



# AFTER AUTHORITY

*War, Peace, and Global Politics in the 21st Century*

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RONNIE D. LIPSCHUTZ

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SUNY series in Global Politics

James N. Rosenau, editor

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*To Lee Grodzins*



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## Acknowledgments

*Once, it seems, we knew what to do.*

—Bronislaw Szerszynski, “On Knowing What to Do”

This book has been a long time coming. It is the second in what I have come to think of as my “security trilogy.” The first was *On Security* (Columbia, 1995), the third is tentatively entitled *Minds at Peace*, and it should appear sometime early in the next millennium. Although some of the preliminary thinking behind this volume occurred in the mid- to late-1980s, the ideas did not really germinate until I arrived at UC-Santa Cruz in 1990, and taught a senior seminar entitled “National Security and Interdependence.” Looking at the literature, I began to think more was needed in international relations than just epistemological debate and more was needed in foreign policy than simply “redefining security.” I tried, therefore, to write on globalization and national security during my first few years at UCSC, but the book refused to be written. Eventually, I gave up, and went on to other books and other projects. Sometimes, however, books come together quite unexpectedly, and when I returned to the project in 1997, I discovered that a number of papers and articles I had written,

presented, and published fit together in what I thought (and what I hope *you* think) is an interesting and provocative way.

As is always the case with such books, they are the product of more than one person, although I take full responsibility for everything that appears here. In the course of thinking about and writing what appears here, I have incurred more debts to friends and colleagues than I am now able to recall. Among those who have, in one way or another, helped me along the way are Beverly Crawford, Ken Conca, Gene Rochlin, Peter Euben, Karen Litfin, James Rosenau, Hayward Alker (who suggested the title), Mary Ann Tetreault, and David Meyer (and, needless to say, many more). My wife, Mary, and my children, Eric and Maia, deserve the utmost thanks and love for showing such great forbearance in dealing with almost constant grumpiness. Finally, I dedicate this book to Lee Grodzins who, as my graduate advisor at MIT, saw that heavy-ion nuclear physics was not in my future.

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1 ❖  
THEORY OF GLOBAL POLITICS

The nation-state is in trouble. It is under siege by contradictory forces of its own making and its leaders have no idea how to proceed. Paradoxically, these forces are grounded in the end of the Cold War as well as the broadly held goals of economic growth and the extension of democracy and open markets throughout the world, the very things that are supposed to foster peace and stability. Why should this be so?

As states open up to the world economy, they begin to lose one of the *raison d'être*s for which they first came into being: defense of the sovereign nation. Political change and economic globalization enhance the position of some groups and classes and erode that of others. Liberalization and structural reform reduce the welfare role of the state and cast citizens out on their own. As the state loses interest in the well-being of its citizens, its citizens lose interest in the well-being of the state. They look elsewhere for sources of identity and focuses for their loyalty. Some build new linkages within and across borders; others organize into groups determined to resist economic penetration or to eliminate political competitors. The state loses control in some realms and tries to exercise greater control in others. Military force is of little utility under such circumstances. While it

remains the reserve currency of international relations, it is of limited use in changing the minds of people. Instead, police power and discipline, both domestic and foreign, are applied more and more. Even these don't really work, as any cop on the beat can attest. Order is under siege; disorder is on the rise; authority is crumbling.

These are hardly new arguments. The search for a unifying theory of international politics and world order has been underway for centuries, if not longer. Such ideas were offered by classical and premodern theorists of politics, such as Thucydides, Hobbes, Kant, List, and various geopoliticians, beginning with Admiral Mahan in the final decade of the 1800s, continuing with Halford Mackinder and Nicholas Spykman during the middle of the twentieth century, and ending with Colin Gray in the 1990s. After World War II, new theories were offered by Morgenthau, Aron, Waltz, and others. Most recently, in the wake of the Cold War's end, these theories have been restated, albeit in a different form, by Samuel Huntington (1996), Benjamin Barber (1995), and Robert Kaplan (1994, 1996). So why another book on the subject of war, peace, and global politics? One reason is that most of the others have it wrong. That the world is changing is doubted by only a few; how and why it is changing, and what is its trajectory, is hardly clear to anyone.

The approach of the millennium has further enflamed the collective imagination, both popular and scholarly, adding fuel to the fire. But most books and films—*The Coming Conflict with China* (Bernstein and Munro, 1997), *Independence Day* and *Armageddon*, and the “Y2K” furor come to mind here—offer the reader (and the policymaker) a biblical dichotomy: the choice between order and chaos, light and darkness, civilization and barbarity. Order draws for its inspiration on both the recent (and antedeluvian) pasts (Noble, 1997), suggesting that a world of well-defined nation-states, under American rule and discipline, still offers the best hope for reducing the risks of war and enhancing the possibilities for teleological human improvement. Chaos reaches even farther back, to the authors of the Bible, as well as the writings of Hobbes, Rousseau, and others, who warned that, in the absence of government, there is only a “State of Nature,” the “war of every one against every one.” The reality (and here, I wish to avoid debates over what is “real” and what “real” means; see Kubáľková, Onuf, and Kowert, 1998) is more likely to be found somewhere in

between these two poles or even elsewhere. It is always difficult to ascertain the trajectories of change when one stands in the midst of that change.

In a prescient 1991 inaugural lecture at the University College of Wales in Aberystwyth, site of the world's first department of International Relations, Ken Booth put his finger on the central point. He argued that

sovereignty is disintegrating. States are less able to perform their traditional functions. Global factors increasingly impinge on all decisions made by governments. Identity patterns are becoming more complex, as people assert local loyalties but want to share in global values and lifestyles. The traditional distinction between "foreign" and "domestic" policy is less tenable than ever. And there is growing awareness that we are sharing a common world history. . . . The [metaphor for the] international system which is now developing . . . is of an egg-box containing the shells of sovereignty; but alongside it a global community omelette is cooking. (Booth, 1991:542)

What Booth did not pinpoint were the reasons for the "disintegration of sovereignty" or, for that matter, where it might lead. Indeed, although virtually everyone writing on the future of world politics takes as a starting point the decline in the sovereign prerogatives of the state, almost no one places the responsibility for this loss directly on the state itself. It is not that the governments of contemporary states have meant to lose sovereignty; they were searching for means to further enhance their power, control *and* sovereignty. Rather, it was that certain institutional practices set in train after World War II have, paradoxically, reduced the sovereign autonomy that was, after all, the ultimate objective of the Allied forces in that war.

Indeed, if there is a single central "unintended consequence" of the international politics and economics of the past fifty years, it is the replacement of the sovereign state by the sovereign individual as the subject of world politics. In saying this, I do not mean to suggest that states are bound to disappear, or that the "legitimate monopoly of violence" will, somehow, be reassigned to tribes, clans, or individuals (although some, such as Kaplan [1996] and Martin van Creveld [1991], argue that, in many places, this has already happened). Instead, it is to



argue that the project of “globalization” (an ill-defined and all-encompassing term, discussed in chapter 2), its commitment to individualism in politics, markets, and civil society, and the decline in the likelihood of large-scale wars and threats around which national mobilization can occur, have made reification of the individual the highest value of many societies, both developed and developing. But because globalization has different effects on different people, and some find themselves better off while others are worse off, individual sovereignty is not accepted by all as a positive value; there is reason to question, moreover, whether it *should* be regarded positively (Hirsch, 1995). The heedless pursuit of individual self-interest can have corrosive impacts on long-standing institutions, cultures, and hierarchies, and can lead to a degree of social destabilization that may collapse into uncontrolled violence and destruction.

The implications of this process for sovereignty, authority, and security are manifold. Whereas it used to be taken for granted that the nation-state was the object to be secured by the power of the state, the disappearance of singular enemies has opened a fundamental ontological hole, an *insecurity dilemma*, if you will. Inasmuch as different threats or threatening scenarios promise to affect different individuals and groups differently, there is no overarching enemy that can be used for purposes of mass mobilization (a theme of one of Huntington’s more recent articles; see Huntington, 1997). Those concerned about computer hackers penetrating their cyberspace are rarely the same as those concerned about whether they will still be welcome in their workplaces tomorrow. Whereas it used to be taken for granted that threats to security originated from without—from surprise attacks, invading armies, and agents who sometimes managed to turn citizens into traitors—globalization’s erosion of national authority has managed to create movements of “patriotic” dissidence whose targets are traitorous governments in the seats of national power.<sup>1</sup>

The old threats were countries with bombs; the new threats are individuals with mail privileges. The old threat was the electromagnetic pulse from exo-atmospheric nuclear detonations; the new threat is information warfare by rogue states, terrorist groups (and corporations?). The old threat was communist subversion by spies, sympathizers, and socialist teachers; the new threat is juvenile subversion by pornography on the World Wide Web. The old threat was aggressive

dictators; the new threat is abusive parents. In short, loyalty to the state has been replaced by loyalty to the self, and national authority has been shouldered aside by self-interest. The world of the future might not be one of 200 or 500 or even 1,000 (semi-) sovereign states co-existing uneasily; it could well be one in which every individual is a state of her own, a world of 10 billion statelets, living in a true State of Nature.

### What This Book Is About

This book reflects on these matters, on the “end” of authority, sovereignty, and national security at the conclusion of the twentieth century, and on the implications of that end for war, peace, and individual *and* global politics in the twenty-first. I am not so foolish as to argue here that these phenomena will cease to exist in the near future or that the state is doomed to disappear. And I have no intention of brushing over the genealogies of these concepts or, for that matter, the state and state system in speculating on the global political environment of the twenty-first century. But I do propose here that, in the long view of history, the two hundred-odd years between 1789 and 1989 were exceptional in that the nation-state was unchallenged by any other form of political organization at the global level.<sup>2</sup> That exceptional period is now just about over.

What *will* emerge over the coming decades is by no means determined or even clear. As the extent of social change becomes more evident, strong states could reassert their primacy and drive the world back into a new period of geopolitical competition (as could happen in East Asia; see, e.g., Bernstein and Munro, 1997). It is entirely possible that global civil society and institutions of transnational governance will, to a significant degree, supplement or supplant national governments, without undermining the basis for the nation (as appears to be taking place in Europe; see Lipschutz, 1996). Or, the resulting social tensions might be so severe as to cause a collapse into violent chaos and nonstate forms of governance (as some suggest is occurring in various parts of Africa and some urban agglomerations; see Jackson, 1990). Perhaps these, and other, forms of political community and action will coexist, as the medieval and the modern were forced to do

during the transition from one to the other. I make few predictions, and no promises.

I begin, in chapter 2, with “The Worries of Nations.” One of the much-noted paradoxes of the 1990s is the coexistence of processes of integration and fragmentation, of globalism and particularism, of simultaneous centralization and decentralization often in the very same place. James Rosenau (1990) has coined the rather unwieldy term “framegration” to describe this phenomenon, which he ascribes largely to the emergence of a “sovereignty-free” world in the midst of a “sovereignty-bound” one. Rosenau frames this “bifurcation” of world politics as a series of conceptual and practical “jailbreaks,” as people acquire the knowledge and capabilities to break out of the political and social structures that have kept them imprisoned for some centuries. Rosenau’s theory—if it can be called that—is an essentially liberal one and, while he acknowledges the importance of economic factors in the split between the two worlds, he shies away from recognizing the central role of material and economic change and the ancillary processes of social innovation and reorganization in this phenomenon.

Without falling into a deterministic historical materialism, it is critical to recognize just how central “production,” as Robert Cox (1987) and Stephen Gill (1993) put it, is to the changes to which we are witness. Production is more than just the making of things (by which I mean material goods as well as knowledge); it is the making of *particular* things under particular *forms* of social organization to fulfill particular societal *purposes* (Latour, 1986). These purposes are not autonomous of the material basis of a society but neither are they superstructure to that base. The two constitute each other and, through practice, do so on a continuous and dynamically changing basis. Social organization then becomes the means by which things are produced and used to fulfill those purposes. Lest this all seem too tautological, or functionalist, there is more at work here than just reproduction, as we shall see. Rosenau’s “framegration” is, thus, a consequence of more than just the acquisition of knowledge and skills in a postsovereign political space; it is a direct result of the particular ways in which production and purpose have been pursued and the forms of social organization established to facilitate that pursuit.

The simultaneous conditions of integration and fragmentation are, then, part of the process of social innovation and reorganization

that go hand-in-hand with changes in production and purpose. Why, after two hundred or more years of state consolidation and centralization, this should happen now, is not immediately apparent although the consequences are all too clear. Whether, on balance, this is to be regarded as a positive or negative development remains to be seen. What is clear is that there is no teleology invoked or involved here. I do, however, attribute recent changes to forces similar to those described by Karl Polanyi (1944/1957) in explaining the causes of the two World Wars, and to the ways in which knowledge and social innovation have transformed our relationship to the nation-state and to each other.

In chapter 3, I turn to the “Insecurity Dilemma” and its relationship to globalization. What does it mean to be threatened? What does it mean to be secure? As in the myth of the Golden Fleece, the slaying of the Great Soviet Dragon seems to have given rise to a proliferation of smaller, poisonous lizards, most of which are merely annoying, but some of which might be deadly. The difficulty comes in telling the two apart. Integration and interdependence, it has long been supposed, foster communication, understanding, and peace, especially among democracies, but if fragmentation is taking place at the same time, in which direction does the arrow of safety point?

Forty years ago, John Herz (1959) pointed out how the efforts of some states to make themselves more secure often made other states feel less secure (see also Jervis, 1978). Inasmuch as intentions could not be known with certainty, while capabilities could be observed with surety, it was better to assume the worst of one’s neighbor. Today, with the proliferation of imagined threats—imagined in the sense that virtually none have, as yet, come to pass—even capabilities can no longer be fully scrutinized. Terrorists might have acquired weapons of mass destruction—but we do not know for sure.<sup>3</sup> Illegal immigrants are subverting our cultures—but they are also supporting them. Mysterious diseases lurk in uncharted forests—but they can escape at a day’s notice, without warning. And even the state cannot protect everyone against these myriads of threats if it does not know whether or not they are real (Lipschutz, 1999b).

The result is a wholesale transformation in the security apparatus of the state. Not only is it now directed against external enemies, wherever and wherever they might be, but also against domestic ones—

and these just might be the boy or girl next door. Soldiers become cops. Cops acquire armored cars and tanks. Citizens are scrutinized for criminal proclivities. Criminals adopt military armaments and practices. Even the paranoid have enemies and, in a paranoid society, can anyone trust anyone except her/himself? (There may be good reason to be paranoid, as we shall see in chapter 7; the chances are that someone *is* watching *you*).

Historically, the purpose of “security” was to protect state and society against war. In chapter 4, “Arms and Affluence,” I ask “Whatever happened to World War III?” War has long been a staple topic of film, fiction, and philosophy, if only because it is so uncommon. For those in the midst of battle, there is hardly a big picture: One’s focus is on survival from one moment to the next. For those who are observers, it is the infrequency and extremities of war that is so fascinating. Yet, in virtually all discussions by international relations specialists, war is taken not as a social institution that can, somehow, be eliminated through deliberate political action, but as a “natural” outgrowth of human nature and relations between human collectives (see, e.g., Waltz, 1959). Where the interests of such collectives come into conflict, it is assumed, war will result; conversely, if collectives can negotiate over their interests, peace is possible. Experience suggests we be more cautious in making such unqualified claims.

Paradoxically, while the war of all against all develops apace, the wars of state against state become ever more uncommon. The United States prepares itself for future regional wars, such as the one undertaken against Iraq, in the face of compelling evidence that such wars erupt no more than once every decade or two. In place of really existing war, we now confront virtual warfare, or what I call here “disciplinary deterrence.” This is war by other means: by example, by punishment, by public relations. It rests upon the United States not as world policeperson but as dominatrix, or global vice-principal strolling down the high school hallway, checking miscreants for hall passes. Violators, such as Iraq, get spanked (giving new meanings to bondage and domination), and serve as warning to others who might think about causing trouble. I return to the implications of this metaphor in chapter 7.

Hobbes and Locke argued that Leviathan and the social contract were necessary to counter the State of Nature, a condition in which the sole moral stricture was to survive. Only through the state could men

(and women) begin to build societies and civilizations. In chapter 5, “Markets, the State, and War,” I examine wars over nature, so-called resource wars that some think could take place over scarce water. In these cases, the limits of nature are presumed to lead to conflict and war among those who require scarce natural goods (Lipschutz, 1989). This amounts to a political redistribution of access meant to redress the arbitrary boundaries of state and geography.

The solution offered to impasses of this sort is exchange in the market, a practice and institution that, left to operate on its own under orderly conditions, can impose peace through the price mechanism. But markets are no less political than any other human institution; they require rules to operate properly, and someone must formulate such rules (Attali, 1997). Moreover, relying on markets to defuse conflicts over resources and environment could have the perverse effect of returning us to something much closer to the State of Nature through the naturalization of market relations. Naturalizing the market removes it from the domain of everyday politics by representing it as immutable and subject neither to change nor to external authority. This, as I point out, is an act of power and domination whose outcomes are quite unlikely to be equitable or legitimate. Indeed, letting the market work its magic may result in no more than a transitory “neoliberal” peace that ultimately leads to vast distributive inequities and a new round of violence (Lipschutz, 1999a).

Most contemporary wars are neither between states nor about resources. Chapter 6, “The Social Contraction” explores the causes and consequences of wars *within* nation-states, especially as manifested through what we have come to call “ethnic” or “sectarian” conflict. Conventional wisdom attributes these cultural wars to socio-biology, ancient animosities, and the need for human beings to differentiate themselves from one another. Yet, there is a fundamental problem with such explanations: They fail to tell us in convincing fashion why such violence did not develop earlier or why earlier periods of violence were followed by times of relative peace and stability. Even such arguments as authoritarian governments “keeping the lid on the kettle” are no more than inaccurate metaphors; politics is neither classical mechanics nor thermodynamics nor even chaos theory.

Rather than being understood as some sort of atavistic or premodern phenomenon, cultural conflict should be seen as a modern

(or even postmodern) response to fundamental social change. The unachievable dream of political theorists and practitioners is stability, now and forever; the undeniable truth is change, always and everywhere. During periods of “normality,” change is slower and more predictable; it can be managed, up to a point. Over the past few decades, we have been witness to more rapid and less predictable changes, brought about by globalization and social innovation. These changes have destabilized the political hierarchies that rule over social orders—even democratic ones—and provided opportunities for those who might seek greater power and wealth to do so. The conflicts and clashes that result can tear societies apart.

The tools for popular mobilization are both contextual and contingent; the phenomenon of social warfare, as Jim Seaton (1994) calls it, has changed only in form, but not in content. During the Cold War, political elites mobilized polities and gained power using the discourse of East versus West, Marxist versus Capitalist. Today, culture has become the language under which political action takes place, and elites operate accordingly. In all cases, it is the contractual basis of social order that is under challenge and being destroyed. When people find their prospects uncertain and dismal, they tend to go with those who can promise a better, more promising future. Cultural solidarity draws on such teleological scenarios and pie in the sky, by and by.

In Chapter 7, “The Princ(ipal),” I explore how the state—especially the American state—is engaged in both international and domestic discipline in the effort to maintain political order amidst the disorder generated by globalization. While conventional wisdom sees the nation-state as a functional provider of security, identity, and welfare, it is better understood as an actor that seeks to project its own, unique, *national* morality into world politics. Each nation-state, as guardian of its own civil religion and inheritor of a moral authority bequeathed to it by Church and Prince (yes, even the United States!), is seen by its members as the total embodiment of good. In this ethnocentric ontology, therefore, all other nation-states come to be representatives of evil. Those states with power try to impose their moralities onto world politics, in the view that the triumph of good can follow only from total domination. If this is not possible, the next best thing is obedience.

The globalization of markets, however, poses an unprecedented challenge to statist moralities. In market society, consumption is a

*good* (and *is good*), and it is the individual's responsibility to consume according to his or her needs and desires. Authority thus comes to rest within each individual, whose self-interested behavior becomes, ipso facto, a moral good (although some might call it nihilism). The state, seeking to reimpose order, is forced to demonstrate its authority by acting as a moral agent able to impose its wishes both abroad and at home. Culture wars are one result, for material girls and boys are not so easily lured back inside the old moral borders.

Are politics in the twenty-first century destined to be so grim? Not necessarily. Trends are never destiny. We are constrained, but we can make choices. In chapter 8, "Politics among People," I suggest a more optimistic possibility. For better or worse, the end of the twentieth century has seen a gradual shift of political power away from the nation-state to the local and the global. Downward decentralization and upward concentration could be disempowering, or they might provide the means for global diversity and democratization. Some governance functions are becoming globalized; others are being devolved to the local level. If we are not to let the global capture the critical functions and leave the irrelevant ones to the local, it is necessary to find ways to have global rules and local diversity, a transnational politics that is both democratic and action-oriented. I suspect that "global civil society" might be one means of accomplishing this end, but there are other possibilities to offer, as we shall see.

If we leave politics to the market, we will be able to choose among cereals, toilet paper, automobiles. If we bring politics back in, opportunities for choices will be broader, more appealing and more just. Political action is, therefore, an absolute necessity; if we fail to act, we may be fat but we will not be happy. The world, "after authority," can be ours to fashion, if we so decide.



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