

Article

Democracies' Discontents: Where Do We Go From Here?

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Abstract

The international order founded on principles of democracy and human rights is facing renewed threats from a declining West, rising authoritarians and ambivalent swing states oriented more to traditional concepts of sovereignty and noninterference. Five middle powers – Brazil, India, Turkey, Indonesia and South Africa – once stood out for their potential as examples of democratization and economic expansion at home and as responsible stewards of global governance. Recent trends, however, are troubling. A renewed effort to find common ground among established and rising democracies on an international democracy and human rights agenda would help stabilize current setbacks, but it will take time.

Keywords

Rising Powers, Democracy, Human Rights, Global Governance, International Order

During the heyday of the global South's rise from autocracy and dictatorship to democratization and prosperity, optimism grew that countries like Brazil, India, South Africa, Turkey and Indonesia would become active defenders of the international liberal order. Experts and diplomats from North and South (this author included) had good reason to be sanguine: these states, and others like them (Mexico, South Korea, Poland, Chile), had emerged from closed repressive systems and rocky transitions to a decent measure of democratic peace, economic growth and human development, progress that signaled a clear break from the past. They proudly brought their newfound credentials as middle power democracies to the world stage and leveraged this status for other campaigns like a seat on the UN Security Council or hosting of the Olympics; they also used their hard-won progress to elevate their role as regional leaders and to attract foreign investment. Their development as diverse societies from every region of the world, organized around the core principles of democracy and human rights, served as powerful symbols of the universal appeal of the international liberal

order. It also gave rise to projections that these states could buttress this order through greater leadership at the United Nations and other international bodies as advocates for a more balanced approach to protection of human rights.¹

More recently, however, the varnish of democratic progress has worn thin and the foundation on which these hopes were based has cracked. Why have these rising democracies fallen off track from their earlier, more positive trends? Can they recover enough momentum of progressive change to propel them toward being net contributors and reformers of an international order that seriously tackles the most pressing human rights and humanitarian crises facing the planet? If so, is the political will and capacity, in government and civil society, strong enough to update their foreign policies to meet the competing challenges of a declining West, a resurgent China and Russia, and a global democratic recession? With the alarming spread of illiberalism and nationalism in Europe and the United States, alongside the rise of Putin, can these states help fill the gap to sustain the hard-fought gains of the post-Cold War era? Finally, are there a set of priority issues in which South and North democracies can work together to effect meaningful progress toward respect for human rights?

The Power of Examples, Good and Bad

When India, the world's largest democracy with 1.2 billion citizens, 122 languages and hundreds of recognized castes and tribes, organized another round of free and fair elections in 2014, voters decisively chose the opposition coalition led by Narendra Modi of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP). As Prime Minister, Modi was quick to address the pressing demands for economic growth and employment for its 800 million citizens under the age of thirty-five, proclaiming India as an inevitable success story worth betting on. In foreign policy, Modi embarked on a frenetic pace of globe-trotting, particularly in India's immediate neighborhood, as a messenger of the multicultural values, democratic principles and economic dynamism that would position India as "a leading power, rather than just a balancing power...willing[] to shoulder greater global responsibilities," according to his Foreign Secretary Subrahmanyam Jaishankar (Jaishankar 2015).

Indian leaders of various stripes recognize that their quest for greater leadership on the world stage depends on addressing their deep and complex problems at home, from widespread poverty and endemic corruption to discrimination and violence against women and "untouchables." Under Modi's pro-Hindu orientation, however, religious-inspired violence against Muslims and other groups has gotten worse while nationalist fervor has unleashed crackdowns against secular and internationalist actors. A joint letter to Modi from 144 NGOs in May 2015

¹ For a collection of related essays on this topic, see SUR: International Journal on Human Rights (2013), and Carothers and Youngs (2016).

accused the government, *inter alia*, of freezing funds, using intelligence reports to denigrate NGOs and stoking “an atmosphere of State coercion and intimidation in India’s civil society space” (letter, 8 May 2015). In August 2016, a complaint of sedition was filed against Amnesty International India by a right-wing student group offended by so-called “anti-India” signs at an event protesting human rights violations by Indian security forces in India-controlled Kashmir.² Ongoing concern about the impunity Indian law allows its security forces engaged in Kashmir and in putting down other insurgencies in northeast India further diminish India’s credibility as a voice for fundamental rights.

These problems, however, are not insurmountable obstacles to India’s growing aspirations for global leadership. With strong institutions, competitive multi-party elections, independent media and activists pressuring government officials to improve their rights record at home, India has the hardware and software gradually to close the gap between its domestic and foreign policies in a way that would allow India to punch at rather than below its weight. The Modi government’s decision to accelerate India’s insertion into the global economy and assert leadership in its near abroad also point in the direction of more responsible stewardship of the commons. The question remains, however, whether India will emerge as a responsible global stakeholder willing to uphold universal values of pluralism, tolerance and rule of law – values that its own “unity in diversity” credo reflects – or will hew to a more realist line with no serious regard for either the intrinsic or instrumental values of human rights and democracy in its foreign policy.

On the other end of the spectrum sits Turkey, once heralded as an inspiring model of the compatibility of political Islam and democracy. For nearly a decade, Turkey made steady progress under the Justice and Development Party (Adalet ve Kalkinma Partisi or AKP) led by then Prime Minister (now President) Tayyip Erdogan. Erdogan rose to power on a campaign to end corruption and poverty and delivered positive results after his party won an absolute majority in the National Assembly in 2002. With an eye on future European Union membership, the AKP government passed laws relaxing restrictions on freedom of expression and dramatically cut down the role of the military in politics. A rigorous economic stabilization program, aided by strong political support from a more stable parliamentary majority and assistance from the International Monetary Fund, reduced public debt and inflation and raised the fiscal surplus. For the next decade, the Turkish economy grew by an unprecedented 253 percent, lifting millions of Turks into the middle class with improved access to health care and better education. Turkey also began positioning itself as a leader in its neighborhood willing to spend political capital to speak out for democracy and human rights. This more

² In an unrelated case, the Supreme Court of India reiterated its view that strong criticism of the government is neither defamatory nor seditious if it does not incite violence or is intended to create public disorder (Anand 2016).

activist approach reached a peak during the turmoil of the Arab spring when then Foreign Minister Davutoglu declared that “long-term stability [in the region] will be granted only if there is a new consensual relation between leaders, state and citizens,” and decried the short-term thinking that favors authoritarian stability over democratic change (Davutoglu 2013, p. 14-16).

Over time, however, Erdogan’s autocratic tendencies got the better of him as evidenced by ongoing and successful efforts to centralize authority, weaken checks and balances, politicize the judiciary and take harsh measures against opponents in the media, civil society and the military. More recently, Erdogan effectively used the July 2016 attempted military coup (apparently inspired, at least in part, by the Gulenist movement (Filkins 2016)) to rally both his supporters and opponents around the principles of civilian-led democracy. He also seized the opportunity to clamp down even further against suspected “collaborators” in and outside of the military and renewed state repression of the Kurdish political opposition which he earlier had accepted as legitimate negotiating partners. As a result, Turkey’s once lauded if inflated potential as a democratic example for other Muslim societies has been badly if not irreparably tarnished. These developments dramatically have derailed its ambitions to be a force for positive change in its near abroad. Through a series of avoidable missteps and events out of its control, Ankara has maneuvered itself out of any position of real influence when it comes to its mission to build a more stable and democratic neighborhood. Faced with a rise in terrorist attacks on its own soil, a devastating war along its border with Syria, a determined Kurdish opposition gaining ground politically at home and territorially in Syria and Iraq, and riven by its own civil-military-religious divisions, Turkey can no longer claim to play a leadership role in matters of supporting the international liberal order.

In between these two emblematic cases of developing democracies’ aspirations for international leadership sit several others that on balance are discouraging, if not exhausted, examples of this genre of middle power actors. Brazil stands out for its sadly diminished state of affairs. In just the last four years, Brazil has fallen from being one of the world’s fastest-growing economies with impressive drops in poverty rates and a growing middle class to a country mired in deepening recession and unemployment, rising inflation and interest rates and a slew of scandalous corruption trials against its economic and political elite. The dubious impeachment of its elected leftist president, Dilma Rousseff, in August 2016, and elevation of her business friendly and unpopular number two to the presidential palace, was the crowning thorn in this soap opera tragedy. That said, Brazil may yet recover its footing if one considers the solid role played by its increasingly professional judiciary and the handling of Rousseff’s impeachment through constitutional rather than extralegal proceedings. Either way, it will take some time

before Brazil can climb out of its domestic morass and restore its luster as a major player on the international stage willing to continue to express a clear preference for some if not all principles of the international liberal order.

South Africa, sub-Saharan Africa's largest economy, is facing similar if less dire challenges on the home front, leading to a declining reputation both regionally and beyond. The highly praised transition from apartheid to multiracial democracy in the 1990s under the leadership of Nelson Mandela fed expectations that South Africa could become not only a beacon of peaceful change on the African continent but an activist leader encouraging other African leaders to reform. More recently, however, the dominance of the African National Congress has slowed down real political change in the country and corruption charges against President Jacob Zuma and members of his cabinet have accelerated the slide toward democratic despotism. Voters frustrated by the country's declining economic fortunes, crony capitalism, rising crime and declining public services have started shifting their sights to other vehicles for change, which may help to revitalize South Africa's political competition and lead to better governance results. In foreign policy terms, South Africa has made a clear move away from Mandela's human rights-oriented approach toward downplaying any real concern in this regard, preferring instead to improve relations with China and Russia as a member of the BRICS and to play the role of mediator in settling African conflicts. It is also quick to sidestep or oppose initiatives at the United Nations that would expand international action on human rights, whether on thematic issues like protection of civil society or LGBT rights or country-specific matters like Myanmar and Zimbabwe.

A slightly more hopeful case can be found in Indonesia which, like India, offers a compelling example of a large, diverse and modernizing society committed to governing itself based on principles of representative democracy, pluralism and moderation. As the world's largest Muslim-majority democracy, its appeal is particularly attractive in an era of profound turbulence within the global Islamic community. With economic growth rates holding steady between four and five percent a year since 1998, an expanding middle class and a vibrant social media environment, Indonesia has proven to be a positive example of both economic and political liberalization in an otherwise stagnant southeast Asia. Its influence in building a stronger international liberal order, however, is limited by a host of domestic and external factors that may ultimately position Indonesia as a constructive but underwhelming player. These include widespread corruption, rising inequality, questionable reliance on torture and the death penalty and an entrenched reluctance to take sides internationally when democracy and human rights are threatened, even in dire cases like North Korea and Iran. Its own violent extremism linked to radical Islam, though mainly contained, has dampened any

overt effort to get involved in the post Arab spring turmoil, holding close to its traditional noninterference doctrine. President Jokowi, who rose from outside the traditional elite to win election in 2014, so far has demonstrated little willingness to build on his predecessor's more internationalist policy gains, choosing instead to focus on maritime security and "people-centered" issues like migrant workers.

What Do Middle Power Democracies Want?

Where does this mixed picture leave us when it comes to evaluating the fate of the international liberal order? This question is not an academic one: with Europe in economic and political crisis, the United States in turmoil over its dysfunctional political system, and China and Russia exploiting opportunities to defend and advance their own anti-democratic positions, the role of middle power democracies has a direct bearing on whether the democracy and human rights progress of the last several decades can continue. In the current climate of rising terrorist violence; metastasizing civil wars in Afghanistan, Iraq, Ukraine and Syria; growing instability in the Asia-Pacific region over China's claims in the South China Sea and nuclear North Korea's provocative actions, the need for international cooperation among a core group of capable democratic states invested in strengthening a system of law, peace and diplomacy is greater now than in decades. Will these and other emerging democratic powers step up to meet these challenges, which are at root problems of democratic governance and human rights? Or will they turn further inward as they tackle their own compelling demands for change at home?

Other than perhaps India, which has articulated a clear desire to expand its role in its region and beyond, most of the middle power democracies will be preoccupied for some years to come with their own domestic problems. In part, this is a natural consequence of their dual status as both developing countries and as democracies. Democratic leaders, if they want to get re-elected, don't have the luxury of ignoring their constituencies at home to engage in risky and potentially costly adventures abroad. And their ability to play leading roles internationally does depend on the health of their economies and societies generally.

This argument, however, only goes so far. After all, it was the wave of globalization that these countries rode to make such dramatic progress in their own development. And they remain heavily dependent on the network of international trade agreements, unimpeded energy flows, foreign direct investment, migration and remittances, and other features of the global order for their continued success. It is in their self-interest, therefore, to protect their investments in a more open and rules-bound global order. It should come as little surprise, then, that charges of free-loading get tossed about, even from the usually gracious outgoing occupant of the White House (Goldberg 2016). There is some merit to the allegation.

Other than a solid contribution toward troop contributions for UN peacekeeping operations on the part of India, Indonesia, South Africa and Brazil, these states are underperforming as contributors to other aspects of the international order, for example in the area of international humanitarian and development assistance. They also have seriously underinvested in their own diplomatic and educational infrastructure needed to build and sustain a credible presence on the world stage.

Turning to the specific theme of support for democracy and human rights, these countries too often have chosen the path of least resistance when it comes to making choices for or against the very values and principles they so enthusiastically have adopted for themselves. This is primarily an ideological and historical problem. Their own national experiences with apartheid, dictatorship and colonialism, propagated and supported by the West, incline them against schemes of intervention in others' internal affairs. They also oppose external audits of their own deficiencies. As a matter of history, however, there is another side of the story: when it served their interests, many of these countries played critical roles in the early years of the post-World War II era in supporting the building blocks of the modern international human rights system, including the key principle of UN monitoring of domestic human rights situations (Jensen 2016). Similarly, countries like Brazil and South Africa have played leading roles in constructing regional mechanisms to defend and protect democratically elected governments from military or other unconstitutional seizures of power. The dominant historical experience, nonetheless, has crystallized over time into an ideology of nonalignment and noninterventionism, particularly for India and Indonesia. While the grip of these doctrines is loosening in the face of globalization and an awakening consciousness of the healthy role international activism can play at home and abroad, it will take more time to shift the balance toward a less rigid interpretation of sovereignty.

As this shift unfolds, a number of deliberate steps should be taken to consolidate the transition to a more balanced approach to the international liberal order. First, the foreign policy thinkers and practitioners in these countries should expand their own definitions of national security to put a greater value on the kind of stability, prosperity and peace that come from democratic governance, the rule of law and respect for human rights. They need look no further than their own transitions to democratic rule, constitutionalism and political pluralism to know the benefits of such an approach. They also can learn from the important progress made by other democracies that once were riven by conflict and despotism to become more stable states, from Germany and Japan to Poland, South Korea and Chile. Empirical evidence is strong that these states have not only become more secure and prosperous but also positive contributors to the international liberal order. We also know from experience that democracies tend to avoid internal and

external conflict, do not experience deadly terrorism, do not spawn refugee crises or famines, and have better records of human development and citizen security.

Second, this more evidence-based approach to national security decision-making should be taught in universities, diplomatic academies and military institutions as a requirement for graduation. Politicians, legislators and their staffs also need to be schooled in the benefits of a longer-term approach to national security policy. Third, these countries should get more engaged in the soft multilateral diplomacy and assistance that creates the environment for other democracies to grow. This includes voting for UN resolutions that respond to gross human rights violations in the dispiriting number of states still mired in conflict (Burundi, Central African Republic, Eritrea, Somalia, Yemen, Venezuela, etc.), making contributions to international institutions that build democracy and human rights (UN Democracy Fund, regional human rights bodies, Community of Democracies), and incorporating a greater concern for democracy and human rights in their own bilateral diplomacy.

Finding Common Ground

When we in the West look at the evolution of middle power democracies as a snapshot in time, we lose sight of the significant if uneven progress they have made from their watershed turning points toward democratic governance. We also miss out on their own histories as both victims of bad behavior by other powers and as early leaders in helping to establish the international democracy and human rights order after World War II. We are now entering a new and in some ways more dangerous post-Cold War era in which that order is under intense stress and in great need of political and material support and innovation. It cannot happen without the active participation of Global South democracies, which have the potential to bring their more recent experience with democratic transition and consolidation to other countries interested in reform. The question is: are they willing and capable of stepping up to this challenge?

Reform, however, is a two-way street. More established democracies have their own cleaning up to do, both at home and abroad. The election of Donald Trump to the White House in a combative campaign that directly attacked core principles of tolerance and civility and even revived the idea of torture as a legitimate tool against terrorists poses a particularly thorny challenge for this traditional coalition. Unsustainable military and nation-building strategies, aggressive interventions in internal affairs, and lack of accountability for egregious human rights violations demand a major re-think of how to conduct an effective and principled foreign policy. This re-think also demands a concerted effort to expand the network of players, including from the global South, willing to support reforms that promote greater transparency, accountability and participation. Workable coalitions

tions of democracies require a willingness to find common ground on approaches that are action-oriented but realistic, deploying a range of soft power tools and exercising strategic patience for the long-term efforts necessary to establish genuine democracy.

One way to build such common ground is to identify a handful of priority thematic areas on the increasingly crowded human rights and democracy agenda for concrete action by key stakeholders in North and South democracies. The following list of ideas has the advantage of including some that are considered “lifeblood” or tree trunk issues on which so many other worthy causes depend. It also includes items that are a balance between traditional priorities of more established democracies, e.g., freedom of information and of the internet, and priorities of developing democracies, e.g., economic and social rights, regulating businesses’ impact on human rights and controlling corruption. Finally, it builds on the established global consensus on the Sustainable Development Goals to advance the unfinished business of integrating the development, governance and human dignity agendas.

Lifeblood issues

The international human rights community has achieved real success in expanding the scope of human rights over time and building an architecture to defend them. Yet it may be reaching a tipping point in which the ambition of turning every issue into a human rights cause dilutes the core principles and concepts that give effect to all other rights. Limited resources are also a constant challenge. The goal, in my view, should not be to shrink the agenda but rather to ensure that advocates have the strongest possible tools to advance their specific causes. This means focusing on the lifeblood issues that make all other progress possible.

There are three areas in particular that require priority attention. First, defending the space for civil society’s work on human rights and democracy. The evidence of repression, harassment and pressure against civil society activists grows every day, a trend prevalent in both authoritarian and democratic states. Without sufficient space for freedom of association and expression, and protection of cross-border funding for such work, NGOs of every stripe will have a harder time monitoring elections, delivering social services or defending vulnerable populations. Good work is already underway at the UN level through the work of the UN Special Rapporteurs on freedom of association and on human rights defenders but the most important work is on the national and local levels. Meaningful recognition of the voice, participation and expertise of civil society should be a *sine qua non* of any national and multilateral consultation process, whether on issues of domestic or foreign policies. Ongoing education of international human rights norms and mechanisms at the local level is critical. At the UN level, democracies should lead

reform of the UN's process for accreditation of NGOs aimed at depoliticizing the process.

Related to protecting the environment for civil society are the lifeblood issues of right to information and freedom of the Internet. Without information on the state of human rights and government performance, policymakers and activists are incapable of identifying deficiencies and devising strategies to address them. It is also critical to pursuing broader goals of more open governance, accountability and freedom of the media. Developing democracies like Brazil, Mexico and India have significant experience on these issues that make them important players in any broader effort to move this agenda forward. Digital freedom for all is another area of growing concern due to the increasing pressure from security and law enforcement quarters to regulate and control the availability of information transmitted and stored digitally. Cyberspying and cyberwarfare, invasion of privacy, and censorship are just some of the manifestations of the turmoil underway and likely to worsen. The starting point for consensus should begin with understanding the Internet as a public good which is accessible, affordable and neutral. Democracies, working closely with nongovernmental and business sectors, should take the lead in ensuring human rights underpin Internet governance principles.

Right to quality of life issues

For too long, the international community has been divided on how to address the fundamental elements that make up the quality of a decent and dignified life – adequate and nutritious food, safe water and sanitation, emergency shelter and access to quality health care for all. The ingredients of a rights-based approach to these basic elements of survival are there but strategies are scattered and under-resourced. The biggest challenge is the financial and logistical demands of delivering such public services in societies starved for resources. Even in wealthier societies, progress is erratic as governments are either unable or unwilling to negotiate with powerful interests opposed to the reallocation of resources required to implement adequate services for the neediest in society. Nonetheless, movements are building at the national and transnational levels, in both developed and developing countries, to enforce these rights through courts, parliaments and executive action, and several democracies that have invested in expansion of such public services have made great strides across multiple indicators of human development. Wealthier democracies should reach out to developing democracies like Brazil, India and Indonesia to build a program of international cooperation in this arena, which could be tied to the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals.

More broadly, a post-Cold War convergence is slowly taking place in support of a rights-based approach to development that recognizes that good outcomes

depend on principles of accountability, transparency, participation and inclusion. The Sustainable Development Goals adopted at the 2015 UN General Assembly offer a window of opportunity to validate and deepen the emerging consensus on the links between governance, rights and development. But much more work needs to be done to translate language in Goal 16 and elsewhere into measurable targets and sustainable financing.³

Within this broad category of economic and social rights, there is one group that deserves special attention: the rights of women and girls, particularly to education. This “empowerment” right is low-hanging fruit for the international human rights community and for good reason: Evidence is overwhelming that states with high measures of gender equality are less likely to encounter civil war, interstate war, or widespread human rights abuses than states with low measures. We also know from years of social science research that an investment in quality education for women and girls directly contributes to improved family living standards, reduced poverty, higher incomes, better health, more civic participation, less corruption and less violence (Legatum Institute 2014, p. 21-22). Despite the broad recognition of the universal right to education, millions of children and adults are still deprived of their right to a quality education. To cite just one statistic, less than one half of countries have achieved universal primary education as of 2015 and only 70 percent are expected to reach gender parity in primary enrollment (UNESCO 2015). The SDGs contain tangible goals for addressing these deficits and should mobilize a grand coalition of stakeholders from both developed and developing democracies to increase dramatically the resources and capabilities for achieving them.

New actors, old issues

Two additional cross-cutting issues – one old, and one new – are proving to be important agents of political reform and mobilizers of civic activism. Corruption of public resources for private gain, which has existed for centuries, may never be eliminated, but certainly can be controlled better than it is currently. Not only is it central to the quality and legitimacy of democratic governance, but it also implicates a wide range of human rights, especially the delivery of economic and social rights, and threatens public and national security in myriad ways.

In response to the growing public demand for greater investigation and punishment for corrupt acts by government officials, institutions are taking dramatic action to root out corruption at even the most senior levels of political power. A mix of judicial, law enforcement, media and civil society actors are taking action in Brazil, Guatemala, India and South Africa, among others, to prosecute grand

³ Goal 16 states: “Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels.”

corruption schemes. There is plenty of room for international cooperation in this field. The UN Convention against Corruption requires signatories to cooperate to prevent, investigate and prosecute offenders, including mutual legal assistance in gathering and transferring evidence for use in courts. Voluntary schemes like the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative and the Open Government Partnership are serving as useful vehicles for creating the habits of information-sharing and transparency that are the prerequisite for holding corrupt officials accountable. Much more should be done, however, at the global level given the vast and complex network of laws, regulations and practices that govern cross-border financial flows. A UN high commissioner on the rule of law could become a key focal point for coordinating and promoting legal tools to fight corruption.

One of the many actors in facilitating corruption is the business sector, both national and international, and they too must be held to account for their role in bribery, tax avoidance and bank secrecy for kleptocrats. But corporations also have responsibilities in the broad arena of human rights, especially large transnational companies whose annual income exceeds that of dozens of countries,⁴ not to speak of their political influence in national capitals.

After years of rancorous debate, UN member states adopted the Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights in 2011, a strong starting point for setting minimum international standards for state regulation of corporations, corporate responsibilities for protecting human rights, and access to effective remedies when violations occur. States have agreed to produce national action plans to ensure their implementation. Meanwhile, dozens of national and international NGOs have begun working together to produce better reporting of corporate performance and to pursue other judicial and nonjudicial avenues for redress. For many others, however, this is not enough. A treaty-writing process is now underway, led by South Africa and Ecuador, that would create a binding legal obligation on states to hold corporations accountable across a spectrum of human rights problems. To date, this has been a contentious development dividing both advocates for greater corporate social responsibility and states and businesses intent on avoiding more binding commitments with unproven effect. A quiet coalition of interested states from Europe, globalizing developing democracies and business and human rights experts could help close the gap and identify the most important areas for cooperation as the treaty talks slowly unfold.

Conclusion

In the current context of a return to nationalism and geopolitical spheres of influ-

⁴ For example, Amazon's gross revenue of \$474.45 billion in 2013 was larger than the gross national income of 150 countries. The value of Tata, the Indian conglomerate, of \$113 billion as of September 2015, would make it the world's fifty-second largest gross national income if it were a country.

ence, proxy wars and rising authoritarian powers, it is important to underscore that democracies, given their inherent nature as governments accountable to their citizens, have a special role to play in fostering a more stable and secure democratic peace. The way forward requires cooperation among both established and rising democratic powers with a stake in that kind of global order. If they don't act, the vacuum will be filled quickly by other revanchist powers bent on a more self-interested, nationalist and closed approach to global governance. This void is already being filled by hostile interventions in cyberspace, heavy investments in state-subsidized propaganda, and trade and investment schemes that favor lowest common denominator rules for transparency and rights. The priorities set forth above are just some of the areas in which democratic states, civil society, businesses and concerned citizens can coalesce behind to ensure the international liberal order survives well into the 21st century.

Bio

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