Introduction
GLOBAL POLITICAL CITIES IN INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS

There once was a time, in the era of Plato, Aristotle, and Pericles, when cities were the central units of international affairs. They were valued way stations on the Silk Road and core constituent units of the Holy Roman Empire, as well as central members of the Hanseatic League. Until the mid-seventeenth century, the role of cities overshadowed that of nations on the global scene.

Despite the Westphalian Peace of 1648, and over three centuries of nation-state dominance in the political realm thereafter, the central role of cities in commerce, education, finance, and cultural exchange has persisted. Indeed, with sustained economic growth and increased economic interdependence since World War II, their scope has steadily expanded, especially in the international realm. Since the 1970s, the role of cities in mediating multiple forms of transnational interaction outside politics, and in becoming a platform for debates of global importance, has clearly grown.

With a historic migration from countryside to city gaining momentum over the past two decades, particularly in the developing world, cities are increasingly the principal home of humanity. Indeed, 55 percent of the world's people live in cities.[1] Many of those urban centers are naturally growing dirty, poor, unhealthy, and environmentally unfriendly. Many are politically restive, crime ridden, and unstable. And they have been ravaged of late, as over history, by pandemic scourges.

Yet cities also have a latent potential for creativity and growth, through exploiting the varied advantages provided by the geographic concentration of skills that naturally prevails in major cities. That "power of proximity"—particularly of gathering talented, educated people of diverse backgrounds to interact personally—leverages the potential social, economic, and political role of urban configurations, even if at times it also magnifies their danger.[2] Cities have enormous potential, on both the domestic and international stages, if only the constraints that limit urban interaction can be safely and rationally released.[3]

Previous Conceptualization: Literature Review

Over a quarter century ago, building on important research of the previous decade, Saskia Sassen coined the notion of the global city to conceptualize the changing character of cities engaging intensely on socioeconomic terms with other parts of the world.[4] She notes that these "cities that never sleep," including New York, London, and Tokyo, are structurally different from other communities of comparable scale yet lacking global reach, owing to their intense interaction with the broader world. Sassen sees these cosmopolitan communities as distinctive in four respects: their key role as command points for organizing the world economy; key locations for finance and other specialized services; sites for production, including the production of innovations; and markets for the products and innovations produced.[5]

As a result of their cosmopolitan interpersonal networks and compelling economic role, Sassen also finds, global cities are growing more important as intermediaries and connectors on the international scene. Yet neither Sassen, a sociologist, nor other early specialists on such global cities probed deeply into their explicitly political role in world affairs. Her analysis focused heavily on the economic, and particularly the financial, functions of urban centers.

Subnational actors have also received significant analytic attention in international relations theory for more than four decades. They are a central concern, for example, of classic works in international affairs such as Robert Keohane and Joseph Nye's *Power and Interdependence* in the late 1970s.[6] Virtually all subnational analyses, however, have focused on transnational actors, apart from cities, such as multinational corporations and global religious organizations such as the Catholic Church.

Geographically defined subnational units, like the great cities of the world, have been accorded remarkably little attention. Yet such communities—crucial locales for the exchange of ideas and expertise—are arguably the most central dimension of the subnational universe, which itself is growing ever more important on the international scene. As Akihiko Tanaka and other close

observers of the international political economy have contended, decentralized patterns of transnational interaction and governance are proliferating, drawing the world closer to the Middle Ages paradigm.[7] Transnational networks are growing ever more functionally important.[8] And these interactions have an explicitly political dimension that remains to be systematically explored.

At the microsocietal level, increasing attention has been given to the policy-advisory system in key nations of the world, especially the United States, and the sociopolitical context within which that system is evolving. Hugh Heclo, for example, points to the importance of issue networks, while James McGann and Donald Abelson stress the catalytic role of think tanks in policy formation.[9] Daniel Drezner and others have drawn attention to the broader range of institutions involved in policy advice, including advisory committees, academic experts, nongovernmental organizations (NGO), and employer and employee associations.[10] Yet few have focused explicitly on the political impact of such growing advisory institutions and networks or on how their development enhances the global political role of cities per se.

The Concept of Global Political City

In conceptualizing the notion of the *global political city*, a distinctive idea in studies of the international political economy, it is important first to remind ourselves of the basic functional roles of politics more generally in international affairs. There are arguably three such basic roles: governance, agenda-setting, and resource allocation. Governance is the most explicitly political function, performed most clearly by national governments in national capitals. Civic leaders, however, also play governance roles of major global consequence, not only through the impact of municipal decisions but through their dealings with counterparts elsewhere in the world, in both transnational and intergovernmental organizations. The informatics and geopolitical revolutions of recent years have greatly expanded their ability to forge such ties and to disseminate best-practice ideas worldwide.

Agenda-setting is a second key dimension of politics in international affairs. Once the near-exclusive province of national governments, agenda-setting has recently also begun to involve think tanks, political advisers, grassroots activists, mass media, and even financiers and entrepreneurs who generate policy ideas. It occurs both through continuously operating organizations at fixed locations and intermittent forums convening at diverse locations, ranging around the world from Singapore to Davos. Through their articulation and advocacy of policies, agenda-setting groups and their related policy networks have also become participants in governance, not just at home but around the world.

A third key dimension of politics in international affairs is resource allocation. The classical political expression, of course, is budgeting, which can have international dimensions, such as defense expenditures, overseas development assistance, and contributions to international organizations. Politics can also shape resource allocation more indirectly through regulatory policies, as in the case of capital markets, and in turn be profoundly shaped by embedded regulatory patterns as well. The rise of buoyant, liberal equity capital markets, in particular, has empowered entrepreneurs, local governments, and civil society institutions in cities like London, New York, and San Francisco, thus further transforming and decentralizing the chessboard of international affairs.

A central role in formal governance might thus be considered one, but only one, core characteristic of a political city. Agenda-setting and resource-allocation clearly assume important auxiliary functions. Both national capitals and major subordinate units with important resource-allocation or agenda-setting functions can thus appropriately be considered political cities.

A global political city can thus be conceptualized as a global city that serves as a major node of governance, agenda-setting, and/or resource allocation in the international political economy. This definition would include many of the cities, including New York, Tokyo, and London, that meet Sassen's economically oriented criteria. It would also, however, include many other national capitals and hubs for NGO activity, such as Washington, DC, and Geneva, which have a stronger political and less economic focus than the cities Sassen centrally considers, but nevertheless exert significant influence in international affairs. The diverse orientations and roles of global cities along the political-economic continuum are suggested in figure 1-1.

Global political cities vary in their distribution of the defining characteristics, but do share in common important sociopolitical traits. They are all home to a mixture of domestic and foreign political actors, who also tend to have overlapping domestic and international networks. Domestic and international political transactions thus often tend to be linked or conflated. Many actors in the global political city are cosmopolitan, travelling frequently and connected continuously to streams of information from throughout the world. Such cities are also replete with institutions capable of publicizing and processing information and demands from diverse sources, converting inputs into policy proposals for further consideration.

Global political cities are thus nodes in world politics and policymaking networks that significantly shape and are also influenced structurally by the international political-economic system as a whole. They include major national capitals, such as Washington, DC, Beijing, London, Paris, and Brussels. Major cities that are not capitals but have major mediating and

Figure 1-1. Conceptualizing the Global Political-Economic Role of Cities
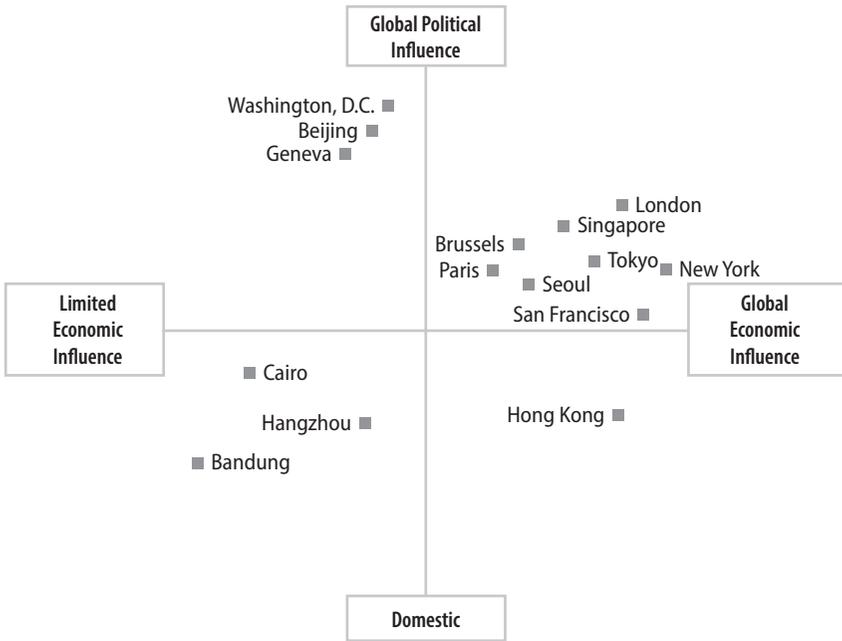
Source: Author's illustration.

agenda-setting functions related to their concentration of intergovernmental organizations (IGO), mass media, technical innovation, or financial transactions, such as New York, Geneva, and even San Francisco, can also be considered global political cities. As resource allocation and global agenda-setting grow more decentralized, with the advance of telecommunications and social media, new metropolitan areas displaying the traits of global political cities are rapidly emerging as well, in cities ranging from Atlanta to Addis Ababa.

We argue that global political cities in the twenty-first century can operate most effectively in international politics, to shape global agendas and to achieve concrete policy outcomes, if they have four structural-functional characteristics: (1) a well-developed policy advisory complex ("penumbra of power"); (2) cosmopolitan political forums, bringing together specialists intermittently to debate key issues; (3) mechanisms for assuring systematic grassroots input; and (4) dynamic, articulate, and visionary local leadership. Cities vary in their potential and optimal mix of these structural traits, with late industrializers such as Korea finding it harder to develop penumbras as vehicles for policy generation than those in mature Western industrialized
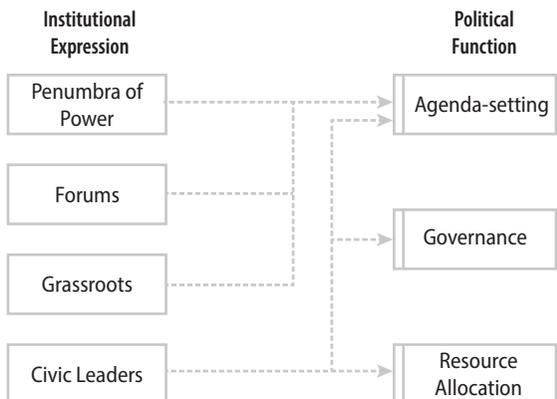
nations, hence making such emerging cities more dependent on intermittent forums. It is possible to identify these structural features, however, in all well-functioning global political cities.

The structural features of the global political city naturally relate closely to the political functions being performed therein.[11] Indeed, they are mechanisms through which politically relevant activities are carried out. Those connections are shown clearly in figure 1-2.

In evaluating global political cities, it is important to recall the power of proximity—a latent general strength of cities, in Glaeser's formulation—and how it might apply to global political cities more specifically. To be sure, proximity does generate some formidable challenges for urban political life: it increases vulnerability to local disasters, including floods, storms, fires, and droughts. Close proximity makes people more subject to contagions, such as the COVID-19 pandemic, as well as to mass outrage and communal violence. Government surveillance and coercion are also easier in urban areas.

Large cities in the modern world can also, paradoxically, be prone to social alienation and apathy that inhibits political expression, as social scientists from David Riesman to Robert Putnam have pointed out.[12] Owing to its impact on human ties, proximity can also conversely make politics in cities at times more volatile and chaotic, as was demonstrated during the 2020 COVID-19 pandemic. Negative externalities, including vulnerability to military predation resulting from the concentration of power, people, and infrastructure, are likewise more pressing. Social life in cities is simply more varied and volatile than elsewhere.

Figure 1-2. Anatomy of the Global Political City

Institutional Expression | Political Function

Penumbra of Power → Agenda-setting

Forums

Grassroots → Governance

Civic Leaders → Resource Allocation

Source: Author's illustration

Proximity appears to clearly strengthen the political efficacy of cities, however, in at least three important ways:

- Proximity helps cities to build human networks. Developing such networks involves direct personal contact, and proximity is obviously crucial in fostering that—even (or especially) in the digital age.

- Proximity reduces transaction costs. That makes complex resource allocation problems, in applications ranging from budgeting to personnel selection, easier to solve.

- Proximity facilitates the formation and communication of ideas. It also makes agenda-setting easier and more effective. Proximity thus makes the functions of global political cities easier to perform, both internally and on the global stage as well.

In the final analysis, proximity thus is a double-edged sword. It magnifies both possibility and peril, with the persistence of cities across history providing strong evidence that the former generally outweighs the latter. Proximity makes political life more uncertain and volatile, to be sure, but it also gives it the promise of being more creative and efficient at problem solving. Above all, proximity makes decisive policy action in the twenty-first-century world, through a dynamic competition of ideas, at once more imperative and more efficacious.

For many years, failure to conceptualize the political role of cities, or to include primarily political towns within the notion of global city, was quite understandable. These politically oriented cities—including even America's capital, Washington, DC—were for decades remarkably parochial. They had little international dimension and remarkably little overall connectivity, even as the world surrounding them grew increasingly cosmopolitan. The overriding concern of these classical political cities was domestic politics, with a focus on the local legislature. Standing in the shadow of national governments, mayors of these political centers were often minor figures, with limited powers and limited ambition to match.

Lobbyists, to be sure, naturally existed, in the quintessentially political cities of the world. Yet in the era before advanced telecommunications and the internet, think tanks had little funding, access, or political weight. Nongovernmental actors had few tools to shape policy agendas, apart from newspaper op-eds and the proverbial three-martini lunch. Washington itself was dominated by parochial congressional politics throughout the first two-thirds of its existence, from 1800 to 1950 or so. And the cosmopolitan transition unfolded only slowly and grudgingly thereafter.

Rising Role of Cities in International Political Affairs

Why, then, have once-parochial and passive cities become markedly more cosmopolitan, proactive, and significant politically on the global stage in recent years? What does this transformation portend for the global future? These are key questions that this book addresses. Where market forces are allowed to prevail, historic, synergistic changes in financial markets and communications technology have unleashed the power of proximity inherent in global cities themselves to influence international political processes, while harnessing data and ideas for policymaking in new and creative ways.

It is important from the outset to be clear about the varied capacities and options that twenty-first-century cities have for shaping international affairs. All stand even in the shadow of nation-states. Yet they can operate with varying degrees of autonomy and dynamism in addressing global problems, as both actor and arena.

Cities have varied ways of influencing global affairs. They can participate directly, first of all, in global governance—as city-states, in the most extreme variant, or as formal participants in transgovernmental bodies such as C40 Cities Climate Leadership Group (C40). They can also address pressing global problems, ranging from environmental pollution and mass transportation to sanitation and personal safety, as autonomous international actors.

Cities, including their leaders, former leaders, and local grassroots movements, can also influence world affairs indirectly. They do so through the networks they create, the forums they provide for agenda-setting, and the activities of their "idea industries" and the penumbra of power surrounding national and local leadership.[13] Cities can likewise exert indirect intellectual influence through the policy paradigms they foster, as New York and Singapore, for example, have so effectively done in the environmental and resource-use areas.[14]

The Many Faces of Global Political Cities

There are thus four important structural dimensions to the notion of the global political city that make it something at once more diffuse and also much more consequential in sociopolitical terms than a simple municipal unit, especially in the information age. Those four elements are the policy advisory complexes (penumbras of power) that analyze information; the political forums that deliberate on information; the grassroots advocacy groups that critique information; and the leaders who act on information. Collectively, the institutions of the global political city provide

an information-centric governance system, potentially capable of rapid, if decentralized, responses to emerging global problems within a given city's chosen area of specialization.

Cities as Catalysts for Policy Ideas

Conventional political analysis often begins with leadership. In the information-centric global political city of the twenty-first century, however, the first institutional structure to consider is the advisory-analytical complex that surrounds the leadership itself and that gives it the tools to operate efficiently. As the world becomes increasingly integrated and volatile, the complexity of problems, and the speed with which their configuration changes, makes timely access to accurate information increasingly vital to decisionmaking. The idea industries that set policy agendas are thus increasingly vital, for both local and national governments. These cosmopolitan groupings include universities, think tanks, lobbyists, and multinational institutions such as the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund (IMF), and the United Nations. Such bodies incorporate substantial, often interlocking interpersonal networks.

Idea-industry networks include a special concentration of university and think tank analysts, many with previous government experience.[15] Such analysts often play critical roles in policymaking through their expertise on the details of policy and the rationales thereof. Government policymakers and their staffs, by contrast, often lack sufficient time to assimilate such information themselves, giving idea industries in many cases an influential political dimension. Idea industries can thus often provide important input into, or be major actors in, the political decisionmaking complexes that are characterized here as penumbras of power.[16]

Cities as Global Forum Sites

A second dimension of the global political city is its role as a forum for policy activities with broader political significance. Forums can, of course, generate and propagate far-reaching and cosmopolitan policy proposals. At the same time, however, they can also link thinkers and policy analysts across national borders. Thanks to podcasts, streaming video, and the internet, foreign venues are becoming readily accessible, at least visually and psychologically, to domestic audiences. "All the world," as Shakespeare put it, "is a stage."[17] Global capitals such as Washington, DC, and Beijing, as well as IGO centers such as New York City, which hosts the United Nations, are becoming locales where leaders with global influence interact personally. Leaders, both

domestic and foreign, also pose there for their own parochial audiences, to whom they are ever more intimately connected by advancing technology.

Local cities with more modest formal political roles can also become globally significant political stages, especially when they lie at the edge of geoeconomic "tectonic plates." The case of Hong Kong shows this dramatically. So did Berlin during the Cold War, or Stalingrad during World War II.

Cities as Stages for Grassroots Political Action

A third, often highly dramatic, dimension of the global political city is its activist community. In the information age, global cities are a natural political stage, and organized nongovernmental groups are very frequently key actors. Global political cities can often be an episodic venue for mass political action of broader global significance staged by activists with cosmopolitan objectives in mind. Periodic demonstrations in Hong Kong (2003–2020), calling into question the viability of China's "one-country, two systems" recipe for national reunification, or the nationwide Black Lives Matter demonstrations in the United States are cases in point.[18] So too were the antiglobalization "battle in Seattle" riots (1999), or the periodic rallies at IMF–World Bank meetings in Washington, DC, over the past two decades.

In the deeply interdependent world of the twenty-first century, international protests and demonstrations are increasingly common.[19] Since financial markets, in particular, move with such volatility, the macroeconomic and macropolitical consequences of sustained activism are potentially severe. Grassroots political actors can thus be an important element in the political equations of global cities, with implications far beyond the boundaries of the cities themselves.

Civic Leaders as Global Leaders

A final face of the global political city is leadership. Building on powerful input from advisory complexes, forums, and civil-society activists, many leaders of major global political cities are growing more influential on the global stage on issues ranging from the environment to counterterrorism. Gifted civic leaders are making some of the most creative and substantial efforts to address international problems. This is partly by default: national leaders have been abdicating traditional leadership roles that their countries have held, as the United States has done recently on environmental protection and free trade. Yet civic leaders can also, through inaction or lack of capacity, make problems worse, as arguably was the case in Hong Kong during its 2019–2020 crisis.

Figures with real leadership expertise, such as Michael Bloomberg of New York, are taking mayoral positions. Several such dynamic local leaders—ranging from Willy Brandt in Germany and Jacques Chirac in France to Lee Myung-bak in Korea, Mauricio Macri in Argentina, and Boris Johnson in Britain—have subsequently become leaders of their nations as a whole, following successful careers as mayors. Some, including Michael Bloomberg, have become creative innovators in the sphere of global governance. The rise of these hybrid local, national, and international leaders testifies both to the rising political importance of local leadership positions themselves and to the central role of cities as a training ground for broader policy-management skills.

Mayors, to be sure, do not rule the world.[20] Yet their collective role in international affairs has recently been rising, together with their individual mobility, in many cases to other positions of importance. That increasingly dynamic mayoral role is thus one key final reason for closer attention to cities in their political dimension.

State, Community, and the Evolution of Global Political Cities

There appears to be little question that the international role of global political cities collectively is rising, owing to grassroots volatility, the rising vitality of advisory complexes, and often leadership assertiveness, energized and leveraged by technological change. Within individual global cities, the role of state influence, versus that of transnational forces, varies significantly, as suggested in figure 1-3. Transnational and community-based forces appear stronger in market-conforming Anglo-Saxon political economies than elsewhere. These nuances need systematic investigation, as they provide important clues to the deeper origins of the epic transformation in the role of global cities within international affairs that is now reshaping the world in which we live.

Analytical Ambitions of This Book

Cities are thus becoming increasingly important political actors in world affairs, through their local leadership, their idea industries, and their role as a global stage, for both elites and grassroots actors. All these functional roles—in which the sociopolitical role of advisers, media, and business is often more important than municipal leadership—build on the latent urban power of proximity that great cities innately possess and that is leveraged by advancing technology. A diverse range of actors collectively releases that latent power. Documenting the new but as yet insufficiently understood and conceptualized reality of rising civic influence on the international scene is a central empirical task of this book.

Figure 1-3. The Varied Strength of Transnational Forces in Global Cities
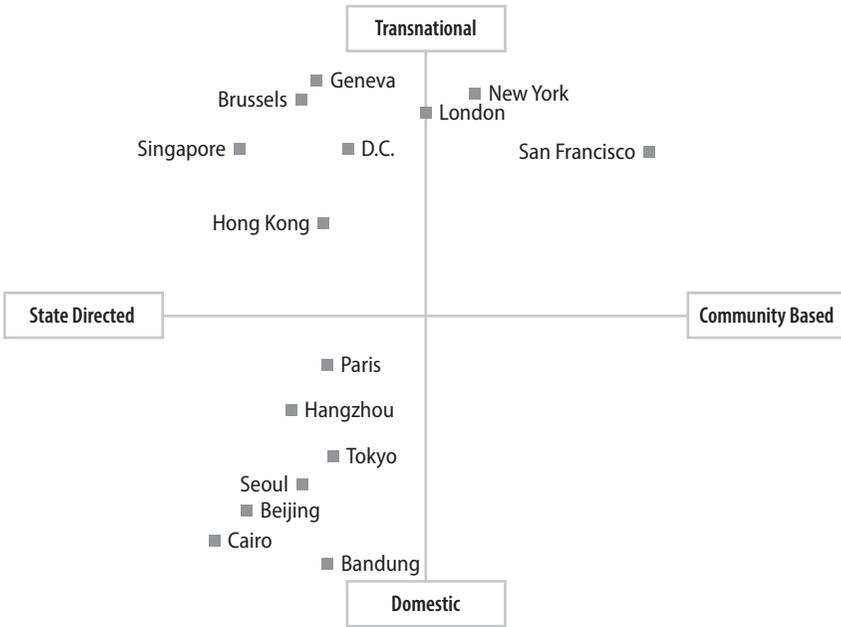
Source: Author's illustration.

Global Political Cities also strives to contribute to broader ongoing theoretical debates in both international political economy and domestic politics. It does so in six major areas: (1) explicating the concept of global political city and assessing its heuristic value; (2) explaining how and why global political cities and their international functions are changing; (3) exploring the institutional role of research and agenda-setting institutions (idea industries as catalysts for civic-policy influence on a global scale); (4) understanding twenty-first-century global agenda-setting; (5) examining contemporary global-governance prospects; and (6) critiquing realist theory, in the light of recent social, political, and economic developments that challenge the centrality of nation-states. After defining and assessing the "global political city" concept abstractly in relation to existing literature, and noting the deep relationship between the evolution of such cities and the profile of local financial markets, the book proceeds to explore the political influence of cities, through four exploratory hypotheses presented later in this chapter.

Explicating and testing the concept of global political city. In the post–Cold War world, where cross-border information and social transactions proliferate and the role of the nation-state is in decline, new subnational actors are playing larger international roles in a system of complex interdependence. Cities are among the most important such actors. How do they fill functional gaps in international agenda-setting, governance, and resource allocation, opened by the decline or inaction of nation-states? Through what sort of decision-making mechanisms, involving what range of actors, and with what implications for world affairs? These are central questions that this volume addresses.

Exploring the relationship of research and agenda-setting institutions to international policy influence. The world has clearly been growing more complex in recent decades, with some key dimensions of the global political economy, including finance and telecommunications, becoming subject to rapid and often volatile change. Government has not adapted quickly or in most cases flexibly to these revolutionary technical changes, leaving scope for new, responsive, nongovernmental institutions to exercise increasing policy influence. The literature on policy advisory systems has previously documented the technological transformation and the domestic policy challenges that such change presents, although in more local and domestic policy contexts. This book explores the global policy influence of advisory systems. It does so by probing how think tanks, universities, and mass media, in various combinations, are now shaping global policy formation—often much more dynamically than local or even national governments and more extensively than even a few years ago, leveraged by new technologies.

Contribution to understanding global governance. The importance of strengthened global governance institutions has been ever more keenly recognized over the past four decades, as worldwide political-economic interdependence has steadily risen.[21] This book strives to show how transnational interaction within the most influential global cities of the world, and the networks among their leaders, shape global norms and institutions under the system of complex interdependence prevailing in the world today.[22]

Contribution to understanding global agenda-setting. In many important policy arenas, particularly relating to nonmilitary dimensions of human security, such as migration, the environment, and at times pandemics, nation-states have been remarkably slow to act. Yet global norms, agreed practices, and ultimately international treaties have nevertheless emerged on subjects ranging from rights of noncombatants in warfare to restrictions on the disposal of plastic. The roles of cities and their varied panoply of actors in framing

these norms, securing their adoption, and actually implementing proposed changes have arguably been substantial but need further verification. The role of urban actors in setting agendas for transportation, land use, and the environment for the post-coronavirus world could be of special importance.

Critique of realist theory. For at least half a century, realist formulations of international politics have been under intermittent attack.[23] How the behavior of sociopolitical communities at the subnational level actually inhibits or redirects national power projection at the national level, however, has rarely been systematically examined, even though it seems to be growing increasingly important. This book demonstrates through concrete comparative case studies of local politics in fifteen major global cities, and the resulting impact on global agenda-setting, that influence does not flow only from conventional national power parameters. It is instead profoundly shaped by subnational sociopolitical characteristics such as local leadership, grassroots activism, and idea-industry development, as well as a feedback loop of media outlets to idea industries and then to policymakers. Transmission via the media is often catalyzed by trigger events, or critical junctures.

Explanation of how global political cities and their international functions are changing. The book explores, in particular, how social media and e-commerce are transforming global agenda-setting and resource allocation, giving rise to new types of global political cities in the early twenty-first century. Technological change, especially in social communications, is dramatically enhancing the role of the global city as a stage for domestically visible international negotiations and agenda-setting.[24]

The Volume in Overview

This volume examines the rising role that large, cosmopolitan urban centers—including but by no means limited to national capitals—have recently come to play in global political-economic affairs. It also explores why that civic role in global affairs is rising. Its point of departure is the latent, untapped strength with which the power of proximity invests cities, if only constraints on the realization of that latent vitality can be released and its periodic dangers contained. The book argues that civic leaders are more effective than national governments in making and implementing policies in most human-security areas, in particular, since national political constraints are relatively relaxed in those spheres.

   The volume also contends that cities exploit the locational power of proximity that such communities provide to nurture idea industries. These human

networks, including diverse membership from the think tank, mass media, and academic worlds, provide critical intelligence to policymakers and help set policy agendas. In interaction with political interests, such idea industries transform concepts into practical advice for both local and national authorities, in policy-setting arenas outside government that are best characterized in their political dimension as penumbras of power.

The urban power of proximity can also provide cities with compelling global influence as a dramatic stage. Elites can be assembled in close proximity at global gatherings such as the Davos World Economic Forum. Grassroots groups can also be amassed in dramatic proximity to power centers such as the White House, the IMF, Tiananmen Square, or the Legislative Council in Hong Kong.

The most effective cities at influencing global agendas, as noted earlier, are those with four well-developed functional characteristics: extensive penumbras of power, cosmopolitan political forums, proactive civic leaders, and insistent grassroots movements. Innovative urban sociopolitical communities consequently tend to flourish best in countries that are open, politically connected, socially cohesive, and supportive of education. The overall impact of cities in international politics thus tends to be stabilizing and liberalizing—contrary to the more rigid, destabilizing, and all too frequently ineffective role of nation-states.

Global Political Cities begins by chronicling the struggle of cities and nation-states for primacy across the ages. This chronicle starts in chapter 2 by considering the role of politically unencumbered classical cities, such as those of the Silk Road, the Holy Roman Empire, and the Hanseatic League, as commercial and information-exchange centers for the broader world. The book then shows how nation-states were legitimated, through the Peace of Westphalia, as the central actors of international affairs and why cities subsequently receded, both politically and economically, into a more subordinate and peripheral collective standing.

Chapter 2 also shows how revolutions in military technology and in methods of warfare and social coercion once played important roles in assuring the centrality of nation-states. Conversely, chapter 3 demonstrates how the waning of interstate military conflict, deepened transnational economic interdependence, and a revolution in communications technology have all strengthened the hand of cities over the past few decades. Global political cities have emerged since the 1970s through a holistic sea change of information technology, finance, and geopolitics. This transformational triad of forces has at once sharply eroded the dominance of nation-states and also enlarged the potential role of global cities in international political-economic affairs. Technological change, interactive with finance, has been gnawing at nation-state

dominance and restoring historic subnational capabilities. The rising political role of cities has led, in turn, to a growing decentralization of global political-economic power and the diffusion of international governance capabilities from nations toward cities and other subnational units, such as mass media and think tanks. We witness this trend clearly in world affairs today.

Chapter 2 provides a detailed historical examination highlighting the post-Westphalian revival of cities as political actors, followed by an exploration in chapters 3 and 4 of the technological and financial forces, in dynamic combination, that animate global political cities. Beginning with chapter 5, the book then considers the explicitly political role of major global cities over the past few decades along four functional dimensions: (1) the operation of politically connected advisory networks, which this analysis refers to as "penumbras of power"; (2) the role of intermittent political forums in shaping decisionmaking; (3) the role of grassroots groups in setting agendas; and (4) the activities of local leaders, principally mayors, in linking their cities to international politics.

Along all four dimensions, activities at the city level are growing more vigorous and globally influential, albeit with substantial cross-national variation. Devolution of decisionmaking responsibility from the nation to the city is occurring at different rates and in different ways from country to country, of course. Devolution from the state to the market also has varied profiles. Broadly speaking, it is useful to distinguish between developmentalist and market-conforming approaches at the level of both cities and nation-states, with the developmentalist approach most common and clearly emphasized in late-developing political economies, including the cities of France and several East Asian nations.[25]

Among the constituent elements of global political cities, mayors, in particular, are growing more central globally in addressing pressing human-security issues such as transportation, public health, and environmental protection. They are also playing key roles in assuring conventional public security, including protection against terrorists. The penumbras of power now emerging in major cities—including influential networks of think tank and university researchers as well as lobbyists and analysts with multilateral institutions—are also expanding rapidly. They are exercising increasingly independent influence on policymaking. Meanwhile, grassroots groups, empowered by social media, are growing more active, while advances in connectivity are making intermittent forum gatherings, ranging from Davos to the Belt and Road Forum, more globally influential.

The collective impact of these sociopolitical developments within cities themselves is at once cosmopolitan and moderating for the global system as a whole, despite occasional disruptive outliers such as the recent Hong Kong

crisis. The changes motivate cities to offset the destabilizing and chauvinistic impact that nation-states have so often had on world affairs across the three and a half centuries of their dominance. Cities are becoming, broadly speaking, more articulate and proactive forces for peace, stability, and democracy in international relations, offsetting more parochial trends at the national level.

Central Questions for Exploration and Dataset

To understand more concretely and rigorously the variegated role of global cities in international political-economic affairs, this volume offers four hypotheses, exploring the origins of the city's global political influence. These hypotheses are tested using historical data drawn from fifteen cities broadly considered to include the most politically influential urban communities on earth. These cities, as noted in table 1-1, vary considerably in size and political-economic function, but they are all ranked prominently in major global surveys of influential global cities or are analytically important foils to them.[26]

Methodology

As Karl Popper has noted, social science research can involve either a quest for new theories or a testing of existing theories.[27] Given the novelty of the subject at hand here—the role of global cities in international politics—this research enterprise must inevitably be a matter of exploration rather than confirmation.[28] The objective is, as Arend Lijphart suggests, "to develop theoretical generalizations in areas where no theory exists yet."[29] Case studies, John Gerring notes, "enjoy a natural advantage in research of an exploratory nature."[30]

For the foregoing reasons, this book adopts an exploratory, hypothesis-generating case study methodology. By using variable-specific hypotheses and triads that test various strengths of the functional variable (highly, moderately, and minimally effective), the book explores how the concrete structural and political-economic characteristics of global political cities support their increasingly influential role in international politics. Through concrete, exploratory, yet systematic case-study analysis, the volume thus addresses an important theoretical vacuum in the study of international political economy.

Table 1-1. Key Global Political Cities in Comparative Perspective

City	City population as share of national population (%)	GDP per capita (US$)	City GDP as share of national GDP (%)
New York	6.3	72,938	8
Washington, DC	1.9	74,469	3
Brussels	48.0	52,445	64
Geneva	9.7	52,753	6
Paris	19.2	65,354	34
London	22.0	55,947	29
Beijing	1.5	30,335	6
Tokyo	29.2	43,884	37
Seoul	49.0	36,002	65
Singapore	100.0	84,399	100
Hong Kong	100.0	56,751	3
San Francisco Bay Area	1.5	80,551	2
Hangzhou	0.6	30,820	2
Cairo	20.3	7,843	48
Bandung	3.0	5,137	5

Foreign born (%)	Capital city? (Y/N)	Mayor directly elected? (Y/N)	Number of top think tanks	Internet use by population (%)	Average number of airport passengers per day
37	N	Y	3	87.3	361,424
21.8	Y	Y	17	87.3	196,556
62	Y	N	7	88.7	80,819
61	N	N	1	89.7	47,671
25	Y	Y	3	82.0	288,114
40	Y	Y	13	94.9	468,594
<1	Y	N	7	50.3	278,740
3.8	Y	Y	4	84.6	303,398
2.8	Y	Y	3	95.9	169,863
38	Y	N	3	88.2	170,411
8.35	Y	N	1	89.4	198,527
30	N	Y	1	87.3	220,616
0.45	N	N	0	50.3	97,453
n/a	Y	N	1	46.9	43,723
n/a	N	Y	0	39.8	17,260

Source: For city population and GDP figures, see Alan Berube and others, "Global Metro Monitor," Brookings, January 22, 2015, www.brookings.edu/research/global-metro-monitor/; and Jesus Leal Trujillo and Joseph Parilla, "Redefining Global Cities," Brookings, September 29, 2016, www.brookings.edu/research/redefining-global-cities/. For country population figures, see "2019 World Population By Country," World Population Review, http://worldpopulationreview.com/. For country GDP figures, see World Bank, "GDP (Current US$)," World Development Indicators. For population foreign born, data for San Francisco Bay Area and Washington, DC, are for 2011; for Beijing, 2012; for Brussels, New York, Paris, and Singapore, 2015; for Hong Kong, 2016; for Geneva, Hangzhou, and London, 2017; for Tokyo, 2018; for Seoul, 2019. For think tank figures, see James G. McGann, *2017 Global Go To Think Tank Index Report* (University of Pennsylvania Think Tanks and Civil Societies Program). For internet use, see International Telecommunications Union, "Percentage of Individuals Using the Internet," *World Telecommunications/ICT Indicators Database.* For airport statistics, see official airport websites.

Hypotheses for Consideration

The systematic triadic case study–based testing of exploratory hypotheses begins with chapter 4, which examines the deep financial and technological drivers behind the rising prominence of global cities in twenty-first-century international politics. It is conceptually separate from the assessment of the functional variables in the succeeding chapters.

For the functional variables whose impact on the international role of global political cities is explored in the succeeding four chapters, a similar analytical approach is employed, yielding four explicit hypotheses:

- An unrestrained and diverse penumbra of power enhances a city's global political influence (chapter 5).

- A continuous and cosmopolitan forum presence enhances a city's global political influence (chapter 6).

- An unrestrained and internationally connected grassroots community enhances a city's global political influence (chapter 7).

- An autonomous and activist local leader enhances a city's global political influence (chapter 8).

These four hypotheses are explored empirically through a triad approach, generally involving various strengths of the functional variable in question. For example, chapter 7 explores the global political influence of an unconstrained and highly connected grassroots community in San Francisco; a moderately unrestrained and connected grassroots community in Seoul; and a socially connected yet politically constrained grassroots community in Hong Kong.

Through this use of concrete cases testing exploratory hypotheses, this volume seeks to provide deeper insights into the analytical concerns raised at the outset, centering on how global political cities operate, how they are changing, and how they exert influence in international affairs.

In Conclusion

This introductory chapter begins by noting the growing recent role of global cities in international politics and outlining the analytical challenge of explaining the complex and nuanced transformation in the global role of cities. It reviews the rising volume of literature on global cities, and the analytical gaps in that literature which this work aspires to fill. It then clarifies the focus

of this volume on the political role of cities in the broader international political economy, introducing and defining a concept of global political city that far transcends a focus on municipal governments alone.

Global political cities are the communities beyond government per se that perform three critical social functions: governing, allocating valued resources, and setting international policy agendas. The principal agents performing these functions are either subnational political actors (especially mayors) or sociopolitical communities, actively advising government. Those communities, if institutionalized and geographically rooted, are known here as penumbras of power. If more fluid and geographically peripatetic, yet institutionalized, they are "political forums." If more spontaneous and popularly inspired, they are "grassroots movements."

The chapter then summarizes the analytical processes through which this book explores the nature and future potential of global political cities. It first identifies a set of fifteen global cities widely regarded as filling major political functions of international importance. These include national capitals, major economic centers with political functions, multilateral hubs, city-states, and entrepreneurial yet policy-oriented cities. The chapter then outlines the four hypotheses that are tested with respect to the fifteen cases, so as to determine across the balance of the volume how global political cities operate, and how their international role will prospectively evolve in future years.

The hypotheses explore and test whether the central institutions of the global political city enhance the global influence of the cities under investigation. This process of testing through extensive case study analysis should deepen our understanding of the extent of global city influence in international affairs. It should, however, also lend insights into the nature of that influence, how it varies by city, and why.

The hypotheses presented here explore the importance of four features of the global political city that we identify as potentially central to its global influence: policy-advisory complexes; political forums; grassroots advocacy groups; and local leadership. What if these institutional traits were indeed well developed in the major cities of the world, either individually or in combination? What difference would the emergence of well-developed global political cities make to the conduct of international affairs?

In the pages that follow, we will see that cities in the past have evolved cyclically, both in capabilities and in global influence. Their rise and fall, in the firmament of international affairs, has historically been a function mainly of their external environment. Their surroundings were largely static, save for critical junctures that provoked changes in the military power and economic prosperity of surrounding empires and nation-states. When the

surrounding world confronting cities was stable and prosperous, their role was more prominent; when that environment was turbulent and unpredictable, they were at the mercy of broader forces. Neither technological change nor the internal configuration of cities themselves had much bearing on their broader success.

Looking forward to the world now dawning, both technological change and the internal configuration of cities will matter more—especially when cities are heavily exposed to the broader world, as so many global cities are. Cities may well face a more unpredictable equation, presenting new challenges, but also new opportunities for agenda-setting and governance. With the collapse of the Soviet Union, the rise of China, divisions in Europe, and the erosion of *Pax Americana,* the world of nation-states is growing more fragmented and decentralized, even as it is growing more interdependent in economic and financial terms. The world is also changing more rapidly than it has typically done. The ability to amass and process information, together with the flexibility to respond to it, are growing increasingly critical. Many global cities are well positioned in both regards.

If the world now emerging indeed proves to be a volatile one, of growing complexity and connectivity, if not interdependence, the flexible, decentralized institutions emerging in many global political cities, as well as their growing ability to exchange ideas and coordinate, could provide major systemic benefits for the world as a whole. Broadly connected idea industries and advisory complexes—what we term the "penumbras of power"—could help disentangle transnational problems ranging from global warming and cybersecurity to financial recovery from a global pandemic. Policy forums could connect thinkers and policymakers personally and even virtually, while also publicizing new policy initiatives. Grassroots activism, in an era of deepening connectivity, could link citizens across borders, with global cities serving as a stage for their pronouncements.

In such a world, leadership would of course be vital, given the fluid, decentralized structure of the future global political city, and of the global system within which it would be embedded. Leaders would need to pick and choose among priorities amid a blizzard of incoming information and demands. Nation-states of course would be formidable competitors. Yet global cities, if our hypotheses bear out, would have formidable advantages: cosmopolitan perspectives, quicker reaction times, and the intrinsically moderating force of a natural focus on human priorities, contrasted with the geopolitical concerns that almost inevitably preoccupy nation-states. Cities could more easily pioneer in areas central to social welfare, ranging from health and environment to transportation, with the flexibility and maneuverability flowing from their

limited scale. They could specialize, branding themselves as experts on clean water, or high-speed transport, or quality healthcare. And they could share their accomplishments in broader partnerships around the world. If the patterns explored in this book continue to materialize, a new era of the global political city may be dawning, and it could be a highly productive one for world affairs.