

**“Shanghai, Mumbai, Dubai or Goodbye:
The Emerging World Revolution and What it Means for America”
Featuring
Afshin Molavi**

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Scholar, policy analyst and former-journalist Afshin Molavi started his presentation by posing the broad question -- “Where are we going?” Many analysts tackling this question tend to focus on *disruptions*, for example:

- Geopolitical – e.g. new erratic leaders and political personalities
- Technological – e.g. autonomous vehicles displacing many thousands of commercial drivers.

There are, however, deep *disruption-proof* trends that will continue to unfold, regardless. Molavi offered five important statistics reflecting these trends; they are:

- *85%*. Eighty-five percent of the world’s population lives outside of North America and Europe.
- *129 million*. The number of babies born every year, with the highest fertility rates occurring in Africa, Asia and Latin America.
- *1.5 million per week*. The number of new urban dwellers (including both migrants and newborns).
- *5 billion by 2030*. The size of the global middle class (3 billion now, 2 more during the coming decades).
 - Over 40% of global middle-class consumption takes place in non-Western areas, primarily Asia.
 - The size of the U.S. middle class is actually shrinking.
- *Under 30*. The world’s population is young; more than one-half of its inhabitants are under the age of 30.
 - The median age in Sub-Saharan Africa, for example, is 19.

The summary effect of these trends is a world revolution – one in which the most dynamic parts of the globe are the formerly marginalized areas outside of North America and Europe.

- Molavi offered examples from Dubai, but also China and India, demonstrating rapid change, development and growth.

Many of the outgrowths of these trends are favorable:

- In 1990 50% of the world lived below poverty levels; today it is less than 15%.
- Attitudes around the world are surprisingly pro-integration, despite frequent press attention to extremism and protectionist sentiments in the West.
 - A recent Arab Youth Survey indicated a rejection of ISIS, and an embrace of economic modernity, and human and women’s rights.

The aforementioned trends, however, also entail challenges, as change frequently produces both winners and losers. Aspirations are rising, but *dashed aspirations* can lead to protest.

And with cell phones and additional media outlets televising mass events, the potential for spillover and violence is amplified. The key variable in staving off dashed aspirations is job creation.

- But with rapid technological change and automation, creation of the right types and numbers of jobs is not assured.

The main lesson of this analysis for the United States is to *get connected*. Twenty million U.S. jobs are tied to exports and foreign direct investment. It will become increasingly difficult for the U.S. to prosper by standing aside from the rising 85% of the globe.

Paul F. Herman, Jr.