

Book Review

Charles A Kupchan, *No One's World The West, The Rest, And The Coming Global Turn* (Oxford University Press, 2012), 272 pp.

-**Nirupama. A.K.**
University of Kerala

The book *No One's World The West, The Rest, And The Coming Global Turn* written by Charles A. Kupchan can be considered a global guide in understanding the world politics of the 21st century. The author is a Professor of International Affairs at Georgetown University and Whitney Shepardson Senior Fellow at the Council on Foreign Relations. The goal of his book is both analytical as well as prescriptive. Kupchan has explained in detail the reasons for how the West had been dominating the world for centuries. He also explores the causes and consequences of the coming global turn due to the rise of the rest, that is the rise of countries like China, Russia, Gulf countries and India which prove to be alternatives to the western way of governing world affairs. The author tries to pinpoint the gaps and issues faced by the West which in turn led to its decline and how the West should revive itself to survive the coming global turn. The global turn mentioned by the author is nothing but a world where there would be multiple power centres rather than a single hegemon. Kupchan boldly challenges that the globe is headed for political and ideological diversity where emerging powers will neither defer to the West's lead nor converge towards a western way. Kupchan contends that the western order will not be displaced by a new grant power, but the 21st century will not belong to America, China or Asia or anyone else, it will be no one's world.

Europe and the United States have together shaped the nature of the modern world for the past centuries. Backed by its power as well as ideas, the West served as both the architect and steward of the globalised order that began to emerge in the nineteenth century. With the collapse of the Soviet Union in the 20th century, the western ways of liberal democracy, capitalism and secular nationalism appeared to have finally prevailed against its many challenges. The West has enjoyed an extended and impressive era of global dominance but it is time that it's running out of primacy. The author strongly argues that, as this new century unfolds, power will be more widely distributed around the world. The author makes a point that the West is losing not only material primacy as new powers rise but also its ideological dominance. This book is the first to argue that the next world will be dominated by no country or region. It contends that the next world will have no centre of gravity, instead, the emergent international system will be populated by numerous power centres as well as multiple versions of modernity. The defining challenge for the West and the rising rest is managing this global turn and peacefully arriving at the next world by design.

The author explains the reasons for Europe's rise like the rising middle class, separation of church and state, industrial revolution etc. Urbanisation, public education and other social developments were by-products of industrialisation. This pattern of socioeconomic development emerged in western Europe and then it

spread to North America via the immigrants. Thereafter, Europe and North America together created a unique western political order defined by three principal attributes: liberal democracy, industrial capitalism, and secular nationalism. The spread of the West's founding ideas like democracy, capitalism, and secular nationalism, marked the first time that a single conception of ideas took hold in most quarters of the world. But the author argues that the spread of this western order has been largely due to the West's material dominance and not due to the universal appeal of its ideas. And also after the fall of the Soviet Union, the western order has been the only game in town. The author says that in order to preserve the western order, it is required that the advance of modernisation in the developing world produces a homogenous community of nations along western lines. But most of the rising powers like China, India, Brazil, and Turkey are not tracking the development path followed by the West. They have different cultural and socioeconomic foundations which gave rise to their own domestic orders and ideological orientations. As their material power increases, they will seek to recast the international order in ways that are an advantage to their interests and ideological preferences. The development paths followed by the rest represent alternatives to the western way.

According to the author, the success of the West was a product of its unique conditions, not of a model whose superiority is immutable. During the West's rise, the middle class was the main agent of change. Today, China's middle class is the defender of the status quo, not a force of political change. In today's multifaceted global system, different types of states have their advantages and disadvantages. It is for this reason that the 21st century will host multiple brands of modernity, not political homogeneity along western lines. The author argues that even if democracy continues to expand, the West, for two reasons still cannot presume that the coming global turn will coincide with the universalisation of the western order. The first reason is the timing problem. The Chinese economy is poised to surpass the American economy. Also building social and institutional underpinnings of representative government takes time. Secondly, even as democracy spreads, the new regimes that emerge will not necessarily play by the West's rules just because they are democratic. Democratisation does not mean westernisation. The challenge for the West and the rest is to forge a new and pluralistic order- one that preserves stability and a rules-based international system amid the multiple versions of modernity that will populate the next world.

As the book moves forward, the author explains why other major states like the Ottoman Empire and other power centres in Asia fell far behind the West. Centralisation in these states prevented socio-economic dynamism. Political centralisation also prevented the agents of literacy, innovation and learning in empires like the Ottoman. The increasingly educated, wealthy, autonomous and networked bourgeoisie that fuelled Europe's rise did not exist in the Ottoman realm. In Europe, emerging agents of political change –merchants, artisans, and protestant leaders succeeded in constructing horizontal social linkages that effectively foiled the efforts of monarchy and the church to maintain top-down rule. Unlike in Europe, where the church and the state lacked the wherewithal to suppress Protestantism, the centralised structures of Ottoman rule enabled Istanbul to enforce religious homogeneity. Like the Ottoman Empire, in India, to ensure the centre's control over the province, the influence of the rural aristocracy was cut back. The Mughals

maintained exclusively vertical lines of authority. India had the resources and human capital needed to emerge as a leading world power. But the rigid social and political hierarchy imposed by the imperial rulers impaired its ability to keep pace with Europe.

Considering the case of China, the Mandarins had a monopoly on political power and also hindered the accumulation of wealth outside the state apparatus. But China had more advanced commodity, labour and land markets. Despite a measure of autonomy at the local level, not until the 20th century did Chinese society begin to develop the horizontal social linkages that emerged much earlier in Europe. Japan on the other hand emerged from the middle ages with a socioeconomic order similar to that of Europe than to that of China or India. It also had semi-autonomous political entities which contributed to political pluralism and economic entrepreneurship. But during the Tokugawa era economic development was arrested by the hierarchical nature of authority. The centralised nature of the regimes in China, India and Japan proved to be their weakness, preventing them from political pluralism, social mobility and economic dynamism. The West, on the other hand, not only eclipsed these regimes but also went on to extend its reach to other regions and produce for the first time in world history an integrated international system.

The author further explains the rise of the rest, where leading voices started proclaiming a post-American world. There are a number of reasons for this which include the September 11 attacks, the lengthy wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, the global financial crisis etc. Europe also faced problems like sluggish economic growth and political divisions in the European Union. As American debts have piled up, China has become the leading purchaser of American treasuries. A detailed account of the alternatives to the western way is given by the author. The book offers three main arguments as to why rising states, rather than taking the western way will follow their own developmental paths and embrace their own views about domestic governance and how best to organise the international system of the 21st century. First, the rise of the West followed a trajectory that was unique to the material conditions of early Europe. But today's rising powers are following unique paths toward modernity based on their political, demographic, topographic and socioeconomic conditions. Second, culture matters; it shapes the particular form of modernity that evolves in a region. In China, Russia and other capitalist autocracies, communitarian and paternalistic cultures sharply contrast with the liberal traditions of the West. Third, today's emerging powers are moving up the pecking order in a very different international setting than the one present during the West's rise. Today, not only are centralised states more responsive to their people than they once were, but also they operate in a more interdependent, fast and porous world. Today's rising powers, rather than resisting and seeking to keep down their expanding middle class, are doing exactly the opposite by co-opting and incorporating entrepreneurs and business elites into the state structures.

In spite of all these factors, the West's track records provide reasons for hope according to the author. He discusses the scope of reviving the West. The guiding concept for reviving the West should be restoring solvency recovering a balance between resources and commitments both economically and politically. Economically the Atlantic democracies have been spending more than they have been producing. The West can also learn from China and other state-led economies the benefits of strategic economic planning. The US foreign policy should follow a

selective strategy where it should have more geopolitical responsibility to its partners and not an expansive range of global commitments in the absence of sufficient domestic support. The central challenge of Europe is to reverse the trend of renationalisation and recover enthusiasm for deeper integration of the union. In the final part of the book, the author explores the ways of managing the coming global turn. According to Kupchan, the rising powers are far from arriving at a shared view of the rules of the next order. The interests and strategic visions of the emerging powers vary widely that the next world will be no one's world. Alternative conceptions of domestic and international order will compete and coexist on the global stage. Due to the onset of global interdependence, it will be the first time that such a diverse set of orders intensely and continuously interact with each other. The West and the rest must address with urgency how to peacefully manage the transition. The author says it is far preferable to arrive at a new rules-based order by design rather than head towards new anarchy by default. The goal should be to forge a consensus among major states about the founding principles of the next world. If the West can help deliver to the rest of the world what it brought to itself several centuries ago-political and ideological tolerance coupled with economic dynamism, then the global turn will mark not a dark era of ideological contention and geopolitical rivalry, but one in which diversity and pluralism lay the foundation for an era of global comity. This book is a thoughtful work, nothing less than a global guidebook for the 21st century.