

Lecture 8 - Future Politics

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What did you think of the reading?

This is a fantastic work, and good reference material. I was a little surprised that this 2003 - 2020 version was an improvement over the 2000 - 2015 version, given the potential political motivations, but I found the 2000 - 2015 version to be very simplistic in its world view (it concentrated on drivers and simple trends).

Which are the developing countries ready to make a splash?

The acronym is BRIC: Brazil, Russia, India, and China. Also on the short list of countries to watch are Indonesia and South Africa.

What will the development of these countries do?

Currently, we just have a lot of “Made in China”-ness and outsourcing to India.

Will the Western world need to learn Mandarin? Will the transition be peaceful? How will the injustices of the Chinese government play out on a world stage?

How will they change world culture? How will they enforce their vision of economics, justice, and centrism?

What is development?

This reading assumes that “development” is the same as “market development” (expansion, greater GDP). Such is the economist’s vision of development. But many developing countries have a different sense of what it means to develop.

By what metric should the most important countries in the world be determined?

How long will it take?

Remember how fast cell phones changed the US. The changes were even more drastic in some developing areas, which went from very limited phone access (a village phone booth), to everyone having a cell. What leap-frog technologies could bring them suddenly into the developed world?

More likely than adopting our own technologies and leap-frogging over developed countries by virtue of their lack of antiquated infrastructure, developing countries will attach to entirely different technological constellations. For example, RockBand is a technology that’s perfect for the United States. But it doesn’t make sense in Japan, where people don’t have the space in their homes. However, cities like Tokyo have Karaoke bars on every block— maybe a RockBand Karaoke franchise will pick up.

What will this increase in the total global economy be like?

Big players will get bigger. The long tail will get longer. World-wide shifts will become easier and more drastic. Cross-continent communication will become easier and more common. Western workers will have to compete with BRIC workers; western inventors will have to watch BRIC inventors.

Is globalization inevitable?

Not just market globalization, but cultural globalization— the predominance of a single world culture, by virtue of the easy exchange of culture. What would it be like? Will we end up with just one language? One set of laws?

What role does the US play in a booming world?

Do we sit back and welcome, or pursue our “project for an America century”? Will there be a world-wide legal organization, to enforce basic social, environmental, and economic justice? What role will the US have in developing that?

How will the US respond to being toppled?

Can we handle the humbleness? How will nations we’ve wronged treat us when they have the upper hand?

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