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978-1-107-13868-1 - Global Turning Points: The Challenges for Business and Society in the 21st Century

Mauro F. Guillén and Emilio Ontiveros

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Global Turning Points

2nd edition

The second edition of this popular and thought-provoking textbook offers an accessible yet sophisticated analysis of the game-changing events and trends that are transforming the world beyond recognition. For the first time in human history more people live in cities than in the countryside, and greater numbers suffer from obesity or being overweight than from hunger. Emerging economies now represent half of the global economy, and during the next few decades, India will become the biggest country in terms of population, China the largest in output, and the United States the richest among the major economies on a per capita income basis. Food and water shortages will likely become humankind's most important challenges. With four new chapters on the rise of the global middle class, the transformative power of technology, institutions and the entrepreneurial spirit, and the trials and tribulations of the financial system, this book provides a thorough introduction to the challenges facing business and society in the twenty-first century.

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Preface

Saying that the world is changing fast has become part of the conventional wisdom. Changes affecting us are not only faster, but more difficult to predict, and of greater economic and political significance. From the economy to politics, and from culture to the environment, the global situation created during the first decade of the twenty-first century is drastically different from the one inherited from the twentieth century. We are overwhelmed by the systemic interactions among economic, business, political, social, demographic, environmental, and geopolitical variables. We are concerned about the consequences of these changes and eager to find new ways of framing and solving the problems they have brought us.

We decided to write this book so as to better understand ourselves the nature and consequences of large-scale changes and to help others understand them. We are interested not just in trends and events but in *turning points*, that is, veritable game changers, inflexions that have transformed human societies as we knew them. The rise of the emerging economies, population aging, urbanization, governmental gridlock and the breakdown of state authority, deepening inequalities, environmental degradation, and the reconfiguration of global power relationships have created a new set of constraints and opportunities that will shape the world for decades to come. In this second, expanded edition we also analyze the rise of the global middle class, the transformative power of technology, the institutions of economic development, and the trials and tribulations of the financial system.

Our main audience is decision makers, from the ordinary citizen who needs to figure out how to balance consumption and saving, or whether to invest more in education or not, to the business leaders and policymakers making big decisions that affect millions of people. We offer them an accessible, yet sophisticated, analysis of major global turning points and future scenarios with an emphasis on actionable issues.

This book is based on years of research and writing on current global issues. Both authors are frequent contributors to public debates in Europe

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and the United States. We are both academics, but with extensive experience in the private sector as entrepreneurs, consultants, and advisors. In the book we deploy the tools of economics, sociology, and political science to provide an analytical perspective on the big problems and opportunities facing the world in the twenty-first century. We present not just our own points of view but also the different positions among experts on each of the topics discussed in the book. We show a large amount of information on trends and events, including future projections with the goal of ascertaining where the world is at the present day and where it is headed. We also suggest the range of solutions available to us as individuals, citizens, and decision makers, and compare their benefits and costs.

We would like to thank the many business leaders, policymakers, and ordinary citizens we have met over the last few years to discuss the topics covered in this book. They have been a constant source of information and insight. As always, we would also like to thank the people who supported this effort with their hard work, especially Lucía Nogueroles at Analistas Financieros Internacionales. Our families also supported us in other, even more important, ways.