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The United States, the West and the 21st Century Global Flows of Ideas

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Oh, how euphoric it all seemed at the end of the Cold War. “The triumph of the West, of the Western *idea* is evident,” in Francis Fukuyama’s iconic proclamation, “an unabashed victory of economic and political liberalism . . . [and] the total exhaustion of viable systematic alternatives.” Similar triumphalism was trumpeted by globalization-*istas* such as Thomas Friedman with among other things his “golden arches theory of conflict prevention” by which no two countries with McDonald’s franchises within their borders go to war against each other. While acknowledging the need for some adaptation, John Ikenberry confidently predicted “liberal internationalism 3.0” following on the 2.0 of the post-World War II order and 1.0 of Wilsonianism. Even the “rise of the rest” in Fareed Zakaria’s post-American world was largely Americanized in nature and with the United States still as the central player.²

Similar themes have come through in policy. The “enlargement” conception with which the Clinton administration began saw democracy spreading globally. George W. Bush’s post 9/11 “evildoers” and freedom agenda, while deploying American power quite differently, followed from a similar set of ideas. So too Barack Obama’s first-term emphasis on restoring America’s reputation by making the United States truer to its core values. In Europe as well, whether with Tony Blair or David Cameron, Nicolas Sarkozy or Françoise Hollande, or Angela Merkel, the core worldview has been a Western-centric one.

The prevailing assumption in these and other articulations is that there principally continues to be an outward flow of ideas about how best to organize national societies and the international

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² Francis Fukuyama, “The End of History,” *The National Interest*, 16 (Summer 1989), 16; Thomas Friedman, “Foreign Affairs Big Mac I,” *New York Times*, December 8, 1996, <http://www.nytimes.com/1996/12/08/opinion/foreign-affairs-big-mac-i.html>; G. John Ikenberry, *Liberal Leviathan: The Origins, Crisis and Transformation of the American World Order* (Princeton University Press, Princeton, 2011); Fareed Zakaria, *The Post-American World* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2008).

system from the West to rest of the world. That assumption has not held up. Instead what has been emerging is a “global marketplace of ideas” marked by three main dynamics: (1) greater doubts about Western models at both the international system and national domestic levels; (2) increasing affirmation across the non-Western world for ideas rooted in their own history, culture and identity, as well as their own national and regional politics; and (3) technology as a driver of a profoundly different discourse and competition of ideas enabled by a digital infrastructure that increasingly connects everyone to everyone.³

This is not a lament about “declinism.” Rather it is a corrective against “denialism,” acknowledging profound changes shaping the 21st century world as an essential mindset for strategizing for the world as it is, not as it used to be. Peace, security, prosperity and justice are best served by ideas that give shape to institutions and policies that can effectively address the challenges posed both internationally and domestically. To the extent that ideas from non-Western nations and cultures can do that more effectively than Western ones, in themselves or as adapted, there is “winning for losing” in the global competition of ideas.

The 21st Century International System in Transition

Forget the pole-counting: uni-, bi-, multi-. And the G-counting: G-2, G-8, G-20, G-0. The most useful conceptualization of the 21st century international system, with a nod to Carl Sagan, is the transformation from a “Ptolemaic” to a “Copernican” world. The Cold War system of the second half of the 20th century was a lot like the ancient philosopher-astronomer Ptolemy’s theory of the universe. For Ptolemy the Earth was at the center with the other planets, indeed all the other celestial bodies, revolving around us. And so too was the United States at the center of the Cold War world. It was the wielder of power. The economic engine. The bastion of free world ideology. When the Cold War ended with the demise and defeat of the Soviet Union, American centrality seemed even more defining. It was the sole surviving superpower. The American economy was driving globalization. Democracy was spreading all over. The world seemed even more Ptolemaic.

Not anymore. The 21st century world is more like Copernicus’ theory of the universe in which the Earth is not at the center but like the other planets each has its own orbit around the Sun. So too here in the 21st century the United States is not at the center. It has its own orbit. Other countries do too with their own sources of influence, their own national interests, their own identities, their own domestic politics. This Copernican world is evident geopolitically with other powers rising (China), recovering (Russia), seeking to reinvigorate (European Union), emerging (India, Brazil, Turkey, South Africa, others), and engendering their own political revolutions and counterrevolutions (Tunisia, Egypt, Syria, et al). It is evident economically with globalization having what the U.S. National Intelligence Council assessed as a “less of a ‘Made in the USA’ character.” It is evident culturally as with the comment by a New York art dealer after an auction dominated by newly moneyed non-Western collectors that “for the first time in nearly two hundred years the Western world doesn’t make the decisions about our future.” And it is evident

³ This article draws on Steven Weber and Bruce W. Jentleson, *The End of Arrogance: America in the Global Competition of Ideas* (Harvard University Press, 2010), and Bruce W. Jentleson, “Global Governance in a Copernican World,” *Global Governance* 18 (2012), pp. 133-148.

ideologically amidst what my colleague Steve Weber and I have called the “global marketplace of ideas.”⁴

Two main forces have been driving this transformation. One is the shifting international distribution of power through diffusion (spread to many more actors) and dilution (traditional sources becoming less potent). Power diffusion is especially evident in the eastward and southward shift in economic dynamism. Chinese economic growth has fallen out of double digits, but 7-8% is still substantial. More broadly, as General Electric CEO Jeffrey Immelt put it, “the billion people joining the middle class in Asia” – not U.S. consumers --- “are the engines driving global growth.”⁵ Nor is it just Asia. The \$150 billion in aircraft orders recently placed by the Gulf Arab monarchies set industry records. Between 2000 and 2010 six of the ten fastest growing economies in the world were in Africa. Whereas in 1950 the United States, Canada, and Western Europe accounted for 68% of global GDP, by 2050 this will likely be less than 30%.

Nor does the U.S. have the diplomatic stage as much to itself anymore. While it still takes on lead diplomatic roles more often than anyone else, there’s been a “pluralization of diplomacy.” There are more states with more relations with one another on a wider range of issues than ever before. As a study by the London-based International Institute of Strategic Studies put it, “countries small, medium and large are all banking more on their own strategic initiative than on formal alliances or institutional relationships to defend their interests and advance their goals.”⁶ Relatedly, very few states today are defining their foreign policies principally in pro- or anti-American terms. This was the point of the statement by the Indian national security advisor on the eve of President Obama’s 2010 visit that while India seeks better relations with the United States its foreign policy remains one of “genuine non-alignment.”⁷ The point was even more pointed in the criticism expressed by Brazilian Foreign Minister Antonio Patriota at a joint press conference with Secretary of State John Kerry that revelations of Brazil being one of the most spied-on countries by the National Security Agency “cast a shadow of distrust” over bilateral relations.⁸

While military power has been less diffused – the United States still has ample superiority over any other state or potential coalition – it is being diluted in two respects. First is that the military balance is much less central to overall systemic structure than during the Cold War-strategic nuclear deterrence era. In a world in which there is much less of a shared and overreaching threat, the currency of military power is less convertible to other forms of power and influence than when such threats were more defining. Second is the “capabilities-utility” gap between

⁴ Weber and Jentleson, *End of Arrogance*, op cit., pp, 10-11.

⁵ Chrystia Freeland, “GE’s Immelt Speaks Out on China, exports, and competition,” *Reuters*, January 21, 2011, <http://blogs.reuters.com/chrystia-freeland/tag/jeff-immelt>

⁶ International Institute for Strategic Studies, *Strategic Survey 2010: The Annual Review of World Affairs* (London: Routledge, 2010), p. 417.

⁷ *The Hindu*, November 2, 2010.

⁸ Simon Romero, “In Brazil, Kerry is Told Spying Sows Distrust,” *New York Times*, August 14, 2013, A10; Henry Farrell and Martha Finnemore, “The End of Hypocrisy,” *Foreign Affairs*, November/December 2013; Mark Leonard, “The NSA and the Weakness of American Power,” (European Council on Foreign Relations, November 1, 2013), http://ecfr.eu/content/entry/commentary_the_nsa_and_the_weakness_of_american_power

military superiority as traditionally measured and the utility of that superiority for achieving strategic objectives, as all too graphically demonstrated in the Iraq and Afghanistan wars.

The other key shaper of this Copernican world is a 21st century version of nationalism which, while not as conquest-oriented as in other eras, is quite assertive of national interests and identities. For centuries-old civilizations like China and India it is the return of history, great pride in the re-emergence of their cultures and nations to the prominence they once had.⁹ So too with Turkey. As one official responded when asked the typical question of whether his country was turning East instead of West, Turkey is “pursuing its own national interest. The debate about whether Turkey has become anti-Western and pro-Islamism misses the ways in which, as a Turkish foreign ministry official expressed the nationalist logic, “We have waited for the big powers to make up their minds on big issues and we just follow them. For the past several years we have made up our own minds.”¹⁰ With Brazil, while some anti-Americanism is sprinkled in, the drive is much more about its own national narrative of greatness as yet unfulfilled going back to its founding. Many other countries also are out there with a sense of being on the world stage for the first time after eras of colonialism and superpower dominance.

One of the paradoxes of our globalized world is the mix of integration and fragmentation, countries being pulled together into various webs of interconnectedness while also being pushed apart by various manifestations of identity. For all the proclamations of the universalization of Western liberalism, we see many tensions between universality and uniqueness of those norms, practices and priorities that are widely held and those which are more particularistic and differentiated. These and other dynamics have belied Western liberal internationalism’s positing of international cooperation as principally a collective action problem for maximizing shared global public goods. The aspirational is confused with the actual in three respects: state interests are more divergent than asserted; even when interests are shared, prioritizations vary among states; and even when interests shared and priorities in synch, there often are significant substantive differences over strategy.

Indeed what’s unclear in our Copernican world metaphor is what the “Sun” is, keeping planets/states from crashing into each other. For all that it achieved for so many decades, the post-World War II international system is showing increasing strains in effectiveness and decreasing global consensus on its legitimacy. This doesn’t mean full system failure or fully revisionist powers. But it also is not just a matter of integrating emerging and other powers while institutional structures and core missions change only minimally. The thrust, as Charles Kupchan puts it, is to “revise, not consolidate, the international system erected under the West’s watch.” Many outside the West do not see the system as value neutral as the West claims, but rather reflecting Western ideological dispositions (e.g., laissez faire economics, liberal democracy politics) and biased towards Western interests. It follows the same logic that as their power increases non-Western powers will “recast the international order in ways that advantage their interests and ideological preferences.”¹¹

⁹ Patrick Smith, *Somebody Else’s Century: East and West in a Post-Western World* (Random House, New York, 2010).

¹⁰ *New Republic*, April 29, 2010.

¹¹ Charles A. Kupchan, *No One’s World: the West, the Rising Rest and the Coming Global Turn* (Oxford University Press, New York, 2012), p. 7.

Consider UN Security Council (UNSC) expansion. If the UNSC is to play the role that it needs to play – not the whole Sun, but a key component of it – it must be reformed to better reflect 21st century distributions of power. To be sure, it is not just the West that is resisting change. China opposes a seat for Japan; Pakistan against India; Argentina and Mexico compete with Brazil; various African countries make their cases for why they should get any seats allocated to their continent. Nor is the need for expansion the only factor affecting UNSC effectiveness. But it is a crucial one without which the most global of all international institutions will not be up to the role it needs to play. The global marketplace of ideas is open.

There also are real questions about the viability of the Bretton Woods international economic system. The Doha Round is well into its second decade, the issues more complex and difficult than as cast in the standard free trade-protectionism dichotomy. The international financial system has had two huge global crises within a few years, one emanating from one of the ostensible paragons (the United States) and the other from the other (Europe). The United States is the only country not to approve International Monetary Fund reforms that would give China and emerging powers greater voice in IMF policy. While Europe has supported these reforms, it still guards its hold on the IMF Managing Directorship. The United States continues to do the same on the World Bank President. While the G-20's role in the 2008-09 global financial crisis exemplified the kind of cooperation the liberal order can produce, this was a “fellowship of the lifeboat” which ensuing G-20 summits have made look more like the exception than the rule. Both scaling up and generalizability of the G-20 are questionable. Moreover, while the dollar isn't going to be replaced, it's not going to retain its quasi-monopoly position. The BRICs (Brazil, Russia, India, China, and now BRICS with South Africa added) are pushing increasingly hard on these issues. As stated at its 2011 summit, “Recognizing that the international financial crisis has exposed the inadequacies and deficiencies of the existing international monetary and financial system, we support the reform and improvement of the international monetary system, with a broad-based international reserve currency system providing stability and certainty.”¹² Whether this transition is stabilizing or destabilizing is its own question: the point here is trend lines towards systemic change.

Even more wide open are questions about norms of global responsibility. Who defines it? On what terms? Through which processes? With what accountability? A major version of this debate is over the scope and limits of state sovereignty and the corresponding rights and responsibilities that come with sovereignty. Whereas during the Cold War much of global instability was “outside in” – i.e., the internalization into states with their own tensions and conflicts of the East-West bipolar global rivalry – the 21st century dynamic is more an “inside out” one of the increased susceptibility of the international community to threats and other disruptions that emanate outward from inside states. Thus while it may be true that “what happens in Vegas stays in Vegas,” as the tag line of a catchy American commercial had it, what happens inside states doesn't stay inside states. Not popular uprisings against repressive

¹² Sanya Declaration, Hainan, China, April 14, 2011, http://news.xinhuanet.com/english2010/china/2011-04/14/c_13829453.htm . See also “Enhancing International Monetary Stability--A Role for the SDR?”. (2011, January 7). *IMF – International Monetary Fund Home Page*. Retrieved September 10, 2011, from <http://www.imf.org/external/pp/longres.aspx?id=4523>

governments that transmit to other countries and scramble regional geopolitics, nor failed states that become safe havens for terrorist groups with global operations, nor mass atrocities that cause refugee flows across borders that then feed into neighbors' ethnic and other conflicts, nor inadequate public health capacity to prevent disease outbreaks from becoming pandemics. This "Vegas dilemma" of the domestic locus yet transnational effects of so many contemporary era threats makes the state sovereignty rights-responsibilities balance a critical issue over a broad array of policy areas.

This comes through especially strongly in the "Responsibility to Protect" (R2P). First developed in 2000-01 in the wake of Bosnia, Rwanda and Kosovo by the unofficial International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty (ICISS), and accepted in principle by the UN at the 2005 World Summit, R2P affirms that governments and any other group within states have a responsibility not to commit atrocities against their own people. When they fundamentally violate that responsibility, the international community has its responsibility to protect endangered peoples, including through military intervention. "What is at stake here," as the ICISS report stressed, "is not making the world safe for big powers, or trampling over the sovereign rights of small ones, but delivering practical protection for ordinary people at risk of their lives, because their states are unwilling to protect them."¹³ Easier said than consensus built, though, as brutal leaders have continued to exploit the anti-imperialist card for their own nefarious purposes, and China and Russia have had their own interests for pushing state sovereignty strict constructionism.

Questions of historical justice and who benefited how much from past international systems also are part of the debate. Global environmental issues and the norm of "common but differentiated responsibility" (CDR), affirming that all states share responsibility for addressing present problems but with respective shares varying based on historical legacies of relative contribution to the problem and relative capacity to contribute to amelioration, is a major example. On the one hand the 1987 Montreal Protocol on Ozone Depletion had some success in working out a CDR formula. It required differential cost-bearing and remedial action based on who bore the greatest responsibility for causing the ozone depletion problem and reaped the greatest benefits from atmospheric damage being a production externality, while requiring all states to bear some costs and be in compliance with non-depletion regulations going forward in the name of the common responsibility of averting a future crisis. On global warming and climate change, though, while CDR was inscribed in the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change and the Kyoto Protocol, it has not worked as well. How differentiated the responsibility should be, as set in actual costs and tasks, has been both more substantively complicated and more politically contentious.

On these and other questions about the optimal norms, institutions, and policies for the 21st century international system, the global marketplace of ideas is open for competition.

¹³ International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty (ICISS), *The Responsibility to Protect* (International Development Research Centre, Ottawa, 2001), p. 11.

Beyond Western Democracy and Capitalism: Diverse Domestic Political and Economic Models

At the domestic level, the marketplace of ideas is even more robust and diverse. Two main dynamics are at work: increasingly critical assessments of Western models, and greater affirmation by non-Western states and peoples of their own “cultural and socioeconomic foundations.”¹⁴ As Patrick Smith, a journalist with many years’ experience in Asia, puts it, “to be modern no longer means to Westernize at the cost of one’s past.”¹⁵ While some ideas and practices have been adopted from the West, modernization has not meant homogenization. Culture and identity are powerful and enduring forces.

Given the combination of the U.S.-precipitated 2007 global financial crisis, persistently poor policy performance of the U.S. gridlocked political system, the eurozone crisis and intensifying stresses in European social compacts, the critical view of Western political and economic systems is not hard to understand. While the strengths of liberal democracies in protecting civil liberties and individual rights remains unrivaled, their policy capacity to deliver on the crucial problems their societies face is increasingly being questioned. The United States ranks 27th of 31 in the OECD social justice index; 17th of 24 on adult literacy; with 15 year olds math scores closer to those of Kazakhstan than Germany or South Korea; gets a D+ from the American Society of Civil Engineers on its infrastructure; closes museums while others build them.¹⁶ Even its vaunted Horatio Alger social mobility lags, not leads, most other industrial democracies.¹⁷ The special interest-ism of the U.S. model, which runs deeper than partisanship to such systemic structural issues as divided power and interest group capture, has brought worrisome policy paralysis.¹⁸ Much of Europe has been mired in economic crisis. Right-wing hate groups have been gaining political traction. The great European Union experiment has been under attack. Even trying not to over-react to current problems, there is serious questioning whether the stresses we are seeing in the social compacts underpinning so many advanced industrial societies are just marginally worse than at other points in history, or are now capable of undermining fundamental bases of states’ political authority and associated policy capacity.¹⁹ I’m not arguing that the answer is yes, but am arguing that the question is real.

The “end of history” and other prognostications of a democratic century are increasingly questionable. In China, as Bruce Dickson argues, contrary to the “conventional wisdom ... that

¹⁴ Kupchan, *No One’s World*, op. cit., p. 6

¹⁵ Smith, *Somebody Else’s Century*, op. cit., p. 99

¹⁶ Bertelsmann Stiftung, *Social Justice in the OECD—How Do the Member States Compare?* http://www.sgi-network.org/pdf/SGI11_Social_Justice_OECD.pdf (2011); *OECD Skills Outlook 2013*, http://skills.oecd.org/OECD_Skills_Outlook_2013.pdf; American Society of Civil Engineers, *Report Card for America’s Infrastructure*, <http://www.infrastructurereportcard.org/>

¹⁷ Jacob Hacker and Paul Pierson, *Winner-Take-All Politics* (Simon and Schuster, 2010).

¹⁸ This goes back to James Madison’s *Federalist #10*: “warning about the danger of “factions”: a “minority of the whole, who are united and actuated by some common impulse of passion, or of interest, adverse to the rights of other citizens, or to the permanent and aggregate interests of the community.” What would Madison think of K Street? If he read *Politico*? See also Theodore J. Lowi, *The End of Liberalism: The Second Republic of the United States* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1979) and Mancur Olson, *The Rise and Decline of Nations: Economic Growth, Stagflation and Social Rigidities* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1982).

¹⁹ Louis W. Pauly and Bruce W. Jentleson, eds., *Power in a Complex Global System* (London: Routledge, 2014).

there *should* be support for democracy in China, given the litany of problems we see in the popular media . . . more often, however, these protests are aimed at making the state govern better, not govern differently.”²⁰ State-building in post-conflict societies is proving to be best as “hybrid” models that “rely on local customs, politics and practices” that may take time to move towards democracy, or not.²¹ There isn’t much “spring” left to the Arab Awakening amidst revanchist counterrevolution in Egypt, brutal repression in Syria, and Gulf monarchies buying off what protest they can and seeking to quash the rest. Mixed models may develop that establish claims to legitimacy that the likes of Mubarak and Ben Ali lacked but may not fit classical democratic models.

Rather than democracy/non-democracy, the debate is over what constitutes a capable state. A capable state meets two criteria: It has internal legitimacy in the eyes of its own people. It has the policy capacity to deliver on the crucial challenges its national society faces. This conception is both less than and more than democracy. It is less than democracy in allowing for the possibility that a people may deem its political system and government legitimate even if it is not based on elections. This does NOT include peoples cowed into submission. But it does acknowledge that for countries with mass poverty, endemic injustice, and other pressing human needs – that is to say, much of the world today – people are looking not just to be protected *from* government, but also to be protected *by* government. That never has and never will justify repressiveness, but it does recognize that in many societies political legitimacy is a function of performance not just process. It cannot be just about freedom from; it also has to be about the capacity to. In this sense capable states entail more than democratic practices like elections in stressing policy capacity in going beyond the “input” side – elections, legislative processes, lawmaking – to policy “outputs”.

Economically, the fundamental state-market balance, which according to the prevalent modernization-development model limited the former and maximized the latter, is being challenged. Not by neo-protectionism, or neo-mercantilism, or authoritarian capitalism: these are too dichotomous to capture current debate and practices. It is more about “purposive state intervention to guide market development and national corporate growth,” both internationally (e.g., in currency markets) and as more sophisticated versions of the “developmental state”.²² China’s unprecedented economic growth has not been about conversion to Western-style capitalism so much as its particular blending of the state and the market. Others such as Brazil and India offer their own variants, each with greater market forces than earlier decades but also with the state playing a significant ownership, planning and strategic investing role. Given whose economies are growing faster and whose financial sector plunged the world into crises, it’s not hard to understand the appeal of such alternative models.

While the West still dominates rankings of economic competitiveness and scientific and technological innovation, the snapshots are more encouraging than the trend lines. Europe and the United States still dominate the World Economic Forum Global Competitiveness rankings,

²⁰ Bruce J. Dickson, “Updating the China Model,” *Washington Quarterly* 34 (Fall 2011), p. 53.

²¹ Jon Western and Joshua S. Goldstein, “Humanitarian Intervention Comes of Age,” *Foreign Affairs* 90 (November/December 2011), p. 59.

²² Gregory Chin and Ramesh Thakur, “Will China Change the Rules of Global Order?” *Washington Quarterly*, October 2010, pp. 122-25.

with economically Western-ish Japan, Singapore and Hong Kong filling out the top 10.²³ But the U.S. National Academy of Sciences study of innovation-based change from 2000-2010 ranked US 40th globally. The high tech sector, which ran a \$15 billion favorable balance as recently as 1999, has been consistently in deficit in recent years. The conception of China as just a low technology, mass labor economy is belied by any number of major companies, including Siemens, Google and Microsoft, opening well-resourced research and development operations there. Even in genomic sciences, which began with the British scientists Francis Crick and James Watson and in which the American Craig Venter was the first to sequence the human genome, the Beijing Genome Institute is becoming a leader in the field, already doing cloning “on an industrial scale.”²⁴ The West continues to have many innovation-conducive qualities in our culture and incentives, and to an extent in our policies, but there should be no complacency.

Marketplace, not War, of Ideas

The “war” of ideas formulation had much currency in the wake of 9/11. It went along with the “why do they hate us” reaction that underlying the security threat was an ideological threat that ran deeper and was more sweeping than even Samuel Huntington’s original clash of civilizations. But this approach was much too focused on the “September 11” agenda and not enough on the “September 10” one. The sense that “the whole world changed on September 11,” while understandable in the trauma of the moment, belied all that was on the international agenda when we all went to bed on the night of September 10: the changing geopolitics of the end of the Cold War; the dispelling of euphoric notions of globalization; the politics of identity fueling ethnic cleansings and genocides. To a greater extent than any time since the immediate post-World War II period, big questions had been opened and new ideas needed on a number of fronts, not just in regard to terrorism-Islamist fundamentalism.

Moreover, the “war” metaphor itself was deeply flawed. Ideas don’t fight wars against each other. There’s no such thing as overwhelming force or unconditional surrender in the realm of ideas. The dynamic is more like a market than a battlefield, with quite intense competition of its own kind but for which the goal is to persuade more than pummel. The rules of engagement are much closer to those set out by social and economic thinkers, ranging from John Stuart Mill to Milton Friedman than those of a Clausewitz. The measure of success is market share, not body count.

With information technology making for exceedingly low barriers to entry, innumerable non-governmental players globally are in the game. All it takes is a website, a blog, a Twitter handle, a Facebook page, a YouTube channel. We can call these Western or non-Western, but their ideas may or may not align with their respective governments. They function as creators of ideas, disseminators, advocates, opponents, distorters, many other roles, and often with a technological nimbleness that makes them impactful well beyond their limited resources in using the internet as a “force multiplier.” In some respects these are “liberation technologies” empowering citizens to confront, contain and hold accountable authoritarian regimes – and even to liberate societies

²³ World Economic Forum, *Global Competitiveness Report 2012-13*

²⁴ Michael Specter, “The Gene Factory,” *The New Yorker*, January 6, 2014, 34-43; David Shukman, “China Cloning on an Industrial Scale,” BBC, January 13, 2014, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/science-environment-25576718>

from autocracy.”²⁵ Efforts by repressive governments to block these transmissions have had much less success than when evaders had to rely on carbon paper and Xerox machines. The global digital infrastructure provides largely unmediated reach. But they also can be used destructively, as with 9/11 and other examples.

Demographic changes also are a factor. By 2030 at 1.2 billion, a 200% increase since 2005, the developing world’s middle class alone will be greater than the total populations of Europe, the United States and Canada. Within that is the huge rural to urban migration flow by which urban sub-Saharan Africa will double, China will be 75% urban, India possibly as much as 55%. And within that the enormous youth bulge: about half the population of Pakistan is below the age of twenty-five; Lagos is a city dominated by children and teenagers; the median age in the Arab world is 26. The global competition of ideas will play out more within the political economy and sociology of chaotic, vibrant, pulsing cities of developing Asia, Latin America, and Africa than in the familiar cities of Western Europe or the mythic frontier communities of the American West.

Winning for Losing?

It is not that Western ideas and values can’t compete in this 21st century marketplace. But this is not about winning in the sense of its traditional ideas prevailing and propagating. Adaptations of the international system to better fit the power diffusion and new nationalism of this Copernican world, and the need to forge a Sun-equivalent for this global age, must be pursued pro-actively not ceded begrudgingly. So too at the nation-state level there needs to be greater openness to a range of political-economic models beyond traditional Western ones so long as they do have genuine legitimacy in the eyes of their own people.

None of this is to be any less proud or positive on what the West has to offer. But it is to be more open to the benefits of reverse flows and ways in which non-Western ideas and practices may have strengths that ours do not for prosperity, justice, security and peace, and ourselves doing the learning and adapting.

²⁵ Larry Diamond and Marc F. Plattner, eds., *Liberation Technology: Social Media and the Struggle for Democracy* (Johns Hopkins University Press, Baltimore, 2012), p. xi.