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The Once and Future World Order: Book Roundtable

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Drawing on his new book covering 5000 years of history, Acharya argues that world order has never been the monopoly of any civilization or nation. Structures of world order: independent states, empires, tributary systems, as well as mechanisms such as diplomacy, inter-state cooperation, freedom of the seas, humanitarian values, religious accommodation and many more, first emerged outside of what we call today as “the West.”

Neither does the West have an exclusive patent over ideas about human rights, republican government, and democracy. Yet, centuries of dominance have bred both arrogance and ignorance in the West; in which the ideas and contributions of other civilizations through history have been forgotten or dismissed.

Acharya also reminds that all civilizations combine pacific and aggressive tendencies, and civilizations often progress by learning peacefully from each other, rather than purely on their own steam or through conflict.

The future world order, Acharya concludes, will not be shaped by one, two or a handful of great powers, but by a “global multiplex,” with many consequential state and non-state actors and in which diversity and interconnectedness will co-exist. While no world order can be free from conflict, the end of Western dominance need not mean the collapse of world order. On the contrary, it will help mitigate the West-versus-the-Rest divide, and create a more equitable and mutually respectful global arrangement.

This book roundtable brings together a distinguished panel to discuss Acharya’s ground-breaking book on the past, present and future of the world order.

Track Classification: Global Politics and Development