

The Rise of the Post-Western World

Rohan Hazell:

The post-Western world order is one in which rising powers from Asia, Africa and South America will have more influence on the global stage.

But, as we are already seeing, this transition is causing friction between nations.

Many non-Western countries feel that the rules and institutions of the current world order don't serve them well.

On the other hand, Western nations feel that their systems are best, and are therefore reluctant to share power by departing from the status quo.

So, how will this play out?

How should the West respond to this shift, and how can non-Western nations find their place in the post-Western world?

Statesman and global thought leader, Professor Kishore Mahbubani, helps us answer these questions.

He was Singapore's Permanent Representative to the United Nations, and the former President of the United Nations Security Council.

He is also a Distinguished Fellow at the Asian Research Institute, National University of Singapore, and shares with us his insights, built on a wealth of experience in the major geopolitical developments that have shaped recent history.

Professor Kishore Mahbubani:



We are in the midst of a major transition away from 200 years of Western domination of world history, and it's important to emphasise that the past 200 years of Western domination of world history have been a major historical aberration. Because from the year 1 to the year 1820, the two largest economies of the world were always those from Asia, the two largest Asian economies of China and India.

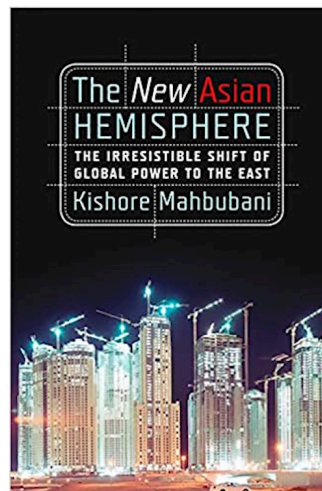


The post-Western world is therefore a return to the natural norm of human history. That's the most important thing we need to know, and especially for people in the West who, as you know, are still resisting the idea that we are moving into a post-Western world.

For the people in the West who are resisting this change, I think the first thing I want to tell them is that they should not be frightened of this move towards a post-Western world because all the new rising powers are rising also in part because they have absorbed Western pillars of Western wisdom. You know, ideas like free market economics, rule of law, or rules-based international order. And many of the new rising Asian powers are not seeking revenge against the West. They actually want to work with the West to create a better world. So, the post-Western world, which will be a more prosperous world, will also create opportunities for the Western societies.

But this is an idea of course, that no Western politician dares to speak about. I don't know of any American politician who was prepared to say: "Hey, you are going to move into a world where America is no longer number one". That is going to happen, but no American politician can say that. It is shocking.

And similarly, I think many European states are also in a state of denial about the fact that we are moving to a post-Western world. I find that quite amazing. So, I think it will still take some time before the leaders of the West, both the political and intellectual leaders of the West, learn to treat Asia with greater respect.



source: mahbubani.net

I actually wrote a book. It was called "The New Asian Hemisphere", which explained why there's a resurgence of Asia taking place. And I do emphasise in that book that the Asian countries should send the West thank you note for their return and their success because they have actually taken on board many Western ideas that have facilitated their return and resurgence.

One obvious idea is the idea of free market economics. We live today in a shocking world where barely 30 years ago, it was the United States that was preaching the virtues of free trade and free trade agreement. China at that time was reluctant to sign free trade agreements to open up its economy. That was at the end of the Cold War in the 1990s.

Now, what's amazing is that 30 years later, it is the United States that cannot sign a free trade agreement. It has withdrawn from the Trans Pacific Partnership, and by contrast, it is China that is now prepared to join free trade agreements. And China has joined the world's largest free trade agreement - The Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP), which is promoted by the ASEAN countries.

Trans Pacific Partnership (TPP)

A trade agreement signed by twelve Pacific Rim countries, including the United States, that together comprised 40 percent of the global economy

Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP)

A free trade agreement among the Asia-Pacific countries of ASEAN, China, Australia, Japan, South Korea, and New Zealand.

I think the important thing to emphasise is that the Asian countries have benefited from the 1945 rules-based order that was created by the West. I served as, you know, as Singapore's ambassador to the UN for over 10 years. The most shocking thing I learned as Singapore's ambassador to the UN is that it was the Western countries, especially the United States, that was trying to undermine the Western rules-based international order because the rules of the Western rules-based international order were constraining the United States from exercising unilateral power on its own.

And unfortunately the European countries who ought to have known better and who should have resisted these American efforts to undermine the rules-based international order did not do so at all. And in fact, they supported American efforts to undermine the rules-based international order. And I'll give you some concrete examples.

For example, it was the United States that walked away from the World Court which is set up by American lawyers and American ideas. And the Europeans should have worked harder to persuade the United States to stay in the World Court and they failed to do so.

International Court of Justice

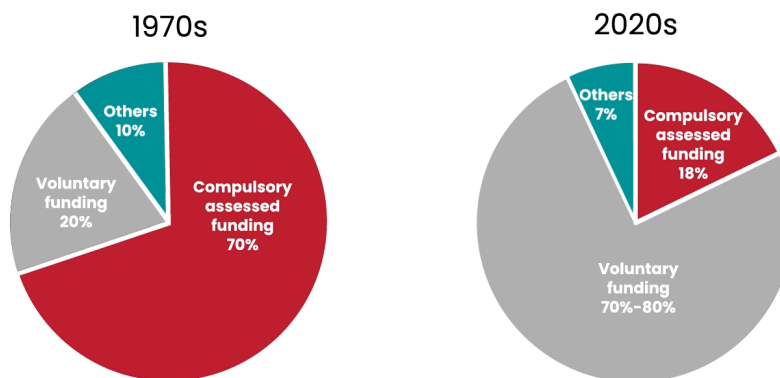
The main judicial organ of the UN, also known as
the World Court

And similarly to give another example, I've discovered that the way the United States tried to weaken the United Nations was by depriving it of its oxygen. And the oxygen of the United Nations is money. You need money to pay for all the programs to improve the world. And the United States fought ferociously to stop the United Nations of funding. And here again, the European countries aided and abetted this efforts of the United States.

I want to emphasise that when the United States weakens an organisation like the World Health Organisation - by the way, to make it absolutely clear. Technically in the 1970s, about 70% of the funding of the World Health Organisation came from compulsory assessed funding and only about 20% came from voluntary funding. 50 years later it's the opposite now. Only 18% of the funding comes from compulsory funding, and 70-80% is voluntary funding. You can't build an organisation with voluntary funding in the long run.

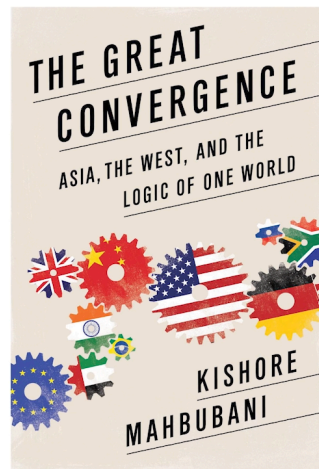


WHO Funding



I wrote another book called The Great Convergence, which explains how the West was systematically weakening these multilateral organisations, these United Nation organisations. But I want to emphasise that the United States is acting against its own interests when it weakens the UN and when it weakens the multilateral forum. Because at the end of the day, since the Western countries make up only 12% of the world's population then it's in their interest to strengthen the multilateral rules-based order because that multilateral rules-based

order will ensure that all of us abide by the same rules. And it's such a tragedy that the West has been undermining the UN for over 30, 40 years.



source: mahbubani.net

Rohan Hazell:

Before the Western colonial period the largest economies have always been Asian, mainly due to their size.

The post-Western world will see a return to this state, and Western societies should not fear this change.

Yet, there is clearly some resistance in the West, where international rules have been designed to favour Western nations.

The fact is, many rising powers have applied Western approaches to market economics, rule of law, and the rules-based international order, and they want to work with the West, not against it, to create a better world.