

'No One's World' provides good look at globalization

"Although the Western democracies appreciate the need to anchor the coming transition in global power, it is very much open to question whether the United States and Europe, individually and collectively, will be up to the task," Charles A. Kupchan asserts in his ninth book, "No One's World: The West, the Rising Rest, and the Coming Global Turn."

"It is no accident that both sides of the Atlantic are simultaneously experiencing significant problems of governance," he continues. "The absence of consensus, coupled with partisan animosity, has prevented progress on important domestic priorities, such as controlling the deficit and reforming immigration policy."

"No One's World" is comprised of seven relatively short chapters that approach globalization from the perspective of the past, present and future. As was the case with his previous books, Kupchan does an exemplary job of researching his subject in a comprehensive and balanced manner. There are no less than 26 pages of chapter notes at the conclusion of the main text, together with an 11-page bibliography. The author leaves no stone unturned as he methodically and meticulously lays out support for his primary thesis; i.e., we are not in Kansas anymore.

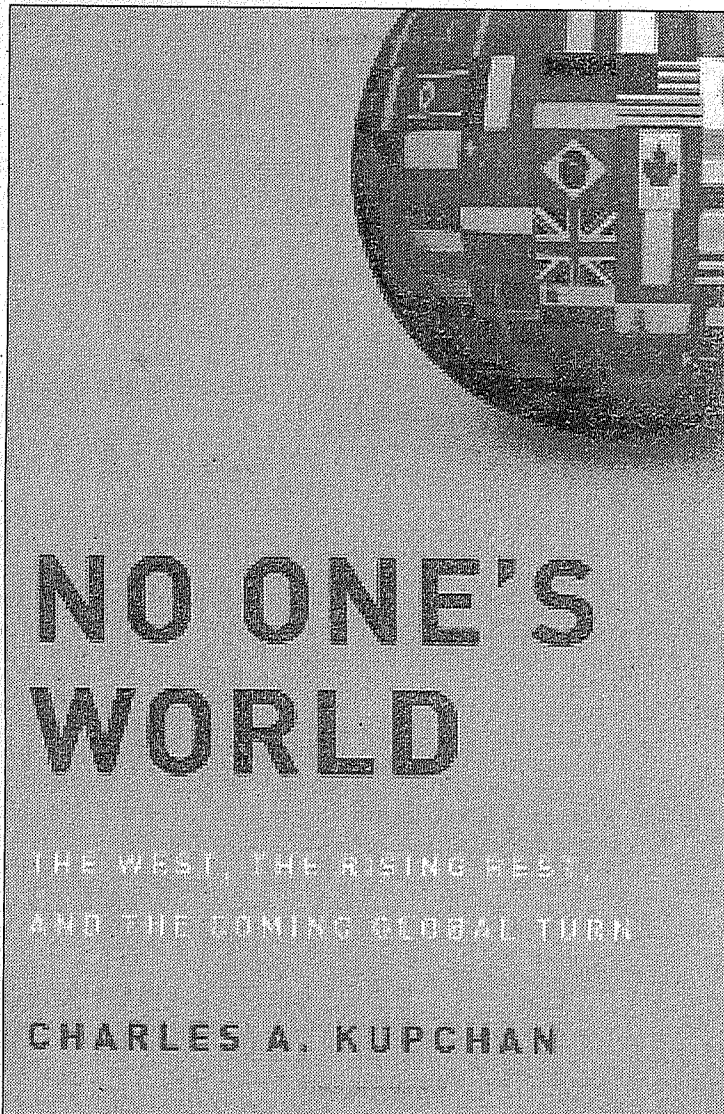
"This book has two primary goals," Kupchan explains. "The first is analytic: to explore the causes and consequences of the coming global turn. The second goal of this book is prescriptive: to map out how the West should prepare for and adjust to the world of the 21st century."

Kupchan is an historian, a realist and a futurist; he sees our current trajectory as a very predictable consequence of past events, especially when viewed from a macrocosmic vantage point.

"Between 1500 and 1800, the world's center of power moved from Asia and the Mediterranean Basin to Europe and, by the end of the 19th century, North America," the author observes. "The West then used its power and purpose to anchor a globalized world – and has been at the leading edge of history ever since. But the West's rise was a function of time and place, and history is now moving on."

Anyone interested in learning more about the increasing importance of education as a necessary precursor for economic prosperity will find Chapter 4, "The Next Turn: The Rise of the Rest," to be particularly enlightening. Kupchan reviews the data and outlines several unmistakable and sobering trends: In the West, we should view his conclusions as a cautionary tale as well as a wake-up call.

"The United States still has the best university system in the world," Kupchan argues. "But an increasing number of the students taking advantage of this system are foreigners – and they regularly bring their skills back home. In 1978, approximately 12 percent of all doctorates awarded in the United States went to foreign students.



"No One's World: The West, the Rising Rest, and the Coming Global Turn" by Charles A. Kupchan. New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2012. 272 pages, \$27.95 (hardbound).

By 2008, that figure had risen to 33 percent for all fields of study. In engineering, foreign students accounted for 60 percent of the doctorates awarded," he adds.

Kupchan makes a convincing case that the world is indeed changing in fundamental and distinctive ways. One consequence of this shift will be a future in which no single country, region or culture will be able to dominate the global geopolitical and economic landscape as has been the case for most of human history. Instead, as the author points out, the world is evolving toward an interdependent community without a defined "center of gravity or global guardian."

In effect, Kupchan is saying that the pre-eminent role the West has played on the world stage is coming to an end, and the more prepared we are to deal with the inevitable consequences of this transformation, the less traumatic it will be for both the individual and society. In other words, there is no going back – we have passed the point of no return and we need to be focused on redefining our place in the new world order.

"A vicious cycle of sorts has emerged," Kupchan contends. "In a globalized world, open and liberal democracies do not have as much control over their destinies as they used to. Immigration, flows of capital, goods, and services, the information revolution, social movements and networks, international terrorism, global warming –

states need to be fleet-footed and adaptive to manage effectively these and other transnational issues."

Kupchan is a professor at Georgetown University and a senior fellow at the Council on Foreign Relations. He has degrees from Harvard and Oxford and has been a visiting scholar at Columbia. His previous books include "How Enemies Become Friends: The Sources of Stable Peace," "The End of the American Era: U.S. Foreign Policy and the Geopolitics of the Twenty-first Century" and "Power in Transition: The Peaceful Change of International Order."

In the final analysis, the author is guardedly optimistic that we will be able to effectively deal with the complex challenges we will confront over the first half of the 21st century.

"The United States will have more to say about the shape of the global turn than any other nation," Kupchan concludes. "America will remain the world's most powerful and influential country even as a multipolar landscape gradually emerges over this decade and the next."

"No One's World" is an engaging and thought-provoking treatise on an unavoidable metamorphosis that will ultimately affect everyone. I recommend it highly.

— Reviewed by Aaron W. Hughey, Department of Counseling and Student Affairs, Western Kentucky University.