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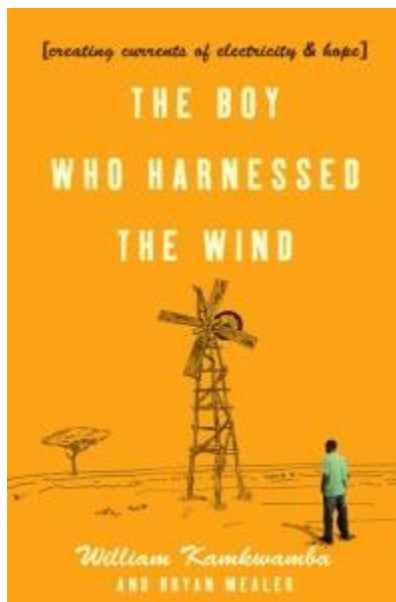
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The Boy Who Harnessed The Wind

Posted 03 December 2009 by Francis Asprec under [Book Reviews](#)



A book review by CGA alumnus Francis Asprec.

The Boy Who Harnessed the Wind by William Kamkwamba and Bryan Mealer: 273 pages.

The Boy Who Harnessed the Wind documents the life of William Kamkwamba and his idea of bringing wind energy into his native country, Malawi. William became fascinated with the subject of energy from a young age. He applied his ingenuity and creativity of constructing a windmill through the use of scrap metal, parts of an old bicycle, and other items that were available. In constructing this windmill, he brought not only a new source of energy, but also a new source of inspiration for the country. This book looks at the remarkable life of this young prodigy and how he defied odds and surmounted various obstacles.

The Boy Who Harnessed the Wind starts off by discussing the early life of William and his family. He grew in a rural area of Malawi, where farming served as the main source of income for his family. Growing up, William became fascinated with the concept of electricity when he discovered a bicycle dynamo, which is similar to that of a turbine. He spent his time trying to figure out the correlation of the light bulb switching on and pedaling on the dynamo. After understanding the correlation between the two, William and his friend Geoffrey would use the dynamo and test it on the radio. The first experiment using the dynamo on the radio was unsuccessful. However, Geoffrey would tell William to attach the wires from the dynamo into the socket of the radio labeled "AC." He describes the moment: "when I shoved the wires inside, the radio came to life. We shouted with excitement. As I pedaled the bicycle, I could hear the great Billy Kaunda playing his happy music on Radio Two, and that made Geoffrey start to dance" (p. 75). This experiment gave William both an inspiration and ideas of how to develop energy. He also points out that "only 2 percent of Malawians have electricity and this is a huge problem" (p. 76). Addressing this fact encouraged William to solve an ongoing problem. The book further explains the obstacles that he and his family would encounter.

In 2002, a devastating famine struck Malawi and brought severe effects to the Kamkwamba family. Their crops would be affected. The family would once again face hardships especially in paying for William's tuition at secondary school. Unable to pay his \$80/year tuition, William was forced to drop out of school and help his family during these tough times. Despite the hardships, he never let go of his dreams.

His quest for electricity started by going to a library at Wimbe Primary School. He found a book that would change his life. The book was called *Using Energy*. The cover of the book struck his attention in which it featured a long row of windmills. Even though he had no idea what a windmill was, he became fascinated and yearned to learn more. After reading further, his interest for windmills grew. William envisioned the idea of constructing a windmill in his village as a way to improve the current famine situation and overall quality of life in Malawi. He says: "But most important, a windmill could also rotate a pump for water and irrigation. Having just come out of hunger – and with famine still affecting many parts of the country – the idea of a water pump now seemed incredibly necessary. If we hooked it up to our shallow well at home, a water pump could allow us to harvest twice a year. While the rest of Malawi went hungry during December and January, we'd be hauling in our second crop of maize. It meant no more watering tobacco nursery beds in the dambo, which broke your back and wasted time. A windmill and pump could also provide my family with a year-round garden where my mother could grow things like tomatoes, Irish potatoes, cabbage, mustards, and soybeans, both to eat and sell in the market (p. 159)."

In addition, William points out in the book that:

"No more skipping breakfast; no more dropping out of school. With a windmill, we'd finally release ourselves from the troubles of darkness and hunger. In Malawi, the wind was one of the few consistent things given to us by God, blowing in the treetops day and night. A windmill meant more than just power, it was freedom" (p. 159). He saw the short and long-term implications of having a windmill. The words "darkness" and "hunger" stick out from this excerpt because it reminds the reader how devastated

the people of Malawi were from the famine. William continues to remind the reader that the windmill can change all that. The windmill can provide a better life for its people and community. From there on, William constructed his first windmill.

The rest of the book continues to explore William's success in constructing a bigger windmill in his village. William and his friends spent countless hours developing a bigger windmill with the similar parts they used from the first one. His vision would become a reality. When people in his village saw the light bulb shine brightly, a gazing reaction would occur. After years of enduring hardship and making sacrifices to help his family, William Kamkwamba accomplished an impossible feat. He became a hero not only to his country, but also to Africa and the world.

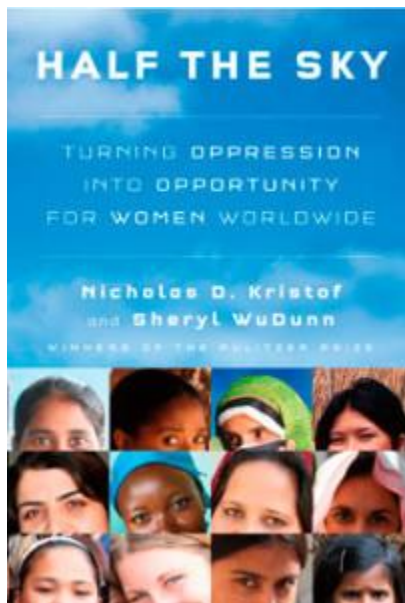
William would make appearances for interviews at various media outlets and as a guest speaker at various conferences throughout the world. He continued to promote his inspirational story to others especially in keeping in mind the importance of clean energy. William also managed to find a way to return to Malawi and utilize his educational opportunities to go back to school.

William closes this book with an inspirational quote from Dr. Martin Luther King: "If you can't fly, run; if you can't run, walk; if you can't walk, crawl." He encourages people to continue to move forward and continue to dream, even if the journey is arduous. This book blends the concepts of hope, inspiration, ingenuity, and of course, electricity!

TAGS: [Book Review](#), [Energy](#), [Environment](#)

Half the Sky

Posted 15 September 2009 by Florence Au under [Book Reviews](#)



Today I sat in on a panel discussion that took place at the United Nations headquarters where two prominent journalists discussed a new book

that they authored: *Half the Sky – Turning Oppression into Opportunity for Women Worldwide*. One of the journalists is the two-time Pulitzer Prize winner Nicholas Kristof of the *New York Times*, and the other is his wife Sheryl WuDunn, who also works for *New York Times*. UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon and the Executive Director of UNODC (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime) were also present, which led me to believe that this was quite a high profile event. In fact, the issues of gender equality and women empowerment are very much the focus of the ECOSOC in the coming year, as I have heard one senior UN ECOSOC official recently testify. Indeed, for gender issues to be at the forefront of United Nations priorities, high-level leadership must demonstrate their support. In his opening remarks, the Secretary General stated emphatically: "...clearly, the antidote is women empowerment." He mentioned two possible ways: empowerment through micro-financing and better care of sexual and reproductive health for women.

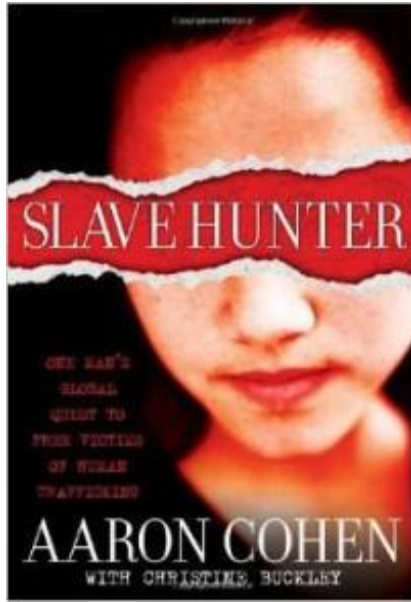
During the panel, Nicholas Kristof was asked why he chooses to focus so much on issues of sex trafficking in his columns. Kristof replied that it all began with a trip that he took to Cambodia where he witnessed and interviewed two young girls who were sold to brothels. Even after Kristof paid a sum of money to the brothel to 'purchase' the girls in return for their freedom, one of the girls actually returned to the brothel because of her drug addiction – a sad testament to the fact that the girl was in effect trapped within her predicament, and even money could not help her. (**Spoiler alert:** Kristof later revealed in the book that the girl had a happy ending). Hopefully with the launch of this book, Nicholas Kristof and Sheryl WuDunn will be able to raise awareness and generate a healthy dialogue on these issues in the global arena.

For more information on the book, visit <http://www.halftheskymovement.org/>

TAGS: Book Review, United Nations, Women's Rights

Inside the Trade for Human Flesh

Posted 07 April 2010 by Rada Ghemigian under Book Reviews



Wasn't slavery abolished? Actually, no. In fact, there are more slaves in the world today than at any point in our history. *Slave Hunter* by Aaron Cohen and Christine Buckley (New York, NY: Simon Schuster, Inc., 2009) looks at the eye-opening truth behind human trafficking from Cohen's perspective as a "slave hunter," documenting and rescuing victims of sexual exploitation and forced labor.

Cohen, inspired by Jubilee, a movement to forgive debt and free slaves, began his human-rights activism first by building a grass-roots campaign with his friend Perry Farrell called Drop the Debt. Believing awareness is the first step to eradication, Cohen dedicated himself to bringing public awareness to the existence of modern-day slavery. Cohen characterizes human trafficking as the new face of slavery, dedicating his book its victims.

Cohen is a "slave hunter," identifying human beings who are trafficked and exploited for labor and/or sexual purposes. Cohen's memoir recounts his first-hand experiences in brothels, massage parlors, restaurants, bars, and war zones. A one-time former partner with Jane's Addiction front-man Perry Farrell, Cohen used his musical connections and social skills to promote his activism alongside Bono, Ricky Martin and the Dalai Lama.

Slave Hunter documents Cohen's journey in distinct sections, each describing a different area of the world where he has traveled: Cambodia, Sudan, Latin America, Myanmar, and the Middle East. Cohen's fieldwork begins with a process he calls "night frightening," where he poses as a sex tourist collecting evidence against traffickers in brothels. He easily finds brothels through taxi drivers who earn vouchers for gas when they bring in customers. Cohen keeps a video journal, where he photographs and records interviews with trafficked women and children on his cell phone. After buying some time with them, he then engages them to talk about their lives and experiences. "Yum-yum thirty dollar. Boom-boom fifty dollar," says one of the children he meets in a brothel. He notes for twenty dollars more a man can have unprotected sex with this child. Cohen is aware he might not be able to save the girl he is talking to at the moment, but he believes his efforts will help prevent future potential victims. Through Cohen's words, we hear the victim's

stories: their pain, their fear, and their misery. In many cases, he helps keep hope alive for the numerous women and children he encounters.

While Cohen's work has documented slavery, he has also seen genocide in Sudan and terrorist operations in Asia. Through his field work around the world, Cohen has identified links between the trafficked women and connections to organized crime, gangs, drug cartels, and natural resources such as oil, gold, and uranium.

Brothels usually have the backing of at least one mafia family. In situations where Cohen is able to buy the freedom of the women and children he encounters, the madams (or slave masters) and the girls sign statements that will keep Cohen and his fellow rescuers from being charged with kidnapping. While Cohen's critics express outrage that he gives money to the traffickers, the money keeps the girls' families safe from mafia threats. The trafficked women and children are then provided safety for the time being. Instead of sitting in meetings talking about human rights, Cohen wants to make sure trafficked victims have a safe place to sleep. After they are taken to safety, the women and children are given a chance at an education and reintegration into society.

At one point in the memoir, Cohen describes how he has hit men coming after him after he has raided several brothels. "Our actions have probably roused more than one gang boss tonight with some very bad news. By taking back nearly thirty girls, we have cut off the bad guys' cash flow to the tune of about \$3 million," Cohen writes. He points out that 'Canadian journalist Victor Malarek's research would later put the average profit a trafficker could make from one woman at about \$160,000.'

Many governments do not recognize trafficked women as victims, which is why Cohen's work is so important. Cohen teamed together with Michele Clark to promote public education and awareness seminars. Clark works on the policy side of things, as a coordinator at a think-tank based at the Johns Hopkins University School of Advanced International Studies. Cohen and Clark both share a victim-centered approach towards human trafficking, which they believe is essential to anti-trafficking work. Cohen has presented his research to help develop prevention programs, and discussed the importance of the Internet in the exploitation of women and children.

We live in a global community, one in which slave labor effects everyone. Cohen exposes this world-wide problem in all the countries he has visited. In Ecuador, where there are no victim shelters, trafficked women are not considered refugees, and therefore are not admitted to refugee camps. Cohen served as a field operative and consultant in Ecuador, intending to shed more light on trafficking patterns there by documenting and photographing trafficked victims.

Cohen's missions involved analyzing the scope of trafficking and helping locals develop a national anti-trafficking strategy. Cohen's journeys also led him to Sudan, where he documented slave redemptions, buying the freedom of slaves for anywhere from twenty to eighty dollars each. Under Sudan's penal code, slave redemption is a violation of sharia law, punishable by limb amputation, death or crucifixion. Cohen's travels also led him to Myanmar, where ethnic Shans are employed by the State Peace and Development Council (SPDC). The SPDC uses slave labor to build infrastructure in the country's new capital, as well as at facilities producing uranium, that is used to process fuel for nuclear

reactors (which is in violation of U.N. Security Council resolutions). In Thailand on another visit, Cohen documented the indigenous people from the Hmong ethnic group, who are denied political refugee status elsewhere, and wait in camps where they easily fall prey to traffickers that take advantage of their situation.

Cohen's memoir gives us access to experiences and thoughts we may otherwise never have had. Arguably, the single most important thing to take away from reading Cohen's memoir is that it illustrates the fact that governments and organizations, as well as individuals, are capable of making a difference in taking a human being out of enslavement. We live in a world that is growing smaller by the minute, and we must all develop a greater sense of universal responsibility for each other.

*Perspectives on Global Issues's Spring 2010 issue on **Human Security** will feature an interview with Slave Hunter author **Aaron Cohen**. The issue will be available in late April 2010.*

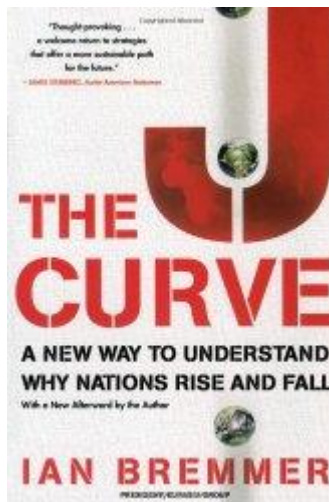
A review of the book *Slave Hunter* by Rada Ghemigian

By PGI Staff

TAGS: [Book Review](#), [Human Rights](#)

“The J Curve,” an examination on stability

Posted 02 February 2009 by Dan Logue under [Book Reviews](#)



Most people have probably never heard of this book, but I find it very insightful when looking at the idea of stability. Ian Bremmer (president of the Eurasia Group) explains his theory that stability can only come in one of two forms: either through dictatorial rule or democracy. By providing fascinating examples of countries along different points of his curve, Bremmer finds a simple way to show why democracy in general is a very sound

political model. His use of North Korea, as an example of a stable state due to its military and communist leadership, illustrates the fragility of such governments.

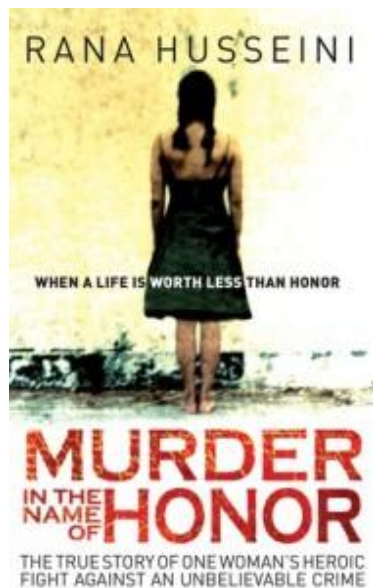
My favorite chapter compares and contrasts Yugoslavia and South Africa. Both went through major political upheavals in the 1990s, yet only one was able to come out stable. South Africa weathered the first fully democratic elections in the country's history peacefully and successfully. Yugoslavia devolved into bloody, violent, ethnic war and eventually broke up into five countries. Interestingly enough the effects of that era are still being seen; in that the Union of Serbia and Montenegro dissolved in 2006, and last year Kosovo unilaterally declared independence from Serbia as well.

While the book is political, it is also anecdotal and very easy to read. Bremmer's style is easy to follow and very digestible. A great addition to any political junkie's library, *The J Curve* provides a great set of ideas to examine why other countries have either succeeded or failed in the quest for stability. I would highly recommend this book to anyone with interests in international politics and comparative political systems.

TAGS: [Book Review](#), [International Development](#), [Political Economy](#)

Murder in the Name of Honor

Posted 18 March 2010 by Linda Bouzembrak under [Book Reviews](#)



Book Discussion of *Murder in the Name of Honour* by Rana Hussein (Winter 2009/2010, at the Soros Foundation in New York City). Rana Hussein is a senior reporter at the *Jordan Times*.

Honor killing is an international phenomena happening mainly in impoverished and uneducated areas. In most of the cases, the crime of honor killing is committed by close

relatives of the victim, who is found guilty of tarnishing the family image or reputation by her behavior. Most killers, based on Rana's experience, are not in peace with themselves after committing such a crime because they were themselves victims of social pressures leading them to do such acts.

According to official figures, 31 women are victims of honor killing every day in the world. But Rana stated that based on her experience, the number is much higher as in many instances these crimes are not investigated by the authorities due to the taboo attached to it.

When Rana started working as a reporter for the *Jordan Times* in the 1980s, she realized that the crime of honor killing was a taboo subject in Jordanian society and was not reported in the media. In addition, she noticed that the perpetrators of such crimes were mostly never brought to a court or if so, faced minor prison sentences ranging from three months to a year. Therefore, Rana used her position at the *Jordan Times* to publish on a regular basis stories of women subject to "honor killing." Her aim was to raise public awareness on the issue by reaching out intellectuals, officials and general public through the *Jordan Times*. The newspaper received numerous letters to the editor from Jordanian citizens supporting her work and officials started to look at the issue more closely.

In 1989, she started a grass-roots movement to collect 150,000 signatures, the minimum number required by the Jordanian law to propose a change in law. Her aim was to increase the minimum prison sentence penalty for perpetrators of honor killing. Thanks to her dedication, the grass-roots movement was able to collect the required number of signatures by reaching out remote areas of Jordan. Thus, she presented to the government her proposed change in law regarding honor killing. Despite the fact that the law was not changed due to a strong resistance from religious leaders, Rana is proud to say today that her initiative broke the taboo of speaking about honor killing in Jordanian society and brought awareness to the general public. As of 2008, there were 8 reported victims of honor killings in Jordan, which is a clear victory of Rana's awareness campaign.

In addition, Rana's work has been and is still supported by the Royal Family of Jordan, who never stood on her way while she conducted her research and work.

Jordan is currently examining the option of a special court dealing only with honor killings, as studies show that different courts in different parts of the country were interpreting the law in a non-coherent manner.

According to Rana, changing the law is a first step to decrease the number of honor killings in a given country. She also highlighted the need to improve the educational system and the image of women. In addition, she is advocating for religious leaders to speak out on the issue of honor killings and to condemn such crimes which are against any religion. Furthermore, she indicated that awareness campaigns should be broader to include domestic violence against women and should be conducted in every country regardless of religion.

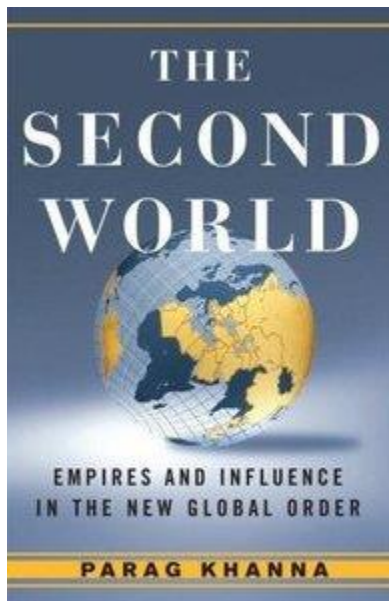
Finally, Rana pointed out the necessity to tackle difficulties faced by gays and lesbians in the Muslim world, which is a taboo in the Muslim religion.

Rana's book *Murder in the name of Honor* is today available worldwide in English and Arabic.

TAGS: Book Review, Women's Rights

The Second World: Empires and Influence in the New Global Order

Posted 22 February 2009 by Dan Logue under Book Reviews



The Second World: Empires and Influence in the New Global Order by Parag Khanna, Random House, New York, 2008, \$29.00.

In his new book *The Second World*, Parag Khanna deconstructs the post-Cold War world. Khanna divides the First World into what he calls the three empires, the United States, European Union and China. Using these three spheres of influence, Khanna explains possible future scenarios/situations that will take place throughout the rest of the world.

Khanna breaks down the different types of diplomatic styles used by each of the three major empires: "America's coalition, Europe's consensus, and China's *consultation*" (p. xvii). He then goes on to provide a brief history of geopolitics and its difference from globalization, particularly in light of works by Fukuyama, Huntington, Toynbee and Spengler.

According to Khanna, the Second World consists of the regions of Eastern Europe (Russia, the Caucasus, Turkey, and the Balkans); the Central Asian countries, China's western provinces, Pakistan and Afghanistan; Latin America; the Middle East and North

Africa; and East Asia. The only region Khanna does not address is sub-Saharan Africa. Within these regions, Khanna sees the real action taking place.

In Eastern Europe he discusses European Union expansion, the play between the EU and Russia, and the importance of Turkey to the EU in the coming years. Brussels is compared to Rome as the new seat of a European empire, crafting the difficulties that Europe will have going forward with further expansion. His chapter on Turkey puts forth the idea that the EU needs Turkey more than Turkey needs the EU. Much of that argument stems from the demographic reality of many European countries in light of their social welfare needs. Khanna argues that Russia will slowly devolve and potentially break up due to its current demographic trends and the continuing influx of Chinese into its Far East. Khanna concludes this section by questioning the very notion of what is “European” and asserting that the definition may need to be stretched in order to assist Europe in its move into the 21st century.

Moving to Central Asia, Khanna crafts arguments for the rise of Chinese importance in the new oil and gas pipelines being built in Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan. There is also discussion of the increased role the western Chinese regions of Tibet and Xinjiang will play as energy needs increase and Central Asia becomes a much larger energy center. Khanna closes this section by discussing the success of China in rebuilding the Silk Road, having learned from British and Russian policies used in the past.

The section on Latin America questions the U.S.’s ability to maintain the same Monroe Doctrine-type policy given the new issues and changes taking place in that region. He addresses Venezuela and its leadership with relation to its oil reserves. There is also an argument for the rise of Brazil and its selective nature in dealing with the U.S. Khanna warns against the continuation of a Cold War mentality in order to create a “new ‘Alliance for Progress’” (p. 167) in order to bring Latin America into a truly integrated Western Hemisphere.

Khanna’s Part IV, focusing on the Middle East, is easily his most complicated. He takes care to account for history when explaining the distinct parts of this region and how they must interact with each other and the rest of the world. The Maghreb (West of Nile) and Mashreq (East of Nile) regions receive individual attention due to their complicated natures. Egypt is given its own chapter, due to its continually important role throughout the history of the region. Iran is examined with respect to its unique history, both ancient and modern, and how it can be a power player within the region (especially due to the dynamic change brought about by the U.S.-led invasion of Iraq).

The final region analyzed in *The Second World* is Asia. It comes as no surprise that Khanna argues for Chinese supremacy in this part of the world. He examines the continuation of the Chinese way, in which trade and diplomacy are one and the same, and slowly loyalty is earned. Khanna argues that unlike the Soviet Union, China has the ability to attract both the Third and First Worlds. Japan has been instrumental in assisting China’s development. Malaysia is seen as on the way to development through smart policy and its proximity to Singapore. High-tech businesses and well-planned cities with maintained colonial infrastructure make Malaysia an up-and-coming hub in Asia. Indonesia is viewed with much more caution, due to its natural and demographic challenges. This “sleeping giant” of 200 million people still struggles with exploitation and

a weak state. China's use of (unconditional) cash in diplomatic dealings with mainland Southeast Asia is a hope to create long-lasting international bonds.

Khanna's concluding statements, entitled "The Search for Equilibrium in a non-American World," argue that the world must begin to come to grips with a post-American future. He argues that the U.S. has not been successful in its attempts to rid the world of numerous threats (including the "Axis of Evil"), since military power cannot be the only solution. Khanna points out the irony of American actions being more and more imperial, even though it is an "accidental empire." China will be able to organize Central Asia and the EU will have a stabilizing force on Eastern Europe, his argument continues. The U.S. is slowly losing effectiveness in both hard and soft power and the world must be prepared to make adjustments to the new realities as they unfold. Khanna even goes on to question the U.S.'s ability to maintain its First World status and sees it potentially falling into the Second World, which could come about with further diversification into the euro.

Khanna's most controversial argument is most likely the one that Russia is on the course to devolve and will most likely lose its Far East to Chinese immigration. There is not much optimism for Russia's future, even with its energy wealth. Its organization and functioning is called into question to the point that Khanna does not appear to hold much hope for a successful future. Its position between the EU and China provides it with potential as a powerbroker. Whether or not this becomes reality is still very much up in the air. According to Khanna's theory and argument, it would appear to be unlikely.

The Second World weaves a fascinating and complicated argument that most of the important actions in the near future will play outside the empires of the U.S., EU and China. Yet, Khanna succeeded in providing large volumes of information in easily digestible verbiage for a very wide audience.

TAGS: Book Review, International Relations