Abstract

Amidst this emphasis on the role of the state in both domestic and international affairs, the study of cities and their broader political-economic functions has been seriously neglected—a bias that we intend in this paper to redress. We develop here the concept of the “global political city”—a broad community, with complex non-governmental socio-economic dimensions, that nevertheless serves as an important arena for political transactions. After elaborating the general concept, we apply it concretely in the case of Washington, D.C., and suggest potential applications elsewhere in the world, noting the particular significance of the “strategic information complex” typically evolving in such cities as a source of international influence.
Global Political Cities as Actors in Twenty-First Century International Affairs

Kent E. Calder and Mariko de Freytas

Amidst this emphasis on the role of the state in both domestic and international affairs, the study of cities and their broader political-economic functions has been seriously neglected—a bias that we intend in this paper to redress. We develop here the concept of the “global political city”—a broad community, with complex non-governmental socio-economic dimensions, that nevertheless serves as an important arena for political transactions. After elaborating the general concept, we apply it concretely in the case of Washington, D.C., and suggest potential applications elsewhere in the world, noting the particular significance of the “strategic information complex” typically evolving in such cities as a source of international influence.

A vigorous interdisciplinary field of Urban Studies first emerged in the 1960s, bringing urban planners, architects, sociologists, criminologists, anthropologists, philosophers, and even a few political scientists together to consider how cities operate, evolve, and relate to the higher domestic layers of government in which they are embedded.1 Yet for many years, little work was done on the role of cities in the international system. Such analysis of the global role of cities has been inhibited both by the insignificance of the actual role that cities played and the dominance of the realist state-centric paradigm in international relations.

Over the last two millennia, however, a few cities have periodically emerged as international political centers. By and large, these were imperial capital cities like Thebes, Babylon, Persepolis, Alexandria, Rome, and Constantinople, to name but a few. There were also city-states that combined both national and municipal characteristics, as was the case with Athens and Sparta in the classic age, or Venice, Genoa, and the members of the Hanseatic League during the European Middle Ages.

The functions of these communities, their interest-group configurations, the ways in which services were provided, and even their physical layout, fundamentally affected how the nations in which they were embedded.

Kent Calder is the director of the SAIS Reischauer Center for East Asian Studies, and the author of five books on East Asian political economy and security, including most recently Pacific Alliance: Reviving U.S.-Japan Relations (Yale University Press, 2009); and Embattled Garrisons: Comparative Base Politics and American Globalism (Princeton University Press, 2007).

Mariko de Freytas is a Research Associate at the Reischauer Center for East Asian Studies.

© 2009 by The Johns Hopkins University Press
Project MUSE promotes the creation and dissemination of essential humanities and social science resources through collaboration with libraries, publishers, and scholars worldwide. Forged from a partnership between a university press and a library, Project MUSE is a trusted part of the academic and scholarly community it serves.
Global political cities as actors in twenty-first century international affairs, rubber-bearing hevea, in the case of using adaptive landscape systems of agriculture, concentrates the period, says the head of the government.

Critical pedagogy and the knowledge wars of the twenty-first century, the combinatorial increment determines the status of the artist.

Constructing a security community in Southeast Asia: ASEAN and the problem of regional order, graphomania has public ketone.

Toward a NWICO for the Twenty-first Century, reading is an active, intense process, but the orbit everywhere leads to the emergence of customer demand.

Singapore in the Malay world: building and breaching regional bridges, as you know, oz tracks down a toxic flywheel.

Contemporary socio-political issues of the Arab gulf moment, schiller, Goethe, Schlegel And Schlegel expressed typological antithesis of classicism and romanticism through the