The West and Global Swing States

Daniel M. Kliman

To adapt and renew today's fraying international order, the West must partner more closely with democratic rising powers that remain ambivalent about existing international arrangements. There are four such 'global swing states': Brazil, India, Indonesia and Turkey. An effective engagement strategy will need to adjust the order's main pillars to enhance their appeal without transforming the fundamental character of the system in the process. It will need to influence what global swing states want through outreach to publics and private sectors. And it will need to make the case that all four can best manage China's rise by strengthening international rules of the road. If the West can enlarge the circle of countries that uphold the global order to include these rising democracies, the system that has long safeguarded international security and prosperity and promoted human rights will be able to endure.

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In an era of constant crises, budget constraints and mounting threats to international peace and prosperity, the West is in the market for new partners. US and European leaders will increasingly need to focus on 'global swing states'.

The term 'swing state' originates in American domestic politics. It refers to the handful of states whose choices can tip the outcome of presidential elections one way or the other. While swing states are not always the largest in terms of population or economic output, their mixed orientation translates into a decisive impact within the American political system. They are the states that matter most.

Internationally, there are four countries that currently occupy a similar position: Brazil, India, Indonesia and Turkey. These countries share four defining attributes. All possess large and growing economies. All occupy strategic locations in their respective regions. All boast democratic governments. And critically, all have

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neither fully embraced the existing international order, rejected it, nor offered a detailed alternative.

With new recognition of their status in major multilateral forums such as the G20, Brazil, India, Indonesia, and Turkey will collectively play a decisive role on issues in which transatlantic interests are increasingly bound up, such as climate change, financial measures, trade and post-authoritarian transitions. All four now define their national objectives in regional and even global terms. None of them, however, has fully embraced the existing international order. This is unsurprising. The global order, an interlocking web of institutions, arrangements and alliance relationships, has benefitted many countries – these four more than most – but it was constructed largely by the United States and Europe without their input.

As the West's attention shifts away from the conflict in Afghanistan, constructing partnerships with these key powers in support of the rule-based order will rise to the top of the transatlantic foreign policy agenda. The United States and Europe will need to work with global swing states to resolve international problems but push back against policies they oppose, all the while encouraging these four powers to become shareholders in an adapted and renewed order. Doing so is as vital as it is difficult. Success will give today's international system a new lease on life. Failure will go a long way toward ensuring that the rules-based global order fractures, fragments and falls.

An order's emergence

As the Second World War raged, the United States set about fashioning a new global order to guide international relations after the conflict's end. To prevent the triumph of authoritarianism, predation and economic chaos that had marked the tumultuous 1930s and culminated in the most costly conflict in human history, the United States and its allies fashioned a new system, based on international rules and rooted in new institutions, that aimed to regulate the conduct of states. The United Nations was the order's crown jewel – a "parliament of man" that aspired to preventing future wars among its members. The World Bank and the International Monetary Fund were established to promote economic development and financial stability, while the formation of the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade was intended to promote trade liberalisation.

This global order, though routinely referred to as such, never encompassed the entirety of the world. The Soviet bloc stood outside many of the new institutions or participated in them only indifferently; other bodies, such as the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation, were founded to maintain order precisely by opposing Soviet designs. Nor was the rules-based order immutable; it evolved in response to

¹ Kennedy, Parliament of Man.

technological changes, a growing demand for natural resources, and trade imbalances that emerged as Western Europe and Japan recovered from wartime devastation.²

Over the course of decades, this system came to advance five specific functions:

- A *non-proliferation* order was constructed to prevent the spread of nuclear weapons and to reduce their testing.
- A *trade* order based on commercial reciprocity and non-discrimination expanded to include a growing number of states.
- A *financial* order aimed at monetary stability despite a shift to floating currencies.
- A *maritime* order premised on territorial sovereignty and freedom of navigation was built on centuries of practice and became increasingly formalised.
- A human rights order, rooted in respect for fundamental liberties and the democratic process, emerged through the rhetoric of Western governments and their newfound willingness after the Cold War to hold accountable leaders who abuse civilians.

Today, each of these pillars encompasses a series of norms, institutions, rules and relationships.

The non-proliferation order is rooted in the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), which draws a strict distinction between recognised nuclear weapons states and all others. It also includes the International Atomic Energy Agency and the four multilateral export control regimes – the Wassenaar Arrangement, the Nuclear Suppliers Group, the Australia Group and the Missile Technology Control Regime – that attempt to limit the spread of particular weapons and delivery systems. Less institutionalised elements of the non-proliferation order range from efforts like the American-led Proliferation Security Initiative to ad hoc multilateral coordination designed to stem proliferation financing and gather intelligence.

The global trade order is highly formalised, based on the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade and now embodied in the World Trade Organisation and its web of rules and dispute resolution mechanisms. The Doha Round of global trade talks represents the current effort to extend this order in the direction of freer international commerce.

The financial order is rooted in the dollar as the predominant international reserve currency, flexible exchange rates, and general currency convertibility. The International Monetary Fund fills a role as a lender of last resort. Since 2008, the G20 has emerged as a key institution that aims to guide the global financial order at a time of growing instability.

The maritime order has emerged from centuries of practice. Many of the rules underpinning the maritime order have been formalised in the UN Convention on

² The seminal work on the establishment of this order is by Ikenberry, *Liberal Leviathan*.

the Law of the Sea. While some countries, including the United States, have not ratified the convention, Washington and most major capitals recognise its key provisions – those setting rules on the limits of territorial waters, the existence of an exclusive economic zone, and the freedom of navigation on the high seas – as customary international law. US naval power continues to backstop international law governing the use of the maritime domain.

The human rights order encompasses a range of widely recognised international norms relating to the basic rights and liberties of individuals everywhere. These rights are enumerated in documents such as the Universal Declaration on Human Rights and the UN Convention on Civil and Political Rights, along with the constitutions and laws of many democracies. A new element of this order may be emerging in the 'responsibility to protect', a doctrine which elevates the protection of individuals against atrocities above the traditional sovereign norm against outside interference.

A sixth, nascent pillar of the international order focuses on the environment. It incorporates mechanisms for reducing global emissions of greenhouse gases. The Kyoto Protocol marked a major effort to bolster the environmental order, but the treaty did not bind rapidly growing emerging markets like China and India nor was it ratified by the United States. Successive rounds of global climate talks have made scant progress toward an international agreement.

From triumph to crisis

The order that exists today, despite exceptions and deviations, has been a profound success. Partly because of the economic and political stability it engendered, both the West and other countries experienced a dramatic rise in trade and investment, the longest period of great power peace in modern times, and an upwelling of democracy in areas where authoritarianism had long prevailed. During the 1990s, the consolidation of free market democracies across Europe and the economic integration of developing nations that had long stood apart from the world economy led many to predict the order's enduring triumph. However, since 2000, each of its pillars has come under strain.

Nuclear pursuits by unsavoury regimes now pose a profound challenge to the non-proliferation order: the world failed to prevent North Korea's development of a nuclear capability; aggressive international sanctions and covert measures not-withstanding, Iran's nuclear program continues to progress. Movement on the Doha Round of trade talks has ceased, and there exists little discussion about advancing free trade at the global level. What has emerged is a patchwork of regional and bilateral deals whose quality – and dedication to open markets – varies widely. The market turmoil of recent years has underscored the weakness of the financial order, as has China's unchecked currency manipulation. The G20,

though showing some success as a crisis management mechanism, has failed to produce breakthroughs on issues vital to the long-term health of the global economy such as chronic trade imbalances. The maritime order has come under pressure, first and foremost from Beijing's aggressive pursuit of claims in the South China, East China and Yellow Seas, but also from the maritime practices of other nations such as Brazil and Turkey. Piracy, a scourge defeated long ago, now threatens vital shipping lanes. Although the development of the 'responsibility to protect' doctrine and the rise of humanitarian intervention suggests greater respect for human rights norms globally, the number of electoral democracies in the world dropped in 2010 to its lowest level since 1995.³ The Arab Spring holds out the promise for new adherence to fundamental rights, but what types of regimes will replace toppled dictatorships remains uncertain. And the environmental order – the new addition to the rules-based system that the United States initially viewed with ambivalence – remains largely aspirational. Despite round after round of global climate talks, a binding accord regulating carbon emissions remains a long way off.

As challenges to the rules-based system multiply, its longtime supporters are increasingly constrained in their ability to exert power in its defence. Differing rates of economic growth are shifting power away from the West. By 2030, the seven largest emerging economies are expected to contribute more to global output than the entire 'developed' world. Compounding this power shift is the debt crisis that has forced a new era of austerity upon the United States and many of its transatlantic allies. To survive, the order requires vast and continued expenditures on defence, development and diplomacy by a core group of likeminded nations, yet the United States and virtually all of Europe are looking to retrench.

Even with this fraying, the rules-based order is not inevitably destined for the dustbin of history; rather, its crisis presents the West with an opportunity to adapt and renew it by engaging with new partners in its support. To do this, the transatlantic allies must identify the key states that can become upholders of the global order, determine modalities by which the West can induce their greater support for the order, and actively shape the order in ways that will attract support from key rising powers.

The global swing states

The most promising partners in this endeavour are Brazil, India, Indonesia and Turkey. Possessing large and growing economies, strategic locations and democratic governments, they bring capability and legitimacy to any international effort. But these four powers have not settled on a disposition toward the prevailing

³ Freedom House, *Freedom in the World* 2012, http://www.freedomhouse.org/sites/default/files/inline_images/FIW%202012%20Booklet–Final.pdf.

⁴ "Pricewaterhouse: China to Oust US as Largest Economy in 2032", Bloomberg, 7 January 2011.

order – they have yet to fully embrace the international system, reject it, or offer an alternative. As global swing states, these four powers are not a bloc, an alliance, a league, nor even a loosely coordinated body; rather, they occupy roughly similar positions in world affairs. In partnership with them, the United States and Europe can adapt and renew a global order that continues to safeguard international security and prosperity. Without their support, transatlantic efforts to extend the imperilled order will likely amount to nothing more than a delaying action.

Brazil has driven the creation of regional institutions and taken on a higher global profile with a non-permanent seat on the UN Security Council, membership in the G20 and participation in the annual BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China and now South Africa) meeting.⁵ But Brasilia's recent actions reveal a degree of ambivalence toward today's international order. On non-proliferation, Brazil continues to reject the NPT's additional protocol, arguing that the United States and Russia should disarm further before non-nuclear weapons states accept virtually unfettered international inspections. In its highest-profile foray into global diplomacy, Brazil joined with Turkey in an unsuccessful bid to negotiate a deal that would send Iran's uranium abroad for enrichment. On trade, Brazil avoids participation in formal agreements with the United States and Europe, instead opting for a South-South trade strategy with developing economies, notably India and South Africa. And under the presidency of Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva, Brazil opposed robust UN Security Council measures against human rights violators such as Burma, Sudan and Zimbabwe, and offered other regimes - such as Fidel Castro's Cuba and Hugo Chavez's Venezuela – political support. Although Lula's successor, Dilma Rousseff, has retreated from this approach to human rights, Brazil did not support the UN Security Council resolution authorising intervention in Libya and diluted international efforts to pressure Syria to end its current crackdown.6

At the same time, however, an ascendant Brazil has lent its growing strength to some aspects of international governance. Brazil has spoken out against China's currency manipulation, is a signatory to the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea, and has emerged as a leader in pressing carbon reductions at home and internationally.⁷ It has also led the UN Peacekeeping Mission in Haiti since 2004.

⁵ Sweig, "A New Global Player".

⁶ J.G. Castañeda, "The Trouble with the BRICs". Foreign Policy (online), 14 March 2011, http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2011/03/14/the_trouble_with_the_brics; UN Department of Public Information, "Security Council Approves 'No-fly Zone' over Libya, Authorizing 'All Necessary Measures' to Protect Civilians, by Vote of 10 in Favour with 5 Abstentions", 17 March 2011, http://www.un.org/News/Press/docs/2011/sc10200.doc.htm; C. Lynch, "New U.N. Bloc Finds Constraining the West Preferable to Restraining Syria", Foreign Policy Turtle Bay Blog, 10 August 2011, 29, http://turtlebay.foreignpolicy.com/posts/2011/08/10/new_un_bloc_finds_constraining_the_west_preferable_to_restraining_syria.

⁷ L. Dantas, "Brazil will Work with Obama to Counter Rising China Imports, Official Says", Bloomberg, 3 February 2011.

India's economic growth has fuelled its global influence to an even greater extent, crystallised by Washington's recent endorsement of New Delhi's bid for permanent UN Security Council membership. It is a member of the BRICS and BASIC (Brazil, South Africa, India and China) blocs, is the largest emerging economy in the G20 after China, and plays a key role in global trade and climate negotiations. In some areas, India tends toward becoming a supporter of the existing international order. India appears increasingly committed to contributing its new naval assets to the defence of the maritime commons. While remaining outside the NPT, India, which possesses nuclear weapons, has moved closer to harmonising its policies and practices with the guidelines of the Nuclear Suppliers Group, and seeks membership in all four multilateral export control regimes.⁸ As India's foreign commerce has expanded, it has retreated from more intransigent positions on multilateral trade liberalisation, though its defence of domestic agricultural production remains a stumbling block to progress in global trade talks.

On other issues that speak to the nature of the international system, however, India's positions remain more ambiguous. New Delhi has expressed opposition to further sanctions against Iran over its nuclear program. On climate change, India has joined a bloc of emerging powers insisting that developed countries assume primary financial responsibility for climate change mitigation and adaptation. And its human rights approach remains torn between promoting human rights and supporting sovereignty. New Delhi abstained from voting in the UN Security Council on both the Libya and Syria resolutions and, on occasion, touts its history of non-interventionist policy. Yet it also trumpets its status as the world's largest democracy, drawing a none-too-subtle distinction with China. New Delhi was both one of the ten founding members of the Community of Democracies and a leading co-founder of the UN Democracy Fund. Overall, Indian elites are split between those more wedded to New Delhi's traditional non-aligned orientation and others who see India's future as a key pillar of global order in partnership with other great powers, including the United States.

Indonesia's economic rise has coincided with an enlargement of the country's regional and global role, including via its membership in the G20 and its role as the heavyweight in Southeast Asia. With its location at the nexus of the Indian and Pacific Oceans and with its ten percent of the world's rainforests, it has an important role to play in the global maritime and environmental orders.

On multiple dimensions, Indonesia has embraced the existing international system. The country is a model nuclear citizen. It has signed the NPT's Additional Protocol, as well as a separate bilateral accord with the United States

⁸ NSG, "Public Statement: Nuclear Suppliers Group Meeting, Christchurch, 21-25 June 2010, http://www.nuclearsuppliersgroup.org/Leng/PRESS/2010-06-NSG_Public_Statement_Final.pdf.

on nuclear safeguards and security. Having consolidated a vibrant democracy at home, Indonesia has started to promote good governance abroad. Its five-year-old Bali Democracy Forum brings together Asian and Middle Eastern countries with the goal of fostering "political development, through dialogue and sharing of experience, aiming at strengthening democratic institutions". In climate change negotiations, Indonesia has stood apart from other emerging powers and unilaterally pledged substantial cuts in carbon emissions.

Although Indonesia appears unlikely to reject today's order, the country could still prove passive, accepting the rules-based system without actively supporting it. This is already the case with respect to the maritime order, where Indonesia has preferred that other nations champion freedom of navigation in the South China Sea despite a clear interest in the waterway's future.

Finally, Turkey has in recent years moved decisively toward an ambitious regional and even global role. Its institutional memberships range from the G20 to NATO to the Organisation of the Islamic Conference. However, Turkey's commitment to the rules-based order remains uncertain. Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan last fall called for a 'new global order' based on solidarity and trust rather than conflict. How Ankara might fill in the details of such a new order remains to be seen.

To date, Turkey's track record on the main elements of global order remains mixed. In trade and finance, Turkey has achieved phenomenal economic growth through an open economic policy that has made it a major force for free-market reforms and an open international financial architecture. On human rights, Turkey has demonstrated little consistency. It soft-pedalled Iran's crushing of the Green Movement, opposed but later supported the NATO intervention in Libya, and pivoted from backing the Assad regime in Syria to pressing for its ouster as evidence of widespread government brutality mounted. At a time of growing concern about Iran's nuclear weapons program, Turkey has enhanced trade and investment ties with its neighbour, attempted to broker a deal enabling Tehran to enrich uranium abroad, and voted against an additional round of UN sanctions. In the maritime realm, Turkey does not recognise the 12-mile international water line, pointing to interests along its own Aegean coastline.

Brazil, India, Indonesia and Turkey are global swing states. The choices they make on specific issues – whether they step up, free ride or obstruct – will in aggregate decisively influence the trajectory of today's international order. To be sure, other important emerging powers exist – Mexico, South Africa and South

⁹ IAEA, "Protocol Additional to the Agreement", http://www.iaea.org/Publications/Documents/Infcircs/1999/infcirc283a1.shtml; National Nuclear Security Administration, "U.S. and Indonesian Governments Sign Arrangement on Nuclear Safeguards and Security Cooperation", Sydney, 9 November 2004, http://nnsa.energy.gov/mediaroom/pressreleases/u.s.-and-indonesian-governments-sign-arrangement-nuclear-safeguards-and-secu.

¹⁰ Indonesia Ministry of Foreign Affairs, "Information Sheet: Bali Democracy Forum", 7 October 2010.

Korea immediately come to mind. But these countries all fall short of global swing states, either because they have already embraced the international order fully or because they currently lack the wherewithal to shape it. Then there is China, the world's second superpower. As a one-party dictatorship, China can move only so far toward embracing a global order that enshrines rule of law and liberal values. Barring domestic political change in Beijing, there are inherent limits on China's range of choices. Conceptually, China differs from the democratic rising powers that are global swing states.

A new transatlantic approach

Brazil, India, Indonesia and Turkey may ultimately come to embrace elements of today's order on their own. As their economies expand, they will have greater cause to hold a stake in key international economic arrangements. As democracies, they may be attracted to the open, stable, rules-based nature of the existing system, which has allowed representative government to take root in many regions. As their military strength increases – and the geographic scope of their interests expands – they may reap greater benefits from a system that aims to prevent war among the major powers.

Yet the United States and Europe would be unwise merely to wait for these rising powers to embrace the status quo. It is therefore troubling that the West's approach to global swing states – an approach often led by the United States – remains a work in progress and has resulted in few unqualified triumphs.

The greatest success story is India. America has invested mightily in a strategic partnership with India. This investment represents a long-term bet and has already reaped dividends on issues like non-proliferation, but has led to little progress on global dilemmas like climate change or multilateral trade liberalisation. The US–Indonesia Comprehensive Partnership officially launched in November 2010, though a welcome development, remains largely aspirational, in part because of Indonesia's hesitancy to go further. To some extent because of Brazil's past positions on human rights and nuclear proliferation, transatlantic engagement with Brasilia remains underwhelming. Western ties with Turkey are fragile. US visions of a 'model partnership' with Turkey were shattered by Ankara's unwillingness to back additional economic sanctions against Iran and its growing tensions with Israel. Turkey's accession to the European Union has stalled due to opposition from some member states. While the Arab Spring has created new opportunities for cooperation between the West and Turkey, the relationship, though on the upswing, remains riddled with potential flashpoints.

¹¹ Armitage et al., Natural Allies.

The West's ambiguous track record with global swing states speaks to the need for a more carefully conceived and executed engagement strategy. The United States and Europe must work with these four powers in a way that differs from a formal alliance against a common adversary and does not simply treat them as other emerging economies. Although the precise details of engagement will differ across these key nations, there are some overarching principles that should guide transatlantic engagement.

An effective strategy starts with recognising that elements of the current global order must evolve to draw greater support from Brazil, India, Indonesia and Turkey. Many have argued that the rules-based system reflects a balance of power that no longer exists. Its bedrock institutions – the United Nations, the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank – give disproportionate weight to the West at the expense of today's emerging powers. This is true, but debates about whether and how to rebalance international institutions obscure a more important question: how each functional component of the order must change. The task for the United States and Europe is to adjust the non-proliferation, trade, financial, maritime and values-based orders to enhance their appeal without transforming the fundamental character of the international system in the process.

The G20 has thus far demonstrated that enhanced representation alone will not inevitably lead global swing states to support the rules-based system. It may, however, diminish the temptation to go their own way or gravitate toward an alternative vision of international governance. At a minimum, according these four powers a greater say in global governance can help their leaders build domestic backing for external engagement. The transatlantic allies should support efforts to boost the weight of global swing states in international institutions, but not across the board – in some institutions, greater inclusivity will deepen the challenges of collective action.

To reshape the current order while remaining faithful to its essence, the West will need to influence what global swing states want. This is foremost the task of public diplomacy. The transatlantic partners should take the case for rules-based order to the publics and private sectors in these four powers. The latter type of outreach is particularly important; as they go global, corporations in these four countries are becoming more dependent upon the international trade and financial architecture and on secure transportation routes. They are natural stakeholders in today's rules-based order. The private sector wields considerable political influence in all four states and could make a decisive case for why governments should lend support to a system that favours market capitalism and contains threats to the peace.

When engaging global swing states, avoiding parallel bilateralisms and building a coordinated transatlantic approach is essential. Europe will play a key role; after all, reconfiguring global governance to give greater weight to Brazil, India, Indonesia and Turkey will require European agreement. In addition, for some swing states

such as Turkey and for some issues such as climate change, Europe may have distinct comparative advantages that warrant a division of labour. This is true of the corporate sphere as well as in government; given that European firms have a significant presence in each of the four countries, they are positioned to reinforce American outreach to local private sectors.

China is not a global swing state, but it remains a critical driver of transatlantic strategy toward these key countries. The BRICs summit, the BASIC group, and other emerging power forums obscure a competitive reality: global swing states view China with ambivalence if not outright concern. Brazil worries that China's artificially depressed currency will undermine its manufacturing base and prevent the creation of high-skilled jobs. India and China share a disputed Himalayan border and joust for influence in South Asia. China's naval expansion and claims in the South China Sea provoke unease in Indonesia, while Turkey and China remain at odds over Beijing's treatment of its Uighur minority. As it engages these four powers, the West should emphasize that investing in a rules-based order is the best way for them to encourage a peaceful Chinese ascendance. An adapted and renewed order supported by global swing states will limit China's room for manoeuvre and may channel its growing strength in a constructive direction. If the order unravels, however, China may be tempted to expand its free-riding or even to forge a new order of its own making.

Today's crisis in perspective

With the emergence of new powers and seemingly intractable economic challenges at home, the transatlantic partners are now experiencing a crisis of confidence that has no parallel in the postwar era. Many point to high economic growth rates in China, India and other countries, an increase in military expenditures in the developing world, and new fiscal constraints in the United States and Europe as indications of a larger trend: the decline of the West and the "rise of the rest". ¹² Fewer note that the ability of emerging powers to maintain indefinitely high economic growth rates, and the military budgets that such economic growth enables, is hardly a given. Whichever view is correct, the West's overwhelming predominance will diminish, though the rapidity and degree of this relative decline remains unclear, particularly given the US' long-term demographic advantage and track record of national renewal.

Whatever the future holds, the values and practices championed by the United States and Europe need not decline in tandem with their relative weight in world affairs. Unlike the 1930s, an era in which aggressive autocracies were ascendant, today most rising powers are democracies. These global swing states have yet to

¹² Zakaria, The Post-American World; Kupchan, No One's World.

fully embrace the rules-based order, reject it, or go their own way. If the West can enlarge the circle of countries that uphold the international order to include them, the system that has long safeguarded international security and prosperity and promoted human rights and democracy can endure. American and European decisions today will – indeed must – influence whether Brazil, India, Indonesia and Turkey support the global order tomorrow.

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