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EMPIRE OR POST-EMPIRE?  
THE CONCEPT OF “LONG CENTURY”  
AND THE CONSEQUENCES OF GLOBALIZATION

NORIHISA YAMASHITA

EMPIRE OR POST-EMPIRE?

“Empire” has been an academic buzzword for a few years. Apparently, the increasing irrelevancy of the nation-state as the only unit of political legitimacy in the world-system underlies this trend.<sup>1</sup> But it is not the case that the retreat of the nation-state is taking place everywhere alike in the whole world-system, but that whereas nation-states are being deconstructed in some (mostly developed) areas, the nation-state (and substantial sovereignty) is still persistently sought for in other (mostly less developed) areas. Moreover, there are (mostly least developed) areas in which even quasi-states are virtually lost and the idea of the nation-state does not offer any relevant prescription any longer.<sup>2</sup> The term “empire” is used by various authors to infer the subsequent predicament of these heterogeneous mutations in somewhat a wholesale way. Plus, in the case of the Eurasian area/s (or the former Soviet area), the usage of “empire” is still more obfuscated, given the deep historical background of the Russian empire.

Apparently, most students of Russian history normally seem to share the conventional periodization in which the history of Russia is punctuated with the formation of Tsarism, the Russian revolution, and the collapse of the USSR. “Imperial” Russia usually denominates the period starting with Ivan III (or Ivan the Terrible or Mikhail Romanov) and ending in 1917.

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<sup>1</sup> Susan Strange, *The Retreat of the State: the Diffusion of Power in the World Economy* (Cambridge, 1996); Saskia Sassen, *Losing Control? Sovereignty in an Age of Globalization* (New York, 1996) for just a few examples.

<sup>2</sup> R.H. Jackson, *Quasi-States: Sovereignty, International Relations, and the Third World* (Cambridge, 1990).

However, there are not a few authors, like Dominic Lieven, who emphasizes the essential continuity between so-called “imperial” Russia and the USSR in their pattern of socio-political processes.<sup>3</sup> Furthermore, Emmanuel Todd, a historical anthropologist, argues that the empire is the authoritative definer of legitimacy in the world-system, like the UK in the nineteenth century and the US in the Cold War period, and that while the USSR had been contained by the Euro-American coalition with American “imperial” leadership during the Cold War period, the recent unilateralist/neo-conservative turn of George W. Bush’s administration turns this Cold War picture upside down: now the US may be being contained by a Euro-Russian coalition as we saw in the UN Security Council just before the Iraqi War in March 2003. In other words, Todd suggests that Russia might be the new empire defining some sort of legitimacy to contain the neo-conservative menace in the twenty-first century.<sup>4</sup>

Anyway, it is sure that the spatial order of the world-system is now undergoing serious transformation which involves multiple regional processes of redefining spatial imagination. And the Eurasian region is no exception. The purpose of this chapter is, first, to extend the geo-historical context, by introducing a concept of the *early modern empire*, in which the recent Eurasian regional trans/formation may be better comprehended; secondly, to re/assess the ongoing process of globalization as the transformation of spatial order in a wider and longer macro-historical perspective with the idea of the alternation of “long centuries”; and, thirdly, to speculate about the destinies of various meso-areas around the Eurasian mega-area.

## THE EARLY MODERN EMPIRES

Andre Gunder Frank, once renowned as one of the theoretical leaders of the so-called dependency school and in a close academic relationship with Immanuel Wallerstein, recently came up with a very

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<sup>3</sup> Dominic Lieven, *Empire: The Russian Empire and Its Rivals* (New Haven, 2000).

<sup>4</sup> Emmanuel Todd, *After the Empire: The Breakdown of the American Order* (translated by C. Jon Delogu, New York, 2003).

provoking and thoroughly (self-)critical work against the received Wallersteinian concept of the modern world-system. The title of his work is *Reorient*.<sup>5</sup>

Wallerstein defines his concept of world-system as the unit of totality which theoretically guarantees epistemological relevance on the one hand.<sup>6</sup> He draws, on the other hand, the actual geographical boundary of the world-system with the scope of division of labor of staple goods.<sup>7</sup> Frank argues, in *Reorient*, that if we are to seek for the truly total entity of the human socio-historical system, we do not have any reason to take one specific type of linkage, namely the division of labor of staple goods, as the yardstick of systemic demarcation, and to black out other types of relations like the circulation of luxury goods, military contact, or intellectual influence.<sup>8</sup> In other words, the modern world-system (which emerged in the western end of the Eurasian continent in the sixteenth century, then geographically expanded itself over centuries to be a global system, and still exists at this moment) carved out by Wallerstein from the whole geo-historical scope of humanity is not the only possible or relevant unit of analysis, but rather a set of blinkers which prohibit alternative conceptualization of past geo-historical reality.

From this standpoint, what Frank actually demonstrated in his *Reorient* is the existence of global economic inter/networks during the fifteenth-eighteenth centuries through which silver – the key currency of the time – was relayed and circulated inter-regionally or globally. In this early modern global economy with a de facto silver-standard, Europeans were only marginal actors whose access to Asian precious goods was substantially dependent on silver from the Americas. In short, Frank accuses Wallerstein of Eurocentric historiography.

Indeed, as far as the fifteenth-eighteenth centuries are concerned, the Wallersteinian concept of the modern world-system covers only a regional (European/Atlantic) portion of the globe. And Wallerstein assumes that the other regions were dominated by pre-modern world-systems, which he calls “world-empires,” whereas the European modern

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<sup>5</sup> Andre Gunder Frank, *Reorient: Global Economy in the Asian Age* (Berkeley, 1998).

<sup>6</sup> Immanuel Wallerstein, *The Modern World-System I* (New York, 1974), pp. 3-11.

<sup>7</sup> Immanuel Wallerstein, *The Capitalist World-Economy* (New York, 1979), pp. 5-15.

<sup>8</sup> Andre Gunder Frank, *Reorient*, pp. 1-51; Christopher Chase-Dunn and Thomas D. Hall, *Rise and Demise: Comparing World Systems* (Boulder: CO, 1997), pp. 27-56.

world-system is defined as the (capitalist) "world-economy." This picture with a "world-empire"/"world-economy" dichotomy is too reductive and unfairly underestimates the early modern globality that Frank has shown in his *Reorient*.

However, the early modern global economy was not a monolithic or homogenous space of commerce and communication. While Frank's approach was successful in demonstrating the presence of a global circuit of material communication at some level, it is apt to see inter-regional interaction only as evidence of connection and to neglect the construction of regionality that regulates the global connectedness. What is needed here is to reconstruct the structural reality of early modern regionality in the shared context of the early modern globality.

To approach the historical construction of the early modern regionality, it may be helpful to rethink the concept of the "long sixteenth century" which has been considered as the cradle of the modern world-system.<sup>9</sup>

The concept of the long sixteenth century originally referred to the almost two-century-long period (circa the 1450s to 1640s) of socio-economic expansion in the European/Atlantic world in which the late medieval Mediterranean and the Flanders-Hanseatic economies were dissolved to form the European capitalist world-economy. Usually, this long period is divided into two contrastive phases in terms of the rate and orientation of socio-economic expansion.

The first phase of the long sixteenth century (up to the 1550/70s) is the period of sharp and risk-taking economic vitalization. Having hit the bottom of the so-called "medieval crisis," the European economy saw a recovery of basic socio-economic productivity in this period, which entailed very active, entrepreneurial and even adventurous commercial activities, most conspicuously in the (West and East) "Indies" but also substantially within the (expanded) European world-economy.

The second phase is the period of stable and rent-seeking economic institutionalization. As the returns of experimental activities in the previous phase became somewhat clear, those new commercial channels turned out to be sources of rent and various political forces

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<sup>9</sup> Wallerstein, *The Modern World-System I*, pp. 67-68; Fernand Braudel, "Qu'est-ce que le XVI<sup>e</sup> siècle?," *Annales E.S.C.* 8:1 (janv-mars 1953), p. 73.

attempted to intervene to “protect” them.<sup>10</sup> So-called early modern mercantilism associated with the absolutist states represented a major part of this process.

The above is rather a standard picture of the long sixteenth century, but the important point that *Reorient* implies (and I would like to underscore) is that this overall pattern of the long sixteenth century can be observed not only in the European/Atlantic world but also on the global scale.

Let us just browse the global picture of the first period from the 1450s through the mid-sixteenth century. The Ottoman Empire underwent vigorous westward expansion, symbolically from the fall of Constantinople in 1453 to Suleyman’s golden age of the 1550s and 1560s. Moscow principality in Russia became independent circa 1480 and steadily expanded its sphere from then on until Ivan the Terrible claimed himself Tsar of all Russia in 1547. In the Indian oceanic world, the shrinking spiral of maritime commercial networks hit the bottom in the mid-fifteenth century catalyzed by the entry of the Chinese and Portuguese, and reactivation of the Indian-Ocean-wide trade network went on until the inland-looking Mughal empire’s presence became evident with the enthronement of Akbar the Great in 1556. East Asia saw the process of inclusive/expansive formation of the Sino-centric tributary trade system through this period under the presence of the Ming dynasty.

Then in the second phase of the long sixteenth century, these parallel outward-looking expansionisms reached the point of refraction with major political re-organization, which essentially resulted in regional consolidation of trade circuits, often intertwined with taxation/redistribution circuits. In South Asia, Mughal expansionism from Akbar to Aurangzeb structured the significant portion of the circum-subcontinent economy, which traded off with maritime commercial networks.<sup>11</sup> In West Asia, the geo-economic orientation of the Ottoman Empire was reversed after the defeat of Lepanto (1571).

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<sup>10</sup> About the concept of “protection rent,” see Frederic C. Lane, *Profits from Power: Readings in Protection Rent and Violence-Controlling Enterprises* (Albany: NY, 1979).

<sup>11</sup> See Frank, *Reorient*, pp. 84-92; K. N. Chaudhuri, *Asia before Europe: Economy and Civilization of the Indian Ocean from the Rise of Islam to 1750* (Cambridge, 1990), pp. 112-148.

Istanbul was no longer an open door between the Mediterranean and the Orient but a bolted gate and started to function as the center of the Ottoman redistributive system of staple goods.<sup>12</sup> In north Eurasia, pre-Romanov Russian expansionism was interrupted by the frequent peasant revolts and political turmoil in the late sixteenth century through the early seventeenth century. When Russian territorial expansion resumed in the mid-seventeenth century, its expansionism was orientated basically eastward, incorporating the frontiers into a Moscow-centered system.<sup>13</sup> In East Asia, in the process of transition from the Ming to Qing dynasties, the Sino-centric tribute trade system was transformed into the aggregation or alignment of immigration/trade control systems in the multiple East Asian dynasties.<sup>14</sup> The so-called "Seclusion Policy" of Tokugawa Japan is just a part of this region-wide transformation.<sup>15</sup> Similar immigration/trade control policies were adopted by Korea and Vietnam as well as China.<sup>16</sup>

Thus, the overall pattern of the long sixteenth century is shared globally, and more importantly, on this basis of global commonality, there took place a parallel formation of regionality in North Eurasia, West Asia, South Asia, East Asia, and Europe. I would like to call this regionality deriving from the global long sixteenth century the *early modern empire*, emphasizing its construction or structure of spatial imagination.

Many readers may be upset when they read that I, proposing the concept of "early modern empire" above, call early modern Europe an "empire." Indeed, there can be observed no single political entity which covered all or even the important parts of the European world in the early modern centuries. This is why Wallerstein retains the sharp

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<sup>12</sup> Fernand Braudel, *La Méditerranée et le monde méditerranéen à l'époque de Philippe II* (Paris, 1966; republished in 1990), tom 2, pp. 289-294 and tom 3, pp. 330-333.

<sup>13</sup> Wallerstein, *The Modern World-System I*, pp. 301-324.

<sup>14</sup> Takeshi Hamashita, *Kindai chuugoku no kokusaiteki keiki* [International Moment of Modern China] (Tokyo, 1990). The essential argument of this Japanese book is presented in his "The Tributal Trade System and Modern Asia," A.J.H. Latham and Heita Kawakatsu, eds., *Japanese Industrialization and the Asian Economy* (London, New York, 1994), pp. 91-107.

<sup>15</sup> See my book, *Seikai shisutemuron de yomu Nihon* [Japan's Modernization in World-Systemic Perspective] (Tokyo, 2003), pp. 107-129.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 96-104.

dichotomy between the European world-economy and the Oriental or Asiatic world-empires. However, when I use the word “empire,” I do not define it in terms of territoriality of direct political domination and/or economic appropriation, but in terms of structural spatial imagination which preconditions the behavioral options of actors in the “empire.” Unlike the post-Revolution modern world-system, the spatial imagination of early modern Europeans assumed Europe as *the* world which should ideally be ruled by a single and universal authority.<sup>17</sup> In other words, dynasties in the European early modern empire acted not in the arena of equally authorized multiple actors (or in the “anarchical society” to use Hedley Bull’s phrase<sup>18</sup>) but in the imaginary empire of its own which should cover the whole (European) world. The actual world split among struggling dynasties was conceived as a temporal and deviated situation in which the political actions of each dynasty were intended to intervene to restore the ideal (or imaginary) “empire.”

Thus defined, the concept of early modern empire deconstructs the dichotomy between world-economy (single axial division of labor with multiple territorial sovereignties) and world-empire (single redistributive system of staple goods under single territorial control). For it is not merely that what Wallerstein called the European world-economy is more like the contemporary (early modern) empires among Eurasia than the post-Revolution modern world-system after the nineteenth century, but also that the (early modern) regionality is characterized not by empire-as-territoriality but by empire-as-idea or imaginary empire shared by actors in a region at the level of their behavioral precondition in the ex-European areas as well. That is to say, for example, the East Asian early modern empire is not identical with the Chinese empire, but with the system composed of all those dynasties like Korea, Japan, and Vietnam as well as China, all of which shared the idea of regional universality (projected on the geo-historical presence of Chinese empire). The early modern empire is a regional system defined by spatial imagination legitimized by the shared *idea* of empire or regional universality.

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<sup>17</sup> Braudel, *La Méditerranée*, tom. 1, pp. 374-385; Anthony Pagden, *Lords of All the World: Ideologies of Empire in Spain, Britain, and France. C. 1500-c. 1800* (New Haven, 1995).

<sup>18</sup> Hedley Bull, *The Anarchical Society: A Study of Order in World Politics* (London, 1977).

All in all, in terms of structure of spatial imagination and its effect on regional formation, it seems better to say that there were five early modern empires including the European one in Eurasia, all of which were variations of the same type of regional system, in spite of the apparent (and still commonly accepted) contrast between the centralized world-empires in the "Orient" and the de-centralized world-economy in "Europe."

### ALTERNATION OF "LONG CENTURIES"

The on-going process of globalization is often characterized as liquidation of the existing system which has been supposed to provide us with some sort of certainty. And this system on the verge is commonly identified with the world-system in which the nation-state is the only unit of political legitimacy. Indeed, nation-states are now losing their legitimacy quite fast, as they lose their dual functions: the internal function as the unit of income redistribution and the external function as the unit of self-determination with political sovereignty.<sup>19</sup>

The malfunction of the national redistributive system, or the so-called "welfare state," became evident in the 1970s in developed countries. But, at that time, the problem was conceived mainly in terms of economic inefficiency of "large government." Today the crisis of the national welfare state is much deeper. For the unity between bearers and beneficiaries of income redistribution is being lost.

Fundamentally speaking, the idea of income redistribution can hardly be legitimized without the assumption that, under progressive taxation, the taxpayers are *collectively* identical to the beneficiaries of welfare policies financed by tax revenues. It is needless to say that this assumption cannot be perfectly true in practice. It is a kind of political fiction on which the whole system is based. And the content of this fictitious unity is one of the very important aspects of the idea of nation. As the transnational flow of socio-economy is accelerated by globalization, estrangement between bearers and beneficiaries of income

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<sup>19</sup> Sassen, *Losing Control?*



redistribution systems became too evident to be absorbed by the fiction of national unity. Thus, the national welfare states are losing their legitimacy.

The second front of de-legitimization of the nation-state is the malfunction of the idea of self-determination of nations. In the last decade, there can be seen a tendency that the long-accepted order of international law based on the principle of national sovereignty is somehow overruled by the “universalist” claims as in the “humanitarian intervention” in Kosovo affairs by the Clinton administration and the Iraqi war justified by the presumed possession of weapons of mass destruction by Saddam’s regime.

Originally, the logic of self-determination of the nation was introduced to the discourse of international politics as the justification of independence from imperial domination. The liberation of the nation was equated with its having its own state in this logic. In other words, the nation is supposed to be the unit of sovereignty.<sup>20</sup>

Sovereignty is the power that cannot be bound by anything but agreement made by itself. In short, sovereignty is the power with no higher authority. Therefore, the sovereign nation-state cannot be subject to intervention by any external force in principle.

Of course, this principle has not always been respected at face value. Rather, it would be more true to say that the major powers utilized this principle as rhetoric to contain the expansionist moves of each other. Just be reminded of the attitudes of the former USSR towards East European countries and the actions of the US in Nicaragua and Grenada in the Cold War period. All those actions violated sovereignties legally, but were somehow accepted in the actual scene of international politics.

However, the principle of national sovereignty is becoming irrelevant at a much deeper level in the post-Cold-War period. For what we are now witnessing is not merely the (ab)use of rhetoric but rather the replacement of that very rhetoric. The sovereignty of the nation-state is now being redefined, if not abolished, by the advocates of a new kind of universalism. The so-called neo-conservatives in the Bush administration who semi-publicly insist to limit (or even deny) the

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<sup>20</sup> Stephen D. Krasner, *Sovereignty: Organized Hypocrisy* (Princeton, 1999).

sovereignty of what they consider anti-democratic states are typical of this tendency.<sup>21</sup>

Thus, nation-states are now losing their legitimacy, malfunctioning in both internal and external terms.

Now, returning to the macro-historical context, this kind of “end of the nation-state” view of globalization is affiliated with the conventional historiography of the modern world-system, in which some sort of linear development is assumed, such as the transition from feudal monarchy through absolutist state to modern nation-state. And, in such a framework, the absolutist state in early modern times is usually considered as the transitional form from the medieval political system to the modern one. In other words, we are immersed in the paradigm that the nation-state is the *telos* or normalcy of modern history.<sup>22</sup>

However, as discussed in the previous section, the early modern spatial formation in a global perspective culminated in the parallel establishment of the five early modern empires around the Eurasian continent in the mid-seventeenth century, and the structural process of the nineteenth century was not so much building the international system as dismantlement of the early modern empires. To put it forcibly, what we have been calling the international system is actually, in a manner of saying, the systematized *absence* of system in the vacuum of empire(s). The nation-state is not necessarily the normalcy but a transitional or exceptional phase of the longer and wider human history.<sup>23</sup>

Indeed, zooming out of the panorama of human history, we see imperial order in the mid-thirteenth century through the mid-fifteenth century under the Pax Mongolica,<sup>24</sup> and then we see the transitional phase in the mid-fifteenth century through the mid-seventeenth century,

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<sup>21</sup> Robert Kagan's *Of Paradise and Power: America and Europe in the New World Order* (New York, 2003) is a very symptomatic book.

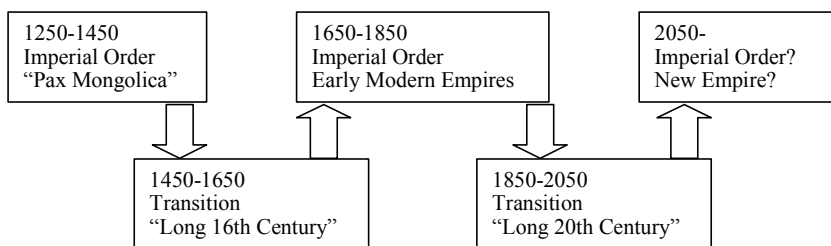
<sup>22</sup> Charles Tilly's *The Formation of National States in Western Europe* (Princeton, 1975) is one of the classic examples.

<sup>23</sup> Revisionist works which illustrate the constructedness of “nation” are now rather common. A few of classic examples are Benedict Anderson's *Imagined Community*, Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger's *The Invention of Tradition*, and Ernest Gellner's *Nations and Nationalism*.

<sup>24</sup> See Janet Abu-Lughod, *Before European Hegemony: The World System A.D. 1250-1350* (New York, Oxford, 1989).

that is the global long sixteenth century discussed in the first section, which led to the next imperial order with the parallel early modern empires which operated until the mid-nineteenth century. Then we entered “the era of the nation-state,” which may actually be another transitional phase (so we may better call this phase “the long twentieth century”) to the coming new imperial order expected in a few decades from now if we assume that the same alternating process would go on in the same time-scale (Figure 1).

FIGURE 1.



Although this model of an alternating pattern of imperial orders and long centuries is quite a rough sketch, it is of some use to relativize the conventional paradigm of 50-year or at most 150-year perspective, in which the current situation is supposed to be the demise of the existing context, namely the Cold War regime and nation-state system. Instead, we may be standing at the end of the two-century long phase of transition, which is comparable with the moment in the early seventeenth century when the early modern empires were being consolidated after the (global) long sixteenth century.

### DESTINIES OF MESO-AREAS: A SPECULATION

Having introduced the rough but totally alternative model of macro-historical context in which the current regional (re)formation and globalization may be better analyzed, we are swiftly going to speculate

on the destinies of the Eurasian meso-areas. Three points are to be made: a) the decline of marcher regions which fail to participate in any imperial order; b) the lowered relevancy of geographical proximity to spatial order (re)definition; and c) the refraction of *Sollen* factors.

#### *THE DECLINE OF MARCHER REGIONS*

As is discussed above, the global long sixteenth century was the process of redefining the spatial order, of which the course was not linear or determined at all. It was full of trials and errors. Various attempts at empire-building were made and failed. Eventually, at the last phase of the long sixteenth century, the five early modern empires were consolidated, but they did not cover 100 percent of the Eurasian space. There remained marcher areas, such as Central Asia, Persia, Southeast Asia, the northernmost part of the Far East and so on. Actually these areas had been very active and even prosperous as the turntables of inter-regional trade and communication in the course of the long sixteenth century, especially in the first half when the empires had not yet been consolidated.<sup>25</sup> But once the early modern empires were consolidated and the spatial imagination was structured in a centripetal manner, those marcher areas were deprived of their space of activity and oppressed by the surrounding empires, often militarily or forcibly incorporated.

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<sup>25</sup> The commercial activeness of Central Asia up to the sixteenth century is reasserted by Morris Rossabi in his "The 'Decline' of the Central Asian Caravan Trade," James D. Tracy, ed., *The Rise of Merchant Empires* (Cambridge, New York, 1990), pp. 351-370. John Foran discusses the long-term shift of the politico-economic presence of Safavid Persia between the earlier long sixteenth century and the latter in his "The Long Fall of the Safavid Dynasty: Moving beyond the Standard Views," *International Journal of Middle Eastern Studies* 24 (1992), pp. 281-304. S. A. M. Adshad further pointed out that these long-term shifts in central Asia and Persia are co-related in his *China in World History* (London, 1988) and *Central Asia in World History* (London, 1993). As for Southeast Asia, Anthony Reid's *Southeast Asia in the Age of Commerce, 1450-1680* (New Haven, London, 1988, two vols.), which emphasizes the socio-economic vigor in the earlier phase of the long sixteenth century (Reid is explicitly inspired by Braudel on this point), is widely appreciated. Shiro Sasaki's *Hoppou kara kita kouekimin* [Traders from the North] (Tokyo, 1996), one of the very few accessible works about the dynamism of Northeast Asian cross-cultural commercial networks, pointed out that cross-cultural traders in Northeast Asia underwent hard times in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries when the Russian and Qing Empires were being consolidated while struggling with each other.

Assuming that we are now living in the last phase of the long twentieth century, we may expect that the meso-areas that fail to participate in any (presumably coming) imperial order will follow the same destiny of, say, Safavid Persia or Jungar in the seventeenth century.

*THE IRRELEVANCY OF GEOGRAPHICAL PROXIMITY*

The critical difference which distinguishes the long twentieth century from the sixteenth is discursive globalization. Today, we globally share the discourses on basic values (such as human rights, civil liberty, and democracy) at an unprecedented level, which certainly affects the course of the redefinition of spatial imagination. Whereas, in the early modern period, geographical proximity more or less corresponded with ethnic, religious, and cultural proximity, which preconditioned the definition of spatial imagination of the early modern empires, today such geocultural consistency is seriously undermined. Due to cultural hybridization by globalization, the basic discourse on legitimacy is diffused trans-regionally cutting across the traditional (or “civilizational”) geocultural unity. Even anti-global activists (including so-called “Islamic fundamentalists”) often use the language of “democracy” and “human rights” to assert their interests and justice.

East European meso-areas are not simply fluctuating between the gravity of the Soviet/Russian mega-area and prospective Westernization. Besides the institutional influence of the Soviet/Russian mega-area, they appropriate the discourse of neo-conservatism and market fundamentalism at the level of rhetoric, while their socio-economic structure has become more and more dependent on the relation between the core countries of the EU, or what the neo-conservatives call “Old Europe.” What does the term “West” actually mean here? The situation cannot simply be projected on a two-dimensional map. Moreover, the development of cyberspace reinforces this tendency at the socio-cultural level.

*THE REFRACTION OF THE SOLLEN FACTOR*

Osamu Ieda formulates the transitive nature of Eurasian meso-areas in terms of the *Sein/Sollen* dichotomy, that is the tension between the existing regionality defined by the Soviet/Eurasian mega-area and

the centrifugal orientation towards the Western world. I agree that at this moment the *Sollen* factor is operating in the centrifugal direction against the Russian gravity. However, assuming that the alternation from the long twentieth century to the new imperial order with consolidated spatial imagination is coming, the *Sollen* factor is likely to undergo drastic refraction from the simple westward direction. There are three possible consequences of this refraction. The first possibility is that the meso-areas make some sort of nativist turn to resist any kind of imperial consolidation or definition of region and follow the destiny of the early modern marcher societies.

The second possibility is that the *Sollen* factor is converged with neo-conservative universalism and the meso-areas become parts of multiple enclaves of the Pacific (i.e. US-China and/or US-Japan axis) imperial order.

The third possibility is that the *Sollen* factor is redefined by negotiation between the EU and Russia. In this case, meso-areas in East Europe are likely to be the hinterland of greater Europe, whose process may in the long run somewhat resemble the process of the division of Poland by early modern empires in the eighteenth century.