economics. *Marx foresaw that ..*

3. Globalisation. *Marx forecast that ...*

4. Market dominance of a few firms. *Marx predicted that ...*

Davos, Switzerland



Text on right side is from website:

<https://www.weforum.org/about/world-economic-forum>

OUR MISSION

The World Economic Forum

The World Economic Forum is the International Organization for Public-Private Cooperation.

The Forum engages the foremost political, business and other leaders of society to shape global, regional and industry agendas.

It was established in 1971 as a not-for-profit foundation and is headquartered in Geneva, Switzerland. It is independent, impartial and not tied to any special interests. The Forum strives in all its efforts to demonstrate entrepreneurship in the global public interest while upholding the highest standards of governance. Moral and intellectual integrity is at the heart of everything it does.

Our activities are shaped by a unique institutional culture founded on the stakeholder theory, which asserts that an organization is accountable to all parts of society. The institution carefully blends and balances the best of many kinds of organizations, from both the public and private sectors, international organizations and academic institutions.

We believe that progress happens by bringing together people from all walks of life who have the drive and the influence to make positive change.

Reading practice

Text from the World Economic Forum:

<https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2016/11/8-predictions-for-the-world-in-2030/>

Eight experts in different fields each make predictions about how life will be in 2030.

- Notice the formulations used to predict the future.
- Notice also any instances of informal, journalistic register that you should not use in academic prose.

Introduction

Eight Predictions for the World in 2030

As Brexit and Donald Trump's victory show, predicting even the immediate future is no easy feat. When it comes to what our world will look like in the medium-term – how we will organise our cities, where we will get our power from, what we will eat, what it will mean to be a refugee – it gets even trickier. But imagining the societies of tomorrow can give us a fresh perspective on the challenges and opportunities of today. We asked experts from our Global Future Councils for their take on the world in 2030, and these are the results, from the death of shopping to the resurgence of the nation state.

Eight Predictions for the World in 2030

As Brexit and Donald Trump's victory show, *predicting* even the immediate future is **no easy feat [not a simple matter]**. **When it comes to [If we consider]** what our world *will look like* in the medium-term – how we *will organise* our cities, where we *will get* our power from, what we *will eat*, what *it will mean* to be a refugee – it **gets even trickier [becomes more complicated]**. But imagining the societies of tomorrow can give us a fresh perspective on the challenges and opportunities of today. We asked experts from our Global Future Councils for their **take [point of view]** on the world in 2030, and these are the results, from the death of shopping to the resurgence of the nation state.

8 slides follow with one of the 8 component paragraphs which follow the introduction above. The paragraphs are all 'headless', in the sense that the 'headings' that introduce them are missing. (Note that such headings are characteristic of news reports, not of academic essays.) At the top of each slide you will find the 8 'headings', which in this journalistic text, have a similar function to the topic sentence of more academic prose. Match each paragraph with its heading.

1. All products will have become services. 2. There will be a global price on carbon. 3. US dominance will be over. We'll have a handful of global powers. 4. Farewell hospital, hello home-spital. 5. We'll be eating much less meat. 6. Today's Syrian refugees, 2030's CEOs. 7. The values that built the West will have been tested to breaking point. 8. "By the 2030s, we'll be ready to move humans toward the Red Planet."

A) China took the lead in 2017 with a market for trading the right to emit a tonne of CO₂, setting the world on a path towards a single carbon price and a powerful incentive to ditch fossil fuels, predicts Jane Burston, Head of Climate and Environment at the UK's National Physical Laboratory. Europe, meanwhile, found itself at the centre of the trade in cheap, efficient solar panels, as prices for renewables fell sharply.

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B) "I don't own anything. I don't own a car. I don't own a house. I don't own any appliances or any clothes," writes Danish MP Ida Auken. Shopping is a distant memory in the city of 2030, whose inhabitants have cracked clean energy and borrow what they need on demand. It sounds utopian, until she mentions that her every move is tracked and outside the city live swathes of discontents, the ultimate depiction of a society split in two.

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C) Nation states will have staged a comeback, writes Robert Muggah, Research Director at the Igarapé Institute. Instead of a single force, a handful of countries – the U.S., Russia, China, Germany, India and Japan chief among them – show semi-imperial tendencies. However, at the same time, the role of the state is threatened by trends including the rise of cities and the spread of online identities.

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C) 3. US dominance *will be over*. Nation states *will have staged a comeback [re-emerged, re-appeared]*, writes Robert Muggah, Research Director at the Igarapé Institute. Instead of a single force, a handful of countries – the U.S., Russia, China, Germany, India and Japan chief among them – show semi-imperial tendencies. However, at the same time, the role of the state is threatened by trends including the rise of cities and the spread of online identities.

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D) Highly educated Syrian refugees will have come of age by 2030, making the case for the economic integration of those who have been forced to flee conflict. The world needs to be better prepared for populations on the move, writes Lorna Solis, Founder and CEO of the NGO Blue Rose Compass, as climate change will have displaced 1 billion people.

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E) Technology will have further disrupted disease, writes Melanie Walker, a medical doctor and World Bank advisor. The hospital as we know it will be on its way out, with fewer accidents thanks to self-driving cars and great strides in preventive and personalised medicine. Scalpels and organ donors are out, tiny robotic tubes and bio-printed organs are in.

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G) Rather like our grandparents, we will treat meat as a treat rather than a staple, writes Tim Benton, Professor of Population Ecology at the University of Leeds, UK. It won't be big agriculture or little artisan producers that win, but rather a combination of the two, with convenience food redesigned to be healthier and less harmful to the environment.

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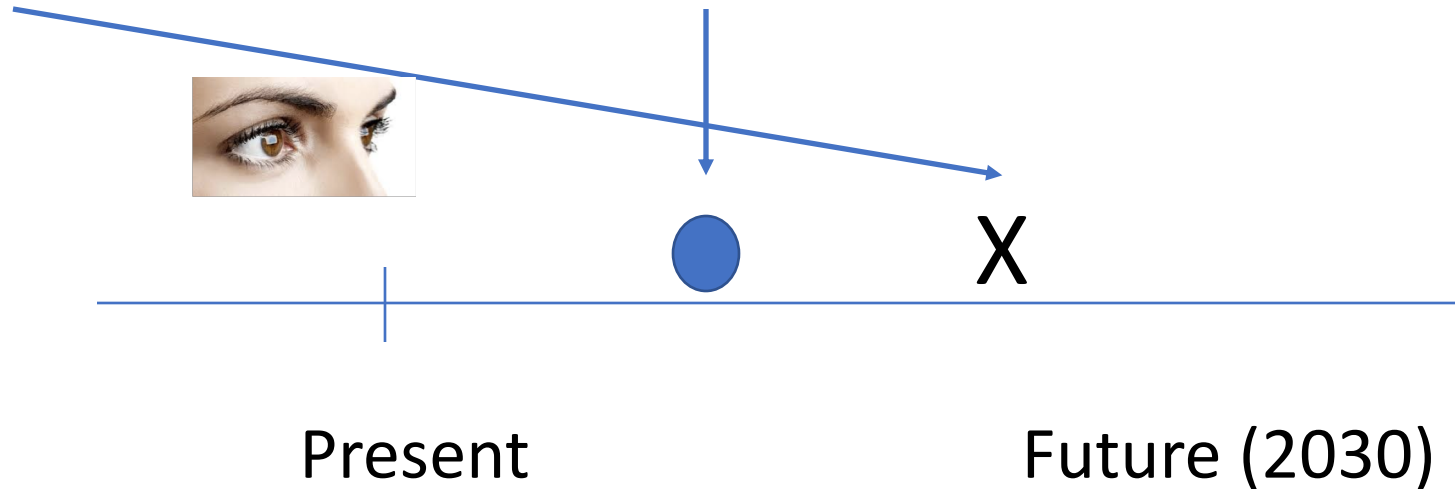
H) discover evidence of alien life, writes Ellen Stofan, Chief Scientist at NASA. Big science will help us to answer big questions about life on earth, as well as opening up practical applications for space technology.

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H) 8. "By the 2030s, *we'll be ready* to move humans toward the Red Planet," to discover evidence of alien life, writes Ellen Stofan, Chief Scientist at NASA. Big science *will help us* to answer big questions about life on earth, as well as opening up practical applications for space technology.

Future perfect (or 'past in the future')

By 2030, all products will have become services



On the next slide, match the two halves of the sentences, according to the meaning of the WEF predictions

Highly educated Syrian refugees
will have

Nation states will have

Technology will have

All products will have

The values that built the West will
have been

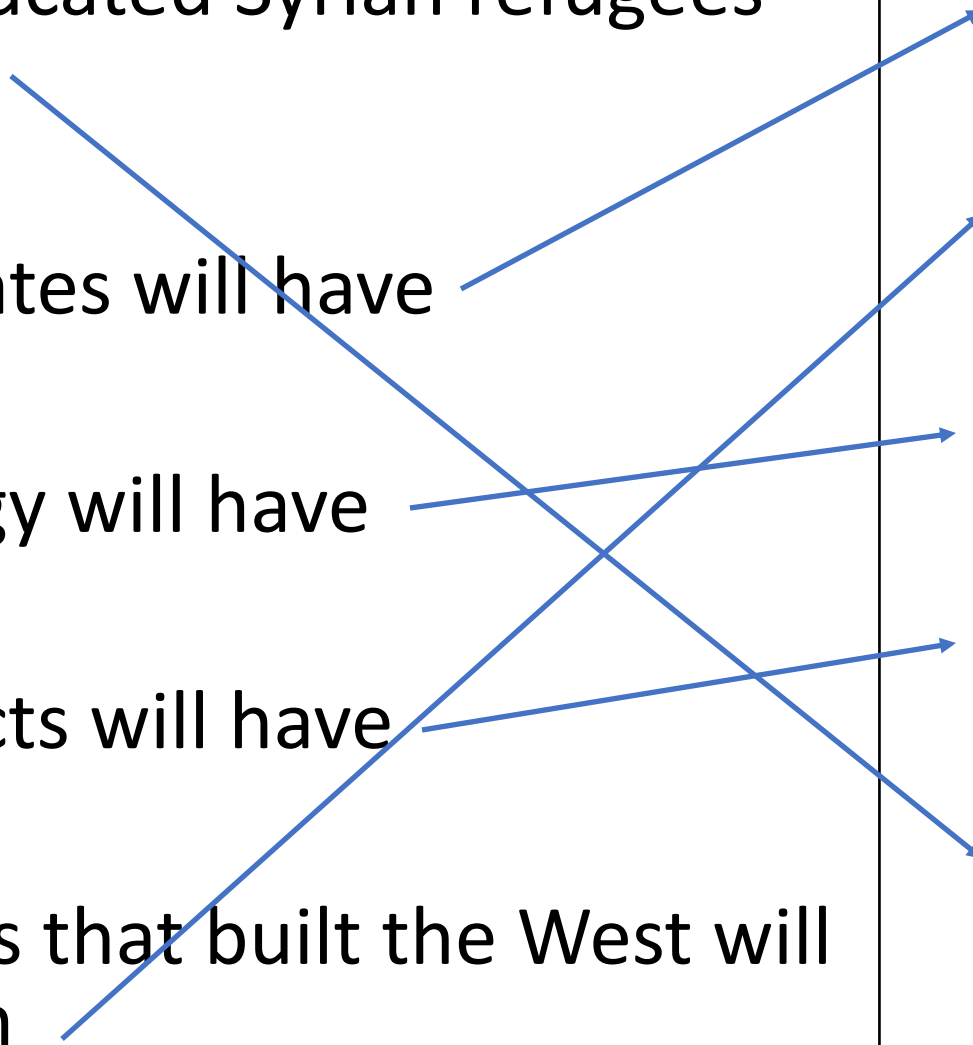
staged a comeback

tested to breaking point

further disrupted disease

become services

come of age by 2030



Future continuous: for regular, continuous action in the future

By the 2030s, we'll be eating less meat; we'll be using less petrol; more people will be living in cities

ONLY with dynamic, not (normally) with stative verbs (to have, to be, to own etc):

XX In the 2030s, we'll be having less water.

✓ In the 2030s, we'll have less water