



HOW TO RULE THE WORLD

What's it to be? Rule by religion or capitalism? By global dictatorship or a world government made up of many? The Net and multiculturalism may decide.

by Sohail Inayatullah

The conventional view of the future in industrialised nations assumes that life will keep on getting better for the majority of citizens, especially the rich and middle class. Incomes will go up, houses will increase in value, the latest technologies will continue to make life better for all – even if, in the short run, some of us have to retrain. Our children's lives will improve. To be sure, there will be difficult times, but challenges will be solved, either through government or through

entrepreneurial activity. In other words, more of the same.

However, it's possible that we're not simply in another phase of late-industrial capitalism, but at the beginning of something quite different: the emergence of a post-industrial knowledge economy. Perhaps the transformation is even deeper, challenging not just industrialism, but the entire rise of capitalism and Western civilisation.

The crucial trends are nano-technologies, smarter markets and multiculturalism.

Nano-technologies (to create microscopic machinery) and artificial intelligence might make for production on a scale never before possible. Though these technologies are not yet on line, they challenge the idea that poverty will always be

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with us (at least because of technological reasons).

Smarter markets - having all products barcoded with complete pricing details (how much the Indonesian worker was paid, how many trees were cut down, how much the middle man made) will soon be possible, allowing consumers to vote with their dollars. Standards will then continue their transformation from merely the product's physical quality (what it looks like, whether it is safe and safely made) to its functional quality (how well it does what it claims to do) to its context (ethical quality). By giving accurate information to consumers, the Internet could level the inequalities of capitalism, creating a giant people's market.

Then there's the rise of multiculturalism. Taken to its full extent, it shatters any notion of one culture, one state, one knowledge system and one view of science. Can nations adequately organise the emerging differences being created? One of the most obvious casualties is the nation-state, which has entered a terminal phase as the sole holder of political power. Whether it will take 50 years or 100, we know well that revolutions from below (by non-governmental people's organisations such as Amnesty International and Greenpeace), revolutions from above (by international institutions such as the European Union and World Trade Organisation), revolutions from capital (globalism), revolutions of culture (new ways of seeing each other) and revolutions of technology (air travel, the Net) all make the nation-state deeply problematic.

Of course, the Hansons, Milosevics, Brahmins and mullahs will not disappear. With no place to hold on to, they will fight to the bitter end, hoping that enough of us retain sentiments of ethno-nationalism and of patriotism (and be willing to kill for it). They will hope to transform the quite legitimate concerns of individuals fearing change into a politics of exclusion, of attacking the other.

What world is likely to result from these historical revolutions in governance? Four possibilities emerge. The first is one dominant religious system, creating a world church, temple or mosque. This is unlikely, as reality has become too fragmented. Neither Christians nor Muslims nor Buddhists are likely to convert en masse tomorrow, even if Jesus, the Mahdi or Buddha were to return. The problem of universally recognising God is not likely to be solved in 2000, even if the Redeemer does return.

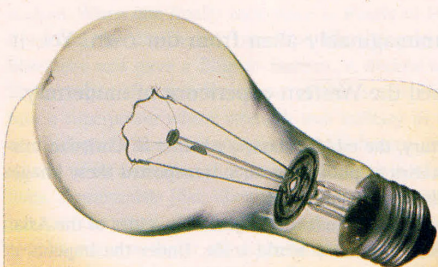
The second possibility is of one nation creating a world empire, which is difficult given the democratic impulse. The only nation vying for the job is trapped by its own democratic participatory language. Disney and Microsoft (and their successors) are far more likely victors than the US State Department, irrespective of what conspiracy theorists in Belgrade, Baghdad, Beijing and Kuala Lumpur believe.

The third, a world capitalist economy, has flourished because the economy has been global, expanding, while identity has been national, fixed. With the nation in deep trouble, can a world economy with politics defined by the nation-state continue?

The fourth alternative could be localist movements that try to capture the spaces created by the loss of national identity. These are local and regional social movements committed to retaining language, culture, environment and economy. For example, in the organisations KASAMA in the Philippines and Amra Bengali in India, there are local groups concerned about specific issues - usually language, religion or the local economy. Groups closer to home include the Maleny co-operative movement in Queensland and the Lake Pedder environmental group in Tasmania. Most of these movements are Left-leaning (social justice-oriented) and others are more right-wing (promoting responsibility and concerned with immigration). All resist the uniformity of globalisation, whether it means loss of jobs, culture or language.

The undercurrent to each of these scenarios is globalism. The first phase was capital, the next is likely to be labour, through the rise of multiculturalism. The final phase is likely to be a world security force, inklings of which we are already seeing with the United Nations. In this context, the most likely form of governing system is a world government (a global policy-framing body) with strong global/localist tendencies, with hundreds, even thousands of bio-regions comprising self-reliant communities and even city-states.

The guiding world ethic will move away from strategy towards health and healing. Classical perspectives of defeating the enemy (or deterrence) will move to a view of negotiating our very real differences, agreeing to move forward, to reconcile past and future instead of erasing our unique characteristics or dominating others.



**2001
& BEYOND** **KEEPSAKES**
JOHN SHINE
A millennium time capsule

1. A syringe and needle

Symbolic of the discovery and use of life-saving drugs and hence of society's success, but at the same time symbolic of one of our biggest challenges - drug abuse.

2. Gutenberg's printing press

Or something related to it, for example, the first printed book, a bible, in 1456. Development of the printing press provided the ability to communicate knowledge, ideas, history, politics to the community at large. This form of communication is rapidly being replaced by electronic versions and those looking back will undoubtedly think of it as " quaint", inefficient and wasteful.

3. A light bulb

The discovery and harnessing of electricity, beginning with physicist William Gilbert's use of the word "electric" about 1600, spanned the next 350 years. Electric power revolutionised industry and everyday life, from street lighting to computers. "Progress is slow in the dark."

4. US Patent 4,363,877

The patent describing the first cloning of a human gene filed in April 1978 and not issued until 1982 while the US Supreme Court was forced to decide if human genes could be patented. The biotechnology industry's subsequent development will permeate all aspects of our lives.

5. The book The Double Helix

Describes the pioneering discovery by Watson and Crick in 1953 of the structure of DNA. This provided a clear understanding of the molecular basis of hereditability and led to the development of gene technology and cloning 30 years later. By 2001, the complete genetic code of a human being will be deciphered, providing a previously undreamt-of database of knowledge.

Professor John Shine is executive director of the Garvan Institute of Medical Research.

A big stick - the world security force - will remain but it will be complemented by a neo-Magna Carta guaranteeing the right of culture, language and income.

Rights are likely to be extended to plants and animals, and large corporations will be far more transparent, paradoxically because of an increase in their formal role in world governance. This continues the 1,000-year trend (with many reversals) of increasing rights to those who previously had none (for example, peasants, females, the colonies, children, nature and, in the future, to robots and new species as well).

In this sense, we should expect dramatic diversity of association, some individuals being concerned about local space, others denationalised world citizens, others regional, and many less concerned with physical space and far more with their electronic communities. Passwords and not passports will be far more defining.

It is possible to imagine a world government with representatives from 1,000 associations, some corporatist (many already in the top 20 when it comes to budgets), some non-governmental people's organisations (Greenpeace, Amnesty International), some directly voted in (through cyber-government) and some traditional nation-state functionaries.

The details are terribly important and burdensome, and how the Chinese will get along with the Americans is difficult to predict (just as the modern era was not possible to articulate from the feudal), but the structural forces are such that this is the only political solution to the future. Notions of "Chineseness" and "Americanness" will most likely transform as well.

While many hope for a weak world governance system with strong localism, this is an unlikely fantasy, as localist systems alone cannot survive because they get taken over (cannibalised by adventurous dictators and expanding economies).

In general, people's aspirations fall into three groups. First, there's the globalist, multicultural and Net-savvy, seeking a jet plane for everyone, the capacity to speak many languages and no more scarcity.

The second is the organic, with emphasis on community and connecting with others. Relationships are not just about communication, but are a way of knowing. Priorities include slowing down time, good sex, good food, regular exercise and meditation. It's about self-reliance, electronically and spiritually.

The third group is based on the scenario of a collapse - the return of *Mad Max*, the end of capitalism, escaped viruses (of the Internet and biological types), airborne AIDS (and thank God for it since we have collectively sinned), mixed species, mixed marriages. The aspirational part is that, after the collapse, a moral order with a strong father figure returns.

There is a generational aspect to the future as well. Baby boomers have been both committed to making money and to challenging authority. Generation X is concerned about ethics, the environment and about others, using their dollars to transform world culture. The globalist scenario is loved by the .com generation. Growing up where difference is essential, they surf culture and the Net. Further down the track will be the double helix generation. They will be far more plastic, willing to change identities and live with multiple life forms, unattached to existing notions of self. They will complete the globalist agenda.

And they will inherit it. Regardless of the shape and character of governance, the most likely future remains that of speed, the Teflon post-modern self (creative, playful, always re-creating itself) and our genetically re-created offspring, the double helix generation to come. They imagine a future with no limits and will have the wealth to create it.

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