

# FOREWORD

By Richard Falk

It has become increasingly difficult to frame international relations according to the realist template premised upon interaction among sovereign states. When World War II ended, the United Nations was constructed on the basis of such a template, conceiving of membership in organized international society as an exclusively statist prerogative. No other political actors were considered sufficiently significant as participants in international political life to challenge the Westphalian paradigm that has dominated thought about world politics for several centuries.

The UN Charter did close its eyes to the tension between its juridical affirmation of the equality of states and its constitutional acknowledgment of existential inequality in the form of veto rights for the five permanent members of the Security Council. It closed them even tighter with respect to the colonized peoples of Asia and Africa, who were (mis)represented at the United Nations by their colonial masters. As the decolonization process rapidly unfolded in the period between 1947 and 1980, the newly independent states were admitted to membership in the United Nations, which meant that the Westphalian system that had previously been mainly regional in scope and civilizational in identity gradually evolved into a genuinely universal framework. This was the first time that such a formally multicivilizational framework embraced all the peoples of the world, and did seem to be a small step in the direction of what might be called “constitutional globalization.”

But it is important to appreciate that this kind of organizational framework did little to alter the logic of security that was based, as it had been for centuries, on military capabilities, alliances, and geopolitical hierarchies. The Cold War period, culminating this dynamic of international relations that sustained the security of major states, made the specter of war so fearsome in what came

to be known as a system of mutual deterrence supposedly made stable by the prospect of massive devastation associated with the possession of huge arsenals of nuclear weapons by the main antagonists on the global stage. Such a bipolar world order established a condition of apocalyptic vulnerability for the entire planet that had never previously existed, and carried the amorality of political realism to the stratospheric heights of potential omnicide, or what some observers viewed as a geopolitics of extermination. This geographic extension of destruction to encompass the whole world can be best interpreted as the onset of “military globalization.” An aspect of this global setting that dominated the political imagination during the Cold War was the negotiation of zones of stability (in the North), as signaled by the avoidance of intervention in Europe, and zones of interventionary rivalry (in the South), as epitomized by the wars in Korea, Vietnam, and Afghanistan.

These developments were profound but did not challenge the conceptual foundations of a Westphalian world constituted by the complex interplay between sovereign states and a supervening discipline administered by geopolitical actors exerting direct and indirect control over subordinate weaker states. A challenge did emerge in the years following the collapse of the Soviet Union due to several converging developments: the spread of what was labeled in the early 1990s as “market-oriented constitutionalism,” the consequent fading away of a socialist alternative, the ascendancy of the United States as the sole surviving superpower, and a set of technological and administrative moves associated with information technology that facilitated transnational networking and socioeconomic integration. It was this series of interrelated developments unfolding in an atmosphere free from ideological rivalry that gave such salience to trade and investment trends, which were increasingly described beneath the banner of “economic globalization.” The traditional preoccupations of states with security were temporarily displaced by preoccupations with economic growth as the universal engine of progress, and conflict was seen more as peripheral to world order—as disruptive encounters of mainly local, national, and humanitarian concern—and not as previously perceived, that is, as dangerously unresolved geopolitical dramas of deadly encounter.

The exception to this pattern of geopolitical calm came in the First Gulf War, when in 1990 Iraq attacked and attempted to annex Kuwait, generating a collective response organized by the United States with the backing of the United Nations. The American president at the time, George H.W. Bush, associated the military response in 1991 with a “new world order,” precisely because the

leading countries could agree on a common response that was given legitimacy by a decision of the UN Security Council. James Baker, the secretary of state, acknowledged a few years later that it was an unfortunate mistake for the U.S. government to have associated the new world order with collective security during the Kuwait crisis rather than to connect it with the ideological underpinning of “neoliberal globalization.” More to the point, it was these emerging patterns of behavior and supportive structures, especially the combination of minimally regulated financial markets and disciplinary control of the South through the International Monetary Fund and World Bank, that cumulatively achieved the first rupture in the Westphalian framing of world politics through the prism of sovereign states delimited by territorial boundaries.

The second rupture came a decade later in the 9/11 attacks on the World Trade Center and Pentagon. These attacks were notable because they exhibited the geopolitical potency of nonstate actors and networks, demonstrating their fearful capability to disempower the traditional security mechanisms of sovereign states, which rested on their unchallengeable control of military power to deter and defend. What Al Qaeda achieved by way of inflicting harm on the dominant geopolitical actor possessing the most formidable military capabilities in the history of the world was a result that no adversary state would dare to undertake. Beyond this disclosure of a post-statist vulnerability was the awkwardness of the response, a flaying of destructive capacities without a notable impact on the terrorist threat. The response relied heavily on the military machine constructed to address hostile threats posed by adversary states but proving almost useless against this new type of threat. To the extent the threat was effectively addressed it was done through a combination of intelligence and police work that was, if anything, hampered by the clumsiness of the military undertakings. What was disclosed by 9/11 and its aftermath was a globalization of insecurity, characterized by an inability to ensure protection or to remove the threat.

But this second rupture also gave rise to a second profound shock to Westphalian verities in the form of the emergence of a “global state.” The United States, with its military bases spread throughout the world, its navies on every ocean, its satellites in the skies, its special forces ignoring the constraints of foreign sovereignty, could be grasped as neither an oversized sovereign state nor as a new type of empire. It was something new and different, which corresponded to the security challenge that could not be situated territorially. Such a perception of a global state was reinforced by the reach of American diplomatic ambition and popular culture.

The third rupture took the form of the financial meltdown of 2008 and the ensuing global economic crisis, radiating its negative impacts to all corners of the planet. Whether this moment of truth for neoliberal globalization is manageable as a cyclical dislocation cannot now be discerned. If unmanageable, it would be viewed as a systemic dislocation imperiling the future of capitalism. What is already evident, and on message, is that the statist problem-solving framework relied upon to reform global economic policy is not well calibrated to the global scale of the challenge. As a result, national economic rivalry, protectionism in various forms, is likely to preclude a more benevolent pattern of response based on respecting and realizing the *global* public good.

It is with these three ruptures in mind that I find James Mittelman's book to be such an invaluable contribution to thought and action in a period characterized by confusion, turmoil, anxiety, and a pervasive sense of risk that gives rise to an enveloping atmosphere of *insecurity*. Mittelman brilliantly and presciently provides us with the first comprehensive mapping of this twenty-first century terrain of insecurity, the touchstone of his heroic effort to depict the wider implications of neoliberal globalization for the future of humanity.

What makes this undertaking truly heroic is that Mittelman accepts the daunting challenge of reconstituting a conceptual framework capable of sustaining inquiry given the obsolescence of Westphalian categories of diagnosis and prognosis. He adapts the terminology of "hyperpower," "hypercompetition," and "hyperconflict" to the originality of the global setting, whether viewed from traditional geopolitical or geoeconomic perspectives. Without questioning the continuing importance of the territorial state, the building block of Westphalian world order, Mittelman draws our attention with great erudition to how old boundaries, as between domestic and international, between self and other, between we and they, are being reconstituted to the great disadvantage of those individuals, groups, and societies that are particularly vulnerable and in various ways situated at the margins. Mittelman invokes such currently influential thinkers as Carl Schmitt, Michel Foucault, Edward Said, and Judith Butler, as well as the usual suspects found in progressive works dealing with the global setting, including Gramsci, Schumpeter, and Karl Polanyi. He also is conversant with contemporary social science approaches used to depict international trends as well as to discuss the nature and role of state and market. Overall, Mittelman builds confidence that his theory-building rests on a thorough consideration of the best thinking that has preceded his monumental undertaking. You may not agree with the assessments reached, but it is difficult to

resist the conclusion that Mittelman did his very best to draw insight and support from the work of others, including those with different, even antagonistic, worldviews, such as Samuel Huntington, Thomas Barnett, and Niall Ferguson. He also does not ignore the contributions of thinkers far more congenial, including Robert Cox and Susan Strange. Such a wide net catches many ideas and approaches, making this book a pedagogical natural for university instruction.

The central argument of the book (but not its subtlety and nuanced analysis) is conveyed by the title, *Hyperconflict: Globalization and Insecurity*. Without the temerity to summarize or dissect Mittelman's worldview, I think it evident that the major conjecture underlying the text is that economic globalization is not just an extension of world trade and investment but is having revolutionary effects on the organization of political, economic, and social life of the peoples of the world; further, that the regressive ideological underpinnings of this phenomenon have been provided by neoliberalism, which privileges the market and the interests of capital and finance while neglecting the adverse consequences on people and culture. Using a series of illuminating case studies to show these forces at work in specific contexts enables Mittelman also to analyze the countermovement of resistance, both through the mobilization of civil society, as in the "battle of Seattle," and, pathologically, through the 9/11 attacks with their antihyperpower animus. Moving beyond the interactions in these examples, Mittelman provides revealing accounts of how the United States as hyperpower strives to establish a self-serving form of "security" but has unwittingly, and instead, intensified hostility and distrust to the point of generating hypercompetition, which in turn gives rise to hyperconflict. This pattern leaves in its wake a sense of heightened risk and uncertainty that is being variously experienced at different sites of struggle and vulnerability as totalizing insecurity. This experience of insecurity exhibits the novelty of this interplay of forces, making it mystifying and opaque, which in turn calls out for exposition.

Mittelman is very clear that his mission is to help us think, and not to offer simplistic solutions, much less to set forth specific policy prescriptions. He writes assuredly from a progressive perspective, movingly acknowledged in an autobiographical preface that helps establish his credential for identification and sympathy with those who find themselves victimized by forces they cannot control but strive to understand and resist. As the currently unfolding world economic crisis confirms, the tentacles of insecurity grip the hyperpower as well as the weak and vulnerable, and what is more, as clearly perceived by Mittelman, security cannot be restored by the old Westphalian reflex of militarism.

Indeed, as the neoconservative Bush presidency pathetically revealed, yielding to the militarist impulse, historically so often decisive in the high politics of global rivalry, greatly accentuated American insecurity as well as inflicted massive suffering elsewhere.

This is Mittelman's most urgent message to his readers: the old ways of power will not work, and the new ways are not yet accepted by those with the authority and capability to act. Can new leadership in this country and elsewhere, as pushed by crisis conditions and pressures from below ("globalization-from-below") and from without (climate change), restore security? Mittelman's answer, without specifying a road map, is that this hopeful possibility can only be materialized if a genuine commitment to the construction of global democracy is coupled with a drastic reorientation of globalization, basically, a shift from the priorities of capital to the imperatives of people, conceived of holistically as the human species, and not from the perspective of class, ethnicity, gender, or nation-state.

This is an inspiring book written for all those who are ready to sign up for planetary citizenship, even if this is not their current mind-set. We can keep our old identities built around loyalty to and pride in nation and state, but to move forward we will need to enlarge them as well if we are to find creative and humane responses to the multiple challenges of globalization. Mittelman not only helps us to see the world as it is but shows us how we should think about the future so as to overcome insecurity and to ground hope. This is a great achievement, warranting our attention and reflection, and eventually our gratitude.