



ISSUE BRIEF

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## Foreign Policy for an Urban World: Global Governance and the Rise of Cities

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Cities will be where humankind either wins or loses the twenty-first century. Cities are where most humans live, and where nearly everyone will live just a few decades hence. Cities are where citizenship is defined, redefined, and contested. Cities generate most of the world's wealth, encourage the bulk of its innovation, and concentrate much of its poverty. Cities, finally, are where many of our civilization's greatest challenges are felt most acutely. If these challenges are to be solved during this century, the world's foreign, security, and development policy communities not only must become far more aware of the significance of global urbanization, they also must create the processes that will integrate cities more effectively into global governance structures and processes. While these communities are slowly coming around, they remain behind the curve. Cities have been building parallel global governance architectures for quite some time now. Cities now wield considerable power at global scale, at least across some domains, and will continue to increase their influence in the decades to come. As such, they have become important actors on the world stage, and are forging new patterns of transnational relations and new forms of global governance.

The role of nonstate actors in global affairs has been a subject of considerable recent interest in foreign and security policy circles, not least due to the intellectual influence of the US National Intelligence Council's *Global Trends 2030* report (released December 2012).<sup>1</sup> That report recognized that cities will be convergence points for a variety of trends, for instance through facilitating a global diffusion of power. More recently, several important documents have stressed the need to better integrate cities into interstate forms of global governance. The US Department of State's 2015 *Qua-*

The **Transatlantic Partnership for the Global Future** brings together experts from government, business, academia, and the science and technology communities to address critical global challenges and assess their effects on the future of transatlantic relations. The Partnership is a collaboration between the Brent Scowcroft Center on International Security's Strategic Foresight Initiative and the Government of Sweden. Together, we seek to make foresight actionable by connecting long-term trends to current challenges to inform policy and strategy choices.

The Strategic Foresight Initiative, which strives to forge greater cooperation on futures analysis among its main partners around the world, has rapidly become a hub for an expanding international community of strategic planners in government and the private sector.

*drennial Diplomacy and Development Review* (QDDR), for example, stressed the need for the department to build stronger relationships with cities given the "era of diffuse and networked power" in which we live.<sup>2</sup> Likewise, the Atlantic Council's first Strategy Paper, *Dynamic Stability: US Strategy for a World in Transition* (April 2015), made the case that the US government should craft partnerships with cities and other nonstate actors in pursuit of its strategic ends.<sup>3</sup>

1 National Intelligence Council, *Global Trends 2030: Alternative Worlds* (Washington, DC: National Intelligence Council, December 2012).

2 US Department of State, *2015 Quadrennial Diplomacy and Development Review: Enduring Leadership in a Dynamic World* (Washington, DC: US Department of State, April 2015).

3 Barry Pavel and Peter Engelke with Alex Ward, *Dynamic Stability: US Strategy for a World in Transition* (Washington, DC: Atlantic Council, April 2015), <http://www.atlanticcouncil.org/publications/reports/dynamic-stability-us-strategy-for-a-world-in-transition>.

This issue brief sketches the governance implications of an increasingly urbanized world.<sup>4</sup> It is premised upon several basic assertions and insights, which together lead to one conclusion: that we ignore cities at our own peril. Economically, cities produce the goods that citizens procure. Ecologically, cities are where most of the world's resources are consumed and much of its waste produced. But cities also foster power diffusion by enabling individual empowerment. Cities provide individuals with easier access to education, services, economic opportunity, and ideas. At the same time, they erode traditional social structures and build new identities, forming the conditions in which citizens become engaged in politics. City governments themselves are increasingly important nodes of power in a tiered system of global governance. If we are to realize our collective wishes for a more peaceful, democratic, just, and sustainable future, the world's cities will have to provide important means for getting us there.

## Our Demographic Destiny

Right now we are experiencing one of the most important demographic turning points in human history, at the turn of a long, rural-defined age and the beginning of an urban-defined one. Cities are ancient phenomena—long predating the nation-state—but it was not until the first decade of this century that most of the world's population lived in them. This process is not yet over: by 2100, perhaps 85 percent of all people will live in cities.<sup>5</sup> The city, in short, has become our species' permanent home.

This rural-to-urban transformation began roughly two centuries ago.<sup>6</sup> At the dawn of the Industrial Revolution around 1800, only a tiny percentage of the world's population lived in cities. But over the next century and a half, driven by industrialization and related trends, hundreds of millions of people migrated from farm and field into the city. By 1950, the share of city dwellers had risen to around thirty percent of the global population. Urbanization rates were highly uneven, with much

higher rates in Europe, Latin America, North America, and Australia than in other regions. However, between 1950 and the present, urbanization enveloped the rest of the world, with the most rapid growth shifting to Asia and Africa. Demographers now estimate that by 2050 cities will be home to two-thirds of the world's total population, and every one of the world's inhabited continents will have more people living in cities than in rural areas. In terms of absolute scale, these trends almost defy belief. Globally, cities are expected to grow by around seventy million people annually to 2050, equivalent to adding roughly thirty-five Stockholms or two Tokyos to the world every single year over that timeframe. By then, urban residents will count for 6.3 billion people out of a global population of 9 billion. That means the world's urban population in 2050 would be nearly as large as the world's total population today and about ten times the size of the world's population in 1950.

## Futures of Light and Shadow

The urbanization of our species will be a story containing elements of both light and shadow. On the one hand, the urbanization megatrend could be one of the most positive developments in human history. When functioning at their best, cities encourage trade and technical innovation, the arts and education, and social tolerance and political citizenship while imposing low burdens on local, regional, and global ecosystems.

Humankind will benefit enormously if the world's cities are built, designed, and governed to be economically productive and innovative, socially inclusive, environmentally sustainable and resilient, and safe and secure. Such cities enhance national stability and prosperity while making global governance much less difficult. However, urbanization might not lead to such a world. When functioning at their worst, cities increase the risk of political instability, make residents' lives insecure through crime and violence, encourage illicit trafficking, contribute to pandemic disease formation, and constrain national economic performance, while stressing local, national, and global ecosystems. Such cities make global governance far more difficult.

Cities exist because they facilitate human exchange. Their key contribution to humankind, whether in the distant past or today, lies in their density of people, structures, and infrastructure. Cities create physical proximity, which encourages the circulation of people, goods, and ideas. This simple fact enables the division of labor, technical and organizational innovation, the creation of institutions, and the formation of wealth and capital.<sup>7</sup>

4 In April 2013, the Atlantic Council's Strategic Foresight Initiative, in partnership with the Government of Sweden, convened a workshop to address how policymakers can come to grips with this fundamental global transformation. The author thanks the workshop's invited experts—Tim Campbell, Billy Cobbett, Reta Jo Lewis, and Jaana Remes—who informed the first edition of this issue brief.

5 Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, *The Metropolitan Century: Understanding Urbanisation and Its Consequences* (Paris: OECD, 2015), p. 20. Demographers variously refer to "urban agglomerations," "metropolitan areas," or "metropolitan regions" when describing cities. The United Nations admits that "there exists no common global definition of what constitutes an urban settlement," relying on national definitions to aggregate its global statistics. See United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs/Population Division, *World Urbanization Prospects: The 2014 Revision* (New York: United Nations, 2015), p. 4.

6 Statistics in this paragraph from United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs/Population Division 2015, pp. 7-24.

7 For a short essay on urban density, see Edward Glaeser, "Viewpoint: The Case for Dense Cities," *Urban Solution*, iss. 2, February 2013, pp. 92-5.



Shanghai's Pudong district, an embodiment of China's newfound wealth and power.  
*Photo credit: Wechselberger/Wikimedia Commons.*

As the economist Edward Glaeser, observing that per-capita incomes in the world's majority-urban societies are four times those of majority-rural societies, puts it, "urban density provides the clearest path from poverty to prosperity."<sup>8</sup> The implication is that mass urbanization not only will raise the incomes of the world's poor, it will also make the entire world wealthier. Urbanization trends are reshaping the global political economy and in so doing are altering the global balance of power. The McKinsey Global Institute has made a strong case that the rapid and historic West-to-East shift in the global economy is due in large part to East Asia's rapid urbanization. The firm forecasts that within a decade, twenty-nine of the seventy-five "most dynamic" world cities will be in China, including four of the world's top five and five of the top ten.<sup>9</sup>

Ecologically, if designed properly, cities can offer many advantages as well. People who live in well-built, well-planned, and well-functioning cities tread more lightly on the earth than those of similar means living in cities that fall short on key environmental performance metrics. For these reasons, 'green city' advocates contend that good urban design and planning can solve

the world's greatest ecological challenges.<sup>10</sup> There is compelling evidence suggesting that people who live in these cities—Vancouver, Copenhagen, and Stockholm, to name a few—also enjoy a higher quality of life owing to the healthy, livable, and green spaces they are lucky enough to inhabit.<sup>11</sup> The green city concept also is becoming an important part of economic strategies designed to attract knowledge-based industries and their skilled workforces, both of which want to settle in stable, well governed, livable, and clean places.<sup>12</sup>

But urbanization's sunny side is not guaranteed. The reality of global urbanization has brought with it some major headaches. If these problems are not dealt with adequately, the world easily might contain hundreds if not thousands of cities that fail in critical respects. Much of the world's new urban growth consists of so-called "informal settlements," a euphemism for the slums of the developing world. In 2003, the United Nations issued a landmark report on slums estimating that one billion people then lived in such places, and projected another

8 Edward Glaeser, *Triumph of the City: How Our Greatest Invention Makes Us Richer, Smarter, Greener, Healthier, and Happier* (New York, Penguin, 2011), pp. 1-7 (quotation, p. 1).

9 In the McKinsey study, "dynamism" is a combination of population, economic size, and rate of economic growth to the year 2025. See Richard Dobbs and Jaana Remes, "Introducing . . . the Most Dynamic Cities of 2025," and Elias Groll, "The East Is Rising," *Foreign Policy*, special issue, September/October 2012, pp. 63-7.

10 Nick Pennell, Sartaz Ahmed, and Stefan Henningsson, "Reinventing the City to Combat Climate Change," *strategy+business* iss 60, Autumn 2010, pp. 34-43; World Wide Fund for Nature and Booz & Company, *Reinventing the City: Three Prerequisites for Greening Urban Infrastructure* (Gland, Switzerland: World Wide Fund for Nature and Booz & Company, March 2010), [http://awsassets.panda.org/downloads/wwf\\_low\\_carbon\\_cities\\_final\\_2012.pdf](http://awsassets.panda.org/downloads/wwf_low_carbon_cities_final_2012.pdf).

11 That green cities provide a higher quality of life is now an axiomatic proposition among those who study cities. See, e.g., Economist Intelligence Unit, *The Green City Index: A Summary of the Green City Index Research Series* (Munich: Siemens AG, 2012).

12 For an introduction to this topic, see Stephen Hammer et al., *Cities and Green Growth: A Conceptual Framework*, OECD Regional Development Working Papers, no. 2011/08 (Paris: OECD, 2011).



View from Rocinha, Rio de Janeiro's largest *favela*. Photo credit: Chensiyuan/Wikimedia Commons.

billion would be added by 2030.<sup>13</sup> These figures remain the most widely cited statistics, but the reality is that no one knows exactly how many people live in slums, nor how many slums there are in the first place.<sup>14</sup> All agree, however, that having so many people living in slums is a path to disaster. In these conditions, criminals and organized terror networks more easily traffic in drugs, humans, arms, and instruments of terror, while communicable diseases may find easier pathways to form and spread quickly into pandemics. Slum dwellers themselves are not the problem. But poor planning and governance of cities—including the failure to positively engage slum-dwellers—will leave behind a huge and growing urban underclass in many cities around the world.<sup>15</sup>

At the same time, the wealth that follows urbanization also generates its own set of problems. The urbanization of our species is lifting hundreds of millions, even billions, into the global urban middle class. This growing wealth is a good thing, but it also has an enormous downside in the form of increasing energy, water, food, commodities, and goods consumption. These things have to come from somewhere, and the waste involved in making and consuming them has to go somewhere.

13 United Nations Human Settlements Programme, *The Challenge of Slums: Global Report on Human Settlements 2003* (London: Earthscan, 2003), p. xxv.

14 Mike Davis, author of a widely-read book on the subject, estimated in 2006 that some 200,000 slums exist on Earth. See Mike Davis, *Planet of Slums* (New York: Versa, 2006), p. 26.

15 For an absorbing but unsettling read on this subject, see P.H. Liotta and James F. Miskel, *The Real Population Bomb: Megacities, Global Security & the Map of the Future* (Dulles, VA.: Potomac Books, 2012). On the urban fragility/state fragility question, see Stephen Commins, "Urban Fragility and Security in Africa," *Africa Security Brief* no. 12, April 2011, pp. 1-7.

China's experience is illustrative. As China has gotten rich through urbanizing, it has also created a wholly unsustainable future for itself and the world. China's urbanization has created an insatiable appetite for more energy, water, and consumer goods. In so doing, China has fouled its air and rivers and become the world's largest carbon dioxide emitter.<sup>16</sup>

Put simply, cities create the global middle class, which in turn claws at the world's resources. To counter this fact, cities must be designed and built in ways that preserve and enhance the virtues of urban life while minimizing the use of land, water, energy, and other resources. Humanity's grandest challenge, therefore, might be thought of as a race between how fast the growing global urban middle class increases resource consumption and how quickly we can create resource-efficient cities.

Finally, cities should be thought of as the physical spaces where humanity's diverse currents intersect. Cities create and recreate social and economic inequalities. They are cultural mixing bowls, where the traditional and the modern, the old and the young, and the established and the avant-garde all clash and recombine, resulting in new forms of cultural expression and types of social relationships.<sup>17</sup> Most importantly, because cities concentrate people into small spaces (thereby facilitating the exchange of views and lowering the cost of organizing),

16 On the scale of China's urban transformation, see Thomas J. Campanella, *The Concrete Dragon: China's Urban Revolution and What It Means for the World* (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 2008).

17 For an illustrative essay on urbanization's effects on social relationships, see Cecilia Tacoli and David Satterthwaite, "Gender and Urban Change," *Environment and Urbanization* vol. 25, no. 1, April 2013, pp. 3-8, <http://eau.sagepub.com/content/25/1/3.full>.



Protesters flood Cairo's Tahrir Square, an urban epicenter of the Arab transitions. *Photo credit:* Ahmed Abd El-Fatah/Flickr.

they create a massed citizenry and an urbanized politics. Over just the past few years, urbanized citizenries have called national governments and even the state itself into question. Writing not long after the Arab Spring, the scholar Daniel Serwer observed that “the narrative of Arab revolution reads like a tale of many cities,” arguing that cities were the sites for nearly all the early mass demonstrations in the Middle East and North Africa.<sup>18</sup> In a social media-fueled age, local issues can become national ones with alarming speed, in turn sparking copycat performances around the world. Since 2013, for instance, networked urbanites have driven mass demonstrations in Turkey, Brazil, Hong Kong, and Lebanon. In all these cases, classic issues of local governance (preservation in Istanbul, bus fares in Brazil, elections in Hong Kong, garbage service in Beirut) swiftly became symbols for long-standing, larger grievances about national governance. All escalated into serious challenges to state authority and competence.<sup>19</sup>

## Westphalia Revisited

The Westphalian state system, the theoretical basis of international politics since 1648, is premised upon several

18 Daniel Serwer, “Revolution: An Urban Phenomenon?,” *SAISPHERE 2012-2013*, 2012, pp. 32-35 (quotation, p. 33).

19 Regina Mennig, “Middle Class Revolts in Turkey and Brazil,” *Deutsche Welle*, June 26, 2013, <http://www.dw.de/middle-class-revolts-in-turkey-andbrazil/a-16908025>; Max Fisher, “Hong Kong’s Unprecedented Protests and Police Crackdown, Explained,” *Vox*, September 28, 2014, <http://www.vox.com/2014/9/28/6856621/hong-kong-protests-clashes-china-explainer/in/6655132>; Zeina Karam, “Lebanon Police Clash with Protesters Again over Trash Crisis,” *ABC News*, September 16, 2015, <http://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/lebanese-police-beat-back-protesters-ahead-talks-33794588>.

core principles, including state sovereignty, territorial integrity, and the inviolability of national boundaries. Above all, it privileges the nation-state as the central actor in global affairs. This system and these core principles are now under considerable stress. For decades, supranational actors such as the United Nations (UN) and European Union have nibbled at its edges. More recently, as the *Global Trends 2030* report outlines, sub-national actors have taken huge bites out of it as well. It is perhaps most accurate to describe the world we now inhabit as a *Westphalian-Plus* system, wherein technologically savvy individuals, globally-oriented nongovernmental organizations, powerful multinational firms, and sub-national political actors like cities join with nation-states in building (or, in many cases, tearing down) global governance architectures.<sup>20</sup>

Michael Bloomberg, former Mayor of New York City, is among the best examples of a world leader who has been at the vanguard of this transformation. Along with mayors from the world’s largest cities, then-Mayor Bloomberg helped lead the C40 Cities Climate Leadership Group, an ongoing initiative designed to find actionable solutions to the climate change problem through the sharing of megacity best practices.<sup>21</sup> C40’s very existence is evidence of the failure of the interstate climate negotiation process (i.e., United Nations) to produce a workable climate stabilization regime. C40 also provides a concrete illustration of how mayors

20 The Westphalian-Plus model is described in Barry Pavel and Peter Engelke with Alex Ward, *Dynamic Stability: US Strategy for a World in Transition* (Washington, DC: Atlantic Council, April 2015), <http://www.atlanticcouncil.org/publications/reports/dynamic-stability-us-strategy-for-a-world-in-transition>.

21 On C40, see <http://www.c40.org/about>.



New York's Mayor Michael Bloomberg speaks to assembled media at a C40 Cities conference, Rio de Janeiro, June 2012. *Photo credit: C40 Cities/Flickr.*

are willing to address problems that have escaped the capabilities of the interstate system.<sup>22</sup> The political scientist Benjamin Barber, author of *If Mayors Ruled the World*, has argued for years that this willingness reflects an “inherent disposition of cities to cooperate” with one another in order to solve problems through the sharing of best practices.<sup>23</sup> This insight contrasts with interstate negotiations, which appear to move in slow motion if at all, often owing to intractable geopolitical, economic, or ideological disputes among and between states. Implicit is the idea that the realities of daily life in cities force mayors to develop workable solutions to practical challenges. “Cities are the real laboratories of democracy,” Bloomberg has said, “because voters expect local leaders to be problem-solvers, not debaters.”<sup>24</sup> Mayors have a strong incentive to identify and adopt policy innovations that have proven successful in other places, including from abroad. C40 has embodied this spirit, emphasizing learning and policy transfer rather than the tedious negotiation of complex multilateral documents.

22 Michele Acuto and Parag Khanna, “Around the World, Mayors Take Charge,” *Atlantic*, April 26, 2013, <http://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2013/04/around-the-world-mayors-take-charge/275335/>.

23 Quoted in Richard Florida, “Next Great Idea: What If Mayors Ruled the World?,” *CityLab*, June 13, 2012, <http://www.citylab.com/politics/2012/06/what-if-mayors-ruled-world/1505/>.

24 “City Statesman: A Conversation with Michael Bloomberg,” *SAISPHERE 2012-2013*, 2012, p. 15.

C40 and analogous organizations (including, for example, the Barcelona-based United Cities and Local Governments) highlight an important trend in global governance, which is the formation of an increasingly self-aware and assertive form of city-based global leadership.<sup>25</sup> While city leaders complain that their global leadership is neither fully recognized nor appreciated among the world’s nation-states, time is clearly on their side. Mayors understand the world’s shifting demographics and its trending economics, both of which are in their favor. (To provide one striking statistic, if the New York metropolitan area were a country, it would be the thirteenth-largest economy in the world, ahead of South Korea, Mexico, and Spain.)<sup>26</sup> Aware of this clout, the world’s mayors have forced their way into the global conversation, and cities’ growing power ensures that the interstate system will have to accommodate them over time. Some observers suggest that that time is already here. “As cities continue to arrogate major diplomatic and economic functions,” the authors Michele Acuto and Parag Khanna once asked, “should we still be talking about international relations?”<sup>27</sup>

25 On United Cities and Local Governments, see <http://www.uclg.org/en/organisation/about>.

26 The United States Conference of Mayors, *U.S. Metro Economies: GMP and Employment 2013-2015* (Washington, DC: United States Conference of Mayors, June 2015), p. 2, <http://usmayors.org/metroeconomies/2014/06/report.pdf>.

27 Michele Acuto and Parag Khanna, “Nations Are No Longer Driving Globalization—Cities Are,” *Quartz*, May 3, 2013, <http://qz.com/80657/the-return-of-the-city-state/>.

Some precaution is justified. When it comes to global governance and security, the interstate system provides core public goods that cities cannot do without. Interstate governance frees mayors and other local leaders from having to worry about different forms of insecurity such as foreign invasion, high-seas piracy, or management of the global commons. If the world consisted only of city-states, mayors would have to handle these issues, and the outcome might be no better than what our current system provides.<sup>28</sup> Singapore, the world's only sizable city-state, has to plan for defense like any other country. Without a national cocoon, the city of Singapore is fully exposed to the international state system. It is thus forced to act like other states, forging military alliances with other countries and developing "the best-equipped [military] in Southeast Asia," complete with an advanced air force, navy, and army. East Asia's recent diplomatic tensions are forcing Singapore to expand this arsenal as part of a regional naval buildup.<sup>29</sup>

## Foreign Policy for an Urban World

Theoretical debates aside, the transnational processes described here represent the leading edges of attempts to revamp the global governance system to fit the realities of this century. A central question for national governments will be whether they can recognize this phenomenon's significance and build structures to take advantage of it. To begin building a foreign policy for this urban world, policymakers should work through several pathways.

### *Embrace the City's Legitimacy and Importance*

The first step is for national governments to recognize and accept that cities are a country's jewels and deserve to be treated as such. If built and governed correctly, cities provide critical economic, political, social, and ecological benefits. They also are not going anywhere. National governments should recognize that prioritizing cities' ongoing development and refinement is a recipe for building more secure, prosperous, sustainable, and resilient societies.

A corollary is the need to enhance the role and profile of local government within national governance systems. In many countries, rapidly growing cities continue to be viewed with suspicion, and rural interests continue to

outweigh urban ones in national parliaments, despite demographic shifts. As odd as this observation may seem, it nonetheless carries much truth. Although the number is declining, national governments in the global south often have policies designed to slow the rate of urbanization.<sup>30</sup> Yet urbanization will continue to occur regardless of how governments feel about it. As the academics David Bloom and Tarun Khanna write, it is "more important to plan for and adapt to increasing urbanization . . . than to attempt to prevent it."<sup>31</sup>

National governments can facilitate healthy urban development. Where local governance is weak, national governments can provide financial and institutional support for building expertise and governance capacity in city planning and related technical areas. In so doing, national support paradoxically might require the devolution of some powers to local governments. National governments can help strengthen local financing systems, for instance, and allow local governments to keep a larger share of tax revenues. National support must also include smart investments in the infrastructure that cities need, including utilities and transport linkages (ports, airports, and intercity connections) as well as green infrastructure that protects ecosystems while providing usable public services. National governments can hasten the adoption of 'smart city' systems, which use information and communications technologies to deliver urban public services more effectively at much lower cost. In September 2015, for example, the Obama administration announced a \$160 million smart cities public-private partnership designed to boost local use of smart city technologies in areas ranging from traffic congestion to policing to service delivery.<sup>32</sup> Major multinational firms have been fully engaged in this space for some time.<sup>33</sup> Finally, national governments can provide security assistance to local governments at critical moments, as when a local government becomes overwhelmed by organized criminal or terror networks.

### *Facilitate Policy Learning and Transfer*

City leaders see their participation in global affairs in positive-sum terms, where dialogue is about coop-

28 A fuller explication of this argument can be found in Peter Engelke, "Why Cities Still Need Nations (and Vice Versa)," *Meeting of the Minds*, July 11, 2013, <http://cityminded.org/why-cities-still-need-nations-and-vice-versa-8117>.

29 Quotation in Agence France-Press, "Singapore in 'Final Stages' of Evaluating F-35," *Defense News*, March 10, 2013, <http://archive.defensenews.com/article/20130312/DEFREG03/303120009/Singapore-8216-Final-Stages-8217-Evaluating-F-35>. On the regional buildup, see Wendell Minnick and Paul Kallender-Umezu, "Special Report: Asia-Pacific Spending Spree," *Defense News*, April 21, 2013, <http://archive.defensenews.com/article/20130421/DEFREG03/304210004/Special-Report-Asia-Pacific-Spending-Spree>.

30 Thanks to Billy Cobbett for these insights.

31 David E. Bloom and Tarun Khanna, "The Urban Revolution," *Finance & Development*, September 2007, pp. 9-14 (quotation, p. 13).

32 White House Office of the Press Secretary, "FACT SHEET: Administration Announces New 'Smart Cities' Initiative to Help Communities Tackle Local Challenges and Improve City Services," September 14, 2015, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2015/09/14/fact-sheet-administration-announces-new-smart-cities-initiative-help>.

33 Marjorie Censer, "A Smarter Way to Manage Cities," *Washington Post*, May 20, 2013, A10; Mark Fischetti, "The Efficient City," *Scientific American*, special issue, September 2011, pp. 74-5. Private sector firms engaged in smart cities are too numerous to list. A few of the major companies involved include IBM, Cisco, pwc, Arup, Siemens, and Qualcomm.

eration, exchange, trade, and mutual gain rather than conflict management. Tim Campbell, author of *Beyond Smart Cities*, stresses the significance of intercity learning as among the best methods the world has to transfer innovative and productive practices and techniques from one society to another. According to Campbell, the world's "learning cities" value the "deliberate and systematic acquisition of knowledge" and actively build transnational partnerships to adapt policy innovation from elsewhere.<sup>34</sup>

Unfortunately, despite the gains to be realized, cities do not engage in these exchanges as often as they could or should, a reluctance driven by a combination of financial, political, cultural, technical, and other constraints. Regardless of the cause, this is a sub-optimal situation for themselves, their countries, and the world writ large. National governments can step into this breach and play an important role through financial and institutional support mechanisms that facilitate intercity learning and best-practice policy transfer.

Nation-states have much to gain in this context. Cities help create and solidify national reputations abroad (what Barcelona is to Spain, for example, or what Dubai is to the United Arab Emirates). Investing in city-to-city exchanges and international forums focused on urban issues enables a country, through its cities, to show itself off. Additionally, such support demonstrates a country's engagement with critical global issues. One example is Sweden's SymbioCity platform, which is a public-private partnership that "promotes an integrated, holistic, and multidisciplinary approach to sustainable urban development" through taking advantage of Sweden's "knowledge and experience in working toward urban sustainability."<sup>35</sup> Swedish foreign policymakers highlight this platform as an example of Swedish innovation, technical know-how, and global goodwill. With a focus on developing countries, the government works with local partners using the SymbioCity model, in the process providing Swedish firms with access to foreign markets.<sup>36</sup> The platform therefore constitutes a form of Swedish soft power as well as a tool for advancing the country's economic interests abroad.

### *Build Cities into Governance Architecture*

National governments and intergovernmental organizations should reform institutional structures to reflect the

34 Tim Campbell, *Beyond Smart Cities: How Cities Network, Learn and Innovate* (New York: Earthscan, 2012), chapter 1 (quotation, p. 4).

35 Ulf Ranhagen and Klas Groth, *The SymbioCity Approach: A Conceptual Framework for Sustainable Urban Development* (Stockholm: SKL International, 2012), pp. 9, 11, [http://sklinternational.se/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2012/09/SCA\\_full-version\\_light-120822.pdf](http://sklinternational.se/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2012/09/SCA_full-version_light-120822.pdf).

36 *Ibid.*, pp. 8-14. See also SymbioCity, <http://symbiocity.org/en/approach/>.

world's shifting demographics, avoid blind spots, and take maximum advantage of the urbanization of our species:

- Foreign ministries can begin by publicly highlighting the importance of cities as demographic and economic centers and as actors who participate in global governance. The State Department's 2015 QDDR is a fitting example, a document signaling that cities ought to be important elements within State's diplomatic firmament. Foreign ministries can reposition their on-the-ground staffing and resources, which prioritize diplomatic staffing according to an interstate rather than intercity logic. In the diplomatic arena, national capitals carry far more weight than other cities, despite the fact that non-capital cities can have greater demographic and economic clout than national capitals.<sup>37</sup> Shanghai, Istanbul, Mumbai, Karachi, São Paulo, Johannesburg, Sydney, Montreal, New York, and Johannesburg are all examples of powerful non-capital cities. Further, in a reversal of the typical jurisdictional relationship, as a matter of routine, foreign ministries should embed officers in domestic city councils. Doing so not only would enhance foreign ministries' understanding of the local-to-global equation, it would provide them with highly useful contacts and other resources for their own purposes.<sup>38</sup>
- National security organizations should recognize that the core of the global security challenge has shifted to cities. Planning for possible military and security operations conducted in complex urban environments is a significant national security challenge. To best avoid urban conflict, security organizations will have to develop a sophisticated understanding of cities and their residents, which will require working closely with local political leaders and urban development experts. Security organizations that possess significant air- and sealift capacity and other assets such as rapid response capabilities (e.g., US Navy, Coast Guard, and Marines) will increasingly be needed to support disaster relief operations in cities. Their participation in such operations likely will become more necessary as weather becomes more extreme owing to climate change and as larger numbers of people live in vulnerable low-lying coastal cities.

There is much interest in the urban security equation in a good many places around the world, driven by an awareness of the basic demographic equation as well as a richer understanding of the problems facing many of the world's cities, in particular the rapidly-growing cities of the global

37 This point is made in Richard Dobbs et al., *Urban world: Mapping the Economic Power of Cities* (San Francisco: McKinsey & Company, March 2011), p. 2. The author thanks Reta Jo Lewis for a similar insight.

38 The latter recommendation is made in Roxanne Cabral, Peter Engelke, Katherine Brown, and Anne Terman Wedner, *Diplomacy for a Diffuse World* (Washington, DC: Atlantic Council, September 2014), p. 4.



Coastal New Jersey after Hurricane Sandy. Much of the world's urban population now lives in similarly vulnerable coastal zones. Photo credit: Greg Thompson, USFWS/Flickr.

south. David Kilcullen's excellent if disconcerting book, *Out of the Mountains*, on the emergence of urban-based terror networks, is the best-known example of a new genre of work in this space.<sup>39</sup> In 2014, the US Army got into the act, issuing a well-written and well-received work on megacities and ground warfare.<sup>40</sup> While such documents represent a welcome addition to the literature on security in the world's cities, actually solving problems of urban insecurity will require sustained and coordinated attention from diverse stakeholders, hard security organizations included.<sup>41</sup>

- Domestic and international aid agencies will have to give urban development as much emphasis as rural development. Until recently, development agencies defined development as a rural exercise with agricultural modernization at its core. Urbanists had to combat the notion that the city itself was just a sector, therefore deserving of little more than attention by a few technical specialists. Such

views not only missed the basic demographic reality that global poverty was rapidly transforming into an urban phenomenon. They also created an unfortunate institutional result wherein aid agencies fought intense rural-versus-urban battles that glossed over the reality that urban and rural are joined at the hip. For example, agricultural modernization creates surplus rural laborers who are forced to migrate to cities. Wages earned by these newly-arrived urban workers find their way back to villages as remittances, raising the incomes of the remaining villagers and thereby contributing to rural development.<sup>42</sup>

Yet, as in the security arena, there are signs of much progress in the development arena too. The World Bank, for example, is now at the point where it considers urban development as a keystone element of its broader development agenda.<sup>43</sup> In 2013, USAID issued a comprehensive urban policy that attempted to move the organization beyond "an artificial urban-rural dichotomy" through a focus on treating rural-urban linkages as an "interdepen-

39 David Kilcullen, *Out of the Mountains: The Coming Age of the Urban Guerrilla* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013).

40 US Army, Chief of Staff, Strategic Studies Group, *Megacities and the United States Army: Preparing for a Complex and Uncertain Future* (Arlington, VA: US Army, June 2014), <http://usarmy.vo.llnwd.net/e2/c/downloads/351235.pdf>.

41 Peter Engelke and Magnus Nordenman, "Megacity Slums and Urban Insecurity," International Relations and Security Network/ETH Zurich, January 22, 2014, <http://www.isn.ethz.ch/Digital-Library/Articles/Detail/?id=175893>.

42 On this rural-urban-rural migratory interface, see especially Doug Saunders, *Arrival City: How the Largest Migration in History Is Reshaping Our World* (New York: Pantheon, 2011).

43 World Bank, "Urban Development," <http://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/urbandevelopment>.

dent system.”<sup>44</sup> However, despite the public release of this policy and the intellectual strength of this appeal, USAID’s dedicated urban work remains hamstrung by severe funding limitations and a miniscule staff.

- As institutions built to advance global and regional governance, multilateral organizations such as the United Nations occupy a unique and important niche within the international order. As such, they should play a more significant role in advancing a pro-urban agenda around the world. As of this writing, the UN is on the verge of finalizing its long-awaited Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the set of aspirational goals that will run to 2030 and that will replace the expiring Millennium Development Goals. After years of lobbying by a dedicated, urban-based, global civil society, the SDGs will include a city-specific goal (SDG 11), to “Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable.”<sup>45</sup> While SDG 11’s title is innocuous, its advocates consider it a watershed, for SDG 11 elevates cities to the highest level of the global development agenda. In so doing, it validates years of effort by urbanists to have cities taken more seriously within the UN system.<sup>46</sup>
- More prosaically, multilateral organizations can assist with standardized data collection. Multilateral organizations such as the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, UN, Inter-American Development Bank, and World Bank can coordinate transnational urban-based data collection. An example is the Global City Indicators Facility (GCIF), a public-private partnership that collects data from member cities using a globally standardized methodology.<sup>47</sup> Another is the Compact of Mayors, launched by the UN, Bloomberg (appointed the UN’s Special Envoy for Cities and Climate Change), and global civil society organizations including C40. As with GCIF, the Compact aims to standardize data measurement, in this case of urban emissions and climate risk.<sup>48</sup> Such data are especially valuable for comparing basic urban metrics across national contexts, e.g., emissions, demographics, transportation patterns, and economic performance.

The world’s foreign, security, and development policy communities have yet to grasp the full significance of urbanization, although this brief has suggested that real change is afoot. Perhaps their reluctance has had to do with the long shadow cast by the centuries-old Westphalian system, which privileges the state in international affairs. Perhaps it has had to do with the distinction between high politics (involving the state’s survival) and low politics (everything else). Whatever the case, the current system reserves diplomacy for nation-states and their designated representatives only. Yet the twenty-first century is unlikely to resemble the past in important respects, not least of which is that cities and other powerful nonstate actors will join with states (or, often, combat states) to form a Westphalian-Plus architecture of global governance. How states adapt to this shifting reality will go far in determining whether the twenty-first century’s greatest challenges will be overcome or not.

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44 United States Agency for International Development, *Sustainable Service Delivery in an Increasingly Urbanized World* (Washington, DC: USAID, October 2013), p. 1, <http://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/documents/1870/USAIDSustainableUrbanServicesPolicy.pdf>.

45 United Nations General Assembly, *Draft Outcome Document of the United Nations Summit for the Adoption of the Post-2015 Development Agenda* (New York: United Nations General Assembly, August 12, 2015), [http://www.un.org/ga/search/view\\_doc.asp?symbol=A/69/L.85&Lang=E](http://www.un.org/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A/69/L.85&Lang=E).

46 A summary of global civil society’s push for SDG 11 can be found at <http://urbansdg.org/>.

47 Global City Institute, Global City Indicators Facility, <http://www.cityindicators.org/Default.aspx>.

48 Compact of Mayors, <http://www.compactofmayors.org/history/>.

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