Introduction

The View from Silicon Valley

TECHNOLOGY AND THE GLOBAL ECONOMIC, MILITARY, AND COMMUNICATION SYSTEMS

The fall of the Berlin Wall and its aftermath have left both citizens and scholars grasping for ways to make sense of the new relations among nation states, multinational corporations, terrorist groups, and other global actors. This book proposes a post–Cold War paradigm based on the interaction between the contemporary globalization of the political, economic, military, and communication (political plus EMC) systems and the significant role of religion in influencing global politics. Indeed, current politics, be it local, national, or international, exists at this connection between the four rapidly integrating global systems and individual self-understandings based on particularistic, often religious, communal histories. Thus, Tip O'Neill and Thomas Friedman are both correct: all politics is both local *and* global at the same time.

Such dual approaches – local and global, religion and EMC systems – seem plausible when examining the reasons for the fall of the Berlin Wall itself. Any treatment of the November 1989 events in Eastern Europe that ignores the progressive weakening of the Soviet economy during the Soviet-American arms race, the political-economic *perestroika* [restructuring] of Mikhail Gorbachev, or the religious and popular communication role of John Paul II and Polish Catholicism misses significant parts of a complete political explanation. This book will expend most of its print discussing the lesser-studied religious causalities, but, hopefully, even the most spiritual factors will be situated within their political and EMC contexts. Ironically, rapid technological

advances have made religion more relevant in the political and EMC systems.

Where, then, should the hunt for a new global paradigm start? From my perspective of living and teaching in California's Silicon Valley, the increasing rapidity of technological advances constitutes the most striking new phenomenon of the last two decades. Scientific innovation affects all areas of life, from biotechnology to entertainment. Technology most significantly influences world politics by fostering, in procedure and in product, the ever-tightening integration of the international economic system. And if any of us Americans have been tempted to ignore that global economic integration, the experience of the dislocation caused by the "Asian Flu" of the late 1990s should have cured us. What started as an obscure attack on the overvalued Thai Baht damaged whole regions. Friedman begins his 1999 book[1] by tracing the contagion: from Thailand to other Asian markets as both local and global investors sought currency stability; from Asia to Russia through lower worldwide commodity prices, especially for oil; from Russia to Brazil to the United States, where Hedge Funds like the Connecticut-based Long-Term Capital Management pulled their investments back into the "safe" American market and went belly up.

The contemporary international economic system thus demonstrates many of the dynamics described by Immanuel Wallerstein and other practitioners of world system theory, which seeks to explain the globe's gradual four-century development by focusing on the link between the dominant economic core and the exploited periphery, whose inhabitants have concentrated on low-productivity, low-wage tasks. Global production takes place from the Shannon Development Authority in Ireland to the Shenzhen Special Economic Zone in Guangdong. The U.S. market in beanie babies (Don't remove the Tyco label!), aided and abetted by the Home Shopping Channel, remains my personal favorite postmodern global commercial fad. Valley Fair, one of Silicon Valley's upscale malls, witnessed a mini-riot one Saturday morning when hundreds of rabid adult collectors descended on a small notions boutique rumored to be receiving a few Peace Bears.

Rapid urbanization has fostered great disparities within nations and regions, reflecting in almost all cases huge socioeconomic gaps between

[1] Thomas L. Friedman, *The Lexus and the Olive Tree: Understanding Globalization* (New York: Farrar, Straus, Giroux, 1999).

the cities and the rural areas. Shanties of tin and cardboard, bereft of water and electricity, exist on the edges of most developing world cities to absorb the constant population flow from the hinterland. The widespread knowledge about lifestyle disparities by many who live on the edge of starvation, plus a long string of regional wars, have fostered major immigration and refugee movements. Brutal authoritarian regimes on the periphery stimulate such flows, as does the desire for a better life. The return of Hong Kong to China in 1997 has not eliminated the great Sunday gatherings of Filipina maids in the center of the ex-colony. Their families at home continue to depend on their remittances, and Hong Kong bureaucrats feel secure that these guest workers, unlike their possible replacements from Sichuan, can always be sent home. In 2003, the Inter-American Development Bank reported that nearly one fifth of Mexico's population would receive remittances from relatives in the United States that year, a total of $14.5 billion.[2] That amount, which the bank estimates helps to feed, house, and educate twenty-five million Mexicans, exceeded both tourism and foreign investment. Only petroleum produced more foreign exchange for Mexico. The Iraq kidnapping of Filipino truck driver Angelo de la Cruz on July 8, 2004, made him a national hero, a symbol of the nearly seven million Filipinos who work overseas. While Mexican and Indian migrant workers sent home more money, the $7.6 billion in official bank transfers make up 7.5 percent of the Philippine gross national product, while untold millions or billions come through unofficial channels.[3] Public pressure forced President Arroyo to withdraw her country's fifty-one soldiers and police immediately, one month ahead of schedule, much to the displeasure of the United States.

The end of the Cold War increased the power of the international economic system by removing many of the political restraints to its operation. Thus, the international economy has become the most closely integrated and independent of the three EMC systems. The Al-Qaeda attack on New York's Twin Towers and the Pentagon, and the subsequent U.S. responses in Afghanistan and Iraq remind us, however, that sometimes a nation's military capacities trump all. The Nuclear Age began "the Day after Trinity" in July 1945 and has been extended and refined through the development of ever more sophisticated bombs and missiles

[2] *New York Times*, October 28, 2003 [date without further citation indicates the *New York Times*].
[3] August 1, 2004.

equipped with "smart" guidance systems. Like the international economy, thermonuclear bombs tie the world together as a system but in a less regulated and a more perverse way. However, the very devastation of the new weapons makes them awkward to employ successfully, aside from any moral considerations. Even India's most prominent nuclear advocate, K. Subrhmanyam, has commented, "[t]he world in which nuclear weapons could be used as a currency of power is gone forever."[4] The global projection of American conventional power proved sufficient for military victory in the Gulf War, Bosnia, Kosovo, Afghanistan, and Iraq.

Communication constitutes the third technologically driven system. The communication revolution, from the Internet to international mass distribution of Hollywood films, creates the possibility of a truly global culture. Such worldwide availability of *Siempre Coca-Cola*, *Terminator*, and Internet pornography terrifies many cultural nationalists and parents. The battle to restrict global communication access takes place in many forms, from "percent of content" laws to Internet filters and V-chips, to criminal prosecution of offenders. Communication remains, however, the least integrated of the three systems. There is no single unit for communication analysis, such as monetary value in the economic system. However, the religious-political issues probe more deeply than in the other two systems since communication inextricably involves personal and societal identities and values. During the last decade American and European media content has expanded throughout the world. Most of the global entertainment and advertising content seeks to project a fictitious "Main Street America with gangsters," but European conglomerates have become more serious rivals as they consolidate into larger commercial entities producing more regional programming. And China, India, and Nigeria have developed formidable film industries for specific niche markets. Communication alliances seek to promote as many tie-ins to advertising and merchandising as possible.

As indicated in the Kosovo and Iraq war examples, these three technology-driven systems are not just each becoming more international (horizontal integration), but they are progressively integrating with each other (vertical integration). Indeed, the September 11 attack illustrated global horizontal and vertical integration with its destruction of symbolic military and economic targets and the significance of communication

[4] David Cortright and Amitabhl Mattoo, eds., *India and the Bomb: Public Opinion and Nuclear Options* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1996), 88.

media in its aftermath. Financial resources and costly satellites foster military might and media moguls. Armies protect oil fields and language schools. Television develops product demand and disposes domestic populations to support foreign military intervention with embedded reporters. Rather than "dual use," computer and satellite advances should be termed "triple use" in this context. Friedman states that "today, more than ever, the traditional boundaries between politics, culture, technology, finance, national security and ecology are disappearing."[5] From the theoretical perspective, the globe has become a truly horizontal and vertical world system, but with modern technological characteristics Wallerstein never dreamed of.

The Westphalian and Cold War paradigms derived their simplicity from the theoretical concentration of ideological and organizational legitimacy in the sovereign nation-state, even when that nation-state had allied with either Washington or Moscow. The current situation offers no such simplicity. Nation-states remain the principal military and political actors, but multinational corporations predominate in the economic and communication systems. Friedman even argues that the basic characteristic of contemporary economic markets is that no one is in charge. These three EMC systems change both within themselves and interactively. And driving technological innovations remain unpredictable, as any venture capitalist or purchaser of "vapor ware" will testify.

Faced with the impact of rapid technological changes in international EMC systems, has there been any systematic political response by any major global actor or groups of actors? Francis Fukuyama in *The End of History*[6] emphasized that this new world system offers by osmosis a single all-encompassing ideology, liberal democratic capitalism. Although this ideology has become progressively less attractive to the developing world, no unifying alternative ideology has arisen, whether from nationalist, imperialist, or internationalist sources. The cultural and political identities of people became more confused after the fall of the Berlin Wall. In summary, our contemporary world combines accelerating technological change with increasingly chaotic and fragmented ideological frameworks, the Valley Fair beanie baby riot writ globally. And this introduction hasn't even mentioned the impact of such an international system on global ecology. It is not a reassuring picture for us, our children, or our grandchildren.

[5] Friedman, *Lexus*, 15.
[6] Francis Fukuyama, *The End of History and the Last Man* (New York: Free Press, 1992).

RELIGION IN CULTURE AND POLITICS

Understanding the influences of the technologically driven, progressively integrating, global EMC systems on international politics has become the necessary starting point for any explanation of contemporary world politics, but such an understanding presents only half the picture. Macro explanations such as world system theory and its more ideological Latin relative, dependency theory, exhibit their Marxist roots. They constitute the leftover theories of the "losers" in the Cold War. More important, these theories generally favor economic explanations to the exclusion of almost every other factor. Sometimes military, cultural, or even specifically religious goals supersede every other motivation. For example, the restrained response of Egyptian public opinion to the 1981 assassination of Nobel Peace Prize winner and President Anwar Sadat shocked American citizens and policy makers. During the 1970s and 1980s, even the relatively mainstream Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood focused on a single religious motivation, defending Islamic values from both the secular West and the atheistic East. This religious motivation superseded any other economic or strategic consideration, with Sadat's government perceived as an irreligious collaborator.

World events since the Iranian revolution of 1979 have thus brought many to a realization that religion has become a major element in most national political systems, especially in the developing world. Religion constitutes an autonomous sphere of human activity but not an interactive system like the political and EMC systems. There is no global religious system because the religious characteristics of any two nations are not necessarily related as the economies of those nations are. All the disparate types of religions, however, have become increasingly significant political actors in the post–Cold War era. Ignoring religion or reducing it to politics, economics, military action, or media influence leads to grievous errors in world affairs. For example, in spring 2003, the U.S. Defense Department grossly underestimated the influence of religion in the political reconstruction of Iraq.

These trends have increased the global political impact of Islam and Christianity, and the growing national political impact of all religions. In contemporary political systems that have a predominant religion, those religions usually play two somewhat contradictory roles. First, the religion holds all social strata together in the name of a unified national culture. Second, it serves as the ideological cohesion for the poor and frustrated lower and middle classes to demand social justice. The political and social

tensions in Latin American Catholicism and Middle Eastern Islam, for example, derive from these respective religions' attempts to mediate the national "common good" for all citizens, and at the same time, to exercise "a preferential option for the poor."

Scholars and diplomats still lack, however, a comprehensive synthetic theory to complement the myriad political-religious analyses limited to a single country, a single religion, or a single geographic region. In short, how are we to understand the post–Cold War relationship of religion and politics worldwide? And how does that relationship interact with the technology-driven international systems? Technological advances and the interpenetration of the EMC systems constantly create new environments in which individuals and societies are forced to make unforeseen political choices on the basis of their perceived personal and social identity (Who am I? Who are we?). In *Clash of Civilizations*,[7] Samuel Huntington shows that these cultural identities, based mainly on religion, play a significant role in defining the loyalties of the post–Cold War world. Huntington does not describe, however, the actual causal relationships of religion and politics in various cultures. In fact, current social science explains international economics, strategic doctrine, and communication theory much better than it does the global political system or the international relationships of religion and politics. This book hopes to fill that void and, by relating these political-religious relationships to the advances in technology-driven EMC systems, offer a new paradigm for understanding post–Cold War politics. The book will argue that the religious responses to these unforeseen political choices depend mainly on three factors: the level of political-religious interaction, from local to global; the nature of the religion, from religions of the book like Christianity to religions of meditative experience like Buddhism; and the regional or national culture of political-religious interaction, from the partially secularized West to Islamist Iran.

BOOK ORGANIZATION: THE NEW PARADIGM AND CONTEMPORARY RELIGION AND POLITICS

The book is divided into two sections: Religion and Politics in the New Paradigm, and Religion in Contemporary World Politics. The first section, Chapters 1 through 4, presents the paradigm, defines religion, describes

[7] Samuel P. Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1996).

its practices, and explains its relationships to politics. The second section, Chapters 5 through 10, consists of five regional studies and a summary chapter. Each chapter compares the politics of the principal religions within the region: the West (Christianity, Islam, Judaism); East Asia (Buddhism, Christianity, Confucianism, Maoism); South Asia (Hinduism, Buddhism, Islam); the Middle East and North Africa (Judaism, Islam, Christianity); and Latin America (Indigenous Religions, Catholicism, Protestantism). Thus, this second section fosters the understanding of contemporary national, regional, and international politics.

The search for an overarching paradigm, of course, begs the question as to whether such a unified explanation exists. Maybe the insight, to borrow from the philosopher Bernard Lonergan,[8] is that there is no insight. Maybe the new international system defies explanation except as singular, unrelated problems and issues. Certainly the contemporary fragmentation of scholarly discourse would seem to suggest that even if such a paradigm existed, its elements would be so widely distributed in separate academic disciplines as to obscure it beyond comprehension. This academic fragmentation, however, has not prevented other political scientists from presenting grand designs. Those interested in excellent comparative discussions of the comprehensive theories of Ohmae, Furukawa, Barber, Kaplan, Huntington, Friedman, and others should consult the review articles by Drezner[9] and Hoffman.[10] To be successful, this book need not explain everything, but it must offer more insight than competing paradigms. This author might even settle for clarifying more than he obscures.

Such a book must be largely derivative for its local and national studies. Any mistakes in interpreting others' works, however, remain the sole responsibility of the author. Despite the author's attempt to take religion very seriously as a major determinant of political culture, this treatment remains political science, not theology or spirituality. The book's central methodological choice, to take religion seriously from the viewpoint of religious practitioners, highlights the significance of choosing some author to orient the text's general approach to spirituality. The book can follow well-known masters, theologians, and other academics for

[8] Bernard J. F. Lonergan, S.J., *Insight: A Study of Human Understanding* (New York: Longmans, 1957).

[9] Daniel Drezner, "Globalizers of the World United!" *Washington Quarterly* 21 (Winter 1998): 209–26.

[10] Stanley Hoffman, "The Clash of Globalizations," *Foreign Affairs* 81 (July/August 2002): 104–15.

each of the religions studied, but who will supply the general language for describing the spiritual life, even if all agree that no language suffices? I have settled on the spiritual writings of Trappist monk Thomas Merton (1915–68). Merton was born in France, had to leave Cambridge over involvement with a woman, and converted to Catholicism while studying the modernist canon under Mark Van Doren and other literary giants at Columbia University. From his Kentucky cloister, Merton later wrote a postwar best-seller, *The Seven Storey Mountain*,[11] which sold over six hundred thousand hardbacks. He liked beer. In the latter part of his life he became a friend of Beat poets, Civil Rights activists, and anti–Vietnam War protestors. When he went to Asia in 1968, Merton spent three days with the Dalai Lama at Dharamsala. Merton died shortly after of a heart attack resulting from electrocution by a defective fan at an ecumenical meeting of monks in Bangkok.

Merton seems to have had the relevant mystical experience, studied and prayed over the history of Christian spirituality all his religious life, and conducted significant dialogues with "great souls" in other traditions of Christianity, Buddhism, Hinduism, and Sufi Islam. In fact, when he was at Columbia, a Hindu ascetic from India first introduced him to the Christian spiritual classics, Augustine's *Confessions* and Thomas a Kempis's *The Imitation of Christ*. Merton also carried on a long friendship and writing projects with Daisetz T. Suzuki, the most important Zen master of early-twentieth-century America. Merton wrote one of his most revelatory spiritual letters to a Pakistani Sufi. No wonder, one month before his death, Merton wrote "I think we have now reached a stage of (long overdue) religious maturity at which it might be possible for someone to remain perfectly faithful to a Christian and Western monastic commitment and yet to learn in depth from, say, a Buddhist or Hindu discipline and experience. I believe some of us need to do this in order to improve the quality of our own monastic life and even to help in the task of monastic renewal which has been undertaken within the Western Church."[12]

We all start from our own religious traditions in seeking to link to those of others. If I were a Muslim, for example, I might follow the suggestion of Seyyed Hossein Nasr[13] to study the influence of the great Islamic philosopher Averroes (Ibn Rushd) on the equally great medieval

[11] Thomas Merton, *The Seven Storey Mountain* (New York: Garden City Books, 1948).
[12] Lawrence Cunningham, ed., *Thomas Merton: Spiritual Master: The Essential Writings* (Mahwah: Paulist Press, 1992), 24.
[13] Seyyed Hossein Nasr, *The Heart of Islam: Enduring Values for Humanity* (San Francisco: Harper, 2002), 82–83.

Jewish and Christian philosopher-theologians, Maimonides and Thomas Aquinas. Readers with a much deeper spirituality than mine can make their own adjustments to the religious sections of the text, but my political analysis relies on fairly simple spiritual insights often expressed in most religious traditions, for example, increasing gratitude as a sign of spiritual depth. No personal articles on spirituality are forthcoming, ever.

THE NEW MILLENNIUM: LINKING GLOBAL, NATIONAL, LOCAL, AND INDIVIDUAL PERSPECTIVES

The world's future has already arrived in Silicon Valley and other similar local societies. The inhabitants mirror the increasing rapidity of technological change in the increasing frenetic pace of contemporary life. Stepping back to take stock of our globe's total situation seems a luxury for academic *dilettantes*. Yet, never has there been a greater need to do so. It is not just that any worthwhile project, from reforming medical care to protecting the environment to preventing the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, requires knowledge from multiple academic disciplines. Internationalization also progressively affects all local societies. In 1999 whites became a minority in this Santa Clara County. The 2000 Census showed that 45 percent of county residents spoke another language than English at home. That group included 18 percent Spanish and 19 percent Asian languages. The diversity of Silicon Valley's residents means that the local society constantly interacts with economic, political, and cultural events across the globe, from Belfast to Michaocán to Guangdong. For example, the Chinese Army Tiananmen massacre of June 4, 1989, resulted in an almost simultaneous flood of Hong Kong wire transfers seeking safe haven for money in San Francisco, Seattle, and Vancouver area banks. As soon as a nation experiences a political or economic crisis, my wife Kathleen begins teaching the area's refugees English as a Second Language at San Jose City College.

How much simpler this book would be if it were written one hundred years ago for the Paris World Exhibition of 1900 during an earlier phase of globalization that took place between the mid-nineteenth century and the Great Depression of the late 1920s. That 1900 Paris exhibition celebrated progress, technology, and the cultural and scientific ascendancy of Anglo-Europeans. Most European intellectuals, of course, remained skeptical about the possibilities of any cultural improvement of the rough, but obscenely rich, American "colonials." The elite of London, Berlin, Vienna, and Paris also assumed that Progress (capital P) soon would render