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"Waving Goodbye to Hegemony" by Parag
Khanna*

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March Roundtable: Introduction

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March Roundtable: Introduction

Abstract

An annotation of:

"Waving Goodbye to Hegemony" by Parag Khanna. New York Times Magazine. January 27, 2008.

Keywords

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“Waving Goodbye to Hegemony” by Parag Khanna. *New York Times Magazine*. January 27, 2008.

With a mixture of creative forecasting and a role call of “who’s who” in geopolitics, Parag Khanna presents a sweeping look at our collective future through the lens of globalization. What are the implications of an American fall from grace that some compare to the decline of the Holy Roman Empire? If this is already a process in motion, what have been its causes and what will be its effects on international peace and stability? Khanna argues that primarily economic and ideological forces are responsible for this shift, which has opened spaces of opportunity for gas-guzzling, capital-rich China and the recently-consolidated and ever-expanding European Union to assert themselves in a new global landscape defined by “tri-polarity.”

“The rise of China in the East and of the European Union within the West has fundamentally altered a globe that recently appeared to have only an American gravity—pro or anti....Even as America stumbles back toward multilateralism, others are walking away from the American game and playing by their own rules.”

One cannot ignore the simultaneous rise of the American hegemon and the modern human rights regime. Arguably, without the former, we do not have the latter. However, with the conspicuous shortcomings of humanitarian intervention (and non-intervention) over the past sixteen years and the post-9/11 adventures in Afghanistan and Iraq, which were in part justified on human rights grounds, the credibility of human rights doctrine has severely suffered. We have already begun to see the consequences of China’s involvement in countries like [Iran](#), [Sudan](#) and [Nigeria](#) as it operates without strings attached to investment—what one commentator has termed “[Rogue Aid](#).” If America is ultimately relegated and forced to compromise on stances it once held as non-negotiable, then the stage may be set for a rollback on policies and priorities that emphasized values like protection for individual dignity and welfare.

“Globalization resists centralization of almost any kind. Instead what we see gradually happening...is a far greater sense of a division of labor among the Big Three [China, E.U., and U.S.], a concrete burden-sharing among them by which they are judged not by their rhetoric but the responsibilities they fulfill.”

Khanna boldly identifies a new phase in this era of globalization as unipolarity gives way to joint stewardship of the international system. Sticking with his largely economic line of argument, the struggle for supremacy in this new phase will amount to the necessity for these competitive powers to orchestrate a “division of labor” around “burden-sharing.” America’s role in this future begins by accepting its diminished status, acting with uncharacteristic humility and serving as perpetual advocate for liberal, democratic and human rights principles. While this conclusion presents a whole new host of problems and questions, its strength lies in the notion that America, in some form, is an indispensable component of an international community concerned with progress and stability and were it to drop into obscurity, there would be a great deal lost in the process.

All this and more are discussed in this month's Roundtable...