

Globalization and International Democracy

Marc Lynch

Global Transformations: Politics, Economics and Culture, David Held, Anthony McGrew, David Goldblatt, and Jonathan Perraton (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1999). 540 pp., paper (ISBN: 0-8047-3627-8), \$29.95; cloth (ISBN: 0-8047-3625-1), \$75.00.

Re-Imagining Political Community: Studies in Cosmopolitan Democracy, Daniele Archibugi, David Held, and Martin Kohler, eds. (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1998). 352 pp., paper (ISBN: 0-8047-3535), \$22.95; cloth (ISBN: 0-8047-5344), \$60.00.

The Power of Human Rights: International Norms and Domestic Change, Thomas Risse, Stephen C. Ropp, and Kathryn Sikkink, eds. (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1999). 318 pp., paper (ISBN: 0-521-65882-9), \$22.95; cloth (ISBN: 0-521-65093-3), \$59.95.

The recent protests in Seattle and Washington against international economic institutions focused attention on the growing perception that crucial political decisions have escaped the hands of democratically accountable governments. The protests also hinted at how global activist networks could exploit the potential of political and media globalization to challenge the processes of economic globalization. Political action across state lines has forced international relations theory to grapple with questions more commonly associated with democratic political theory. Following in the path of the study of democratic deficits and institutional reform in the European Union, the books under review here represent a new concern in international relations theory for the impact of globalization on democracy and political legitimacy.¹

¹On the European debates, see Jürgen Habermas, "The European Nation-State and the Pressures of Globalization," *New Left Review* 235 (1999), pp. 46–59; Erik Eriksen

If important processes affecting the lives of citizens transcend state borders and escape state power, then is national democracy reduced to a formality? How can citizens act politically to affect substantive outcomes whose causes lie outside state borders in the absence of effective supranational political institutions? If international institutions do develop, how can they be made responsive to the concerns of national citizens? To the extent that international institutions make and enforce authoritative decisions, can national citizens democratically participate in their processes? Each book under review makes important claims about the relationship between globalization and democratic political participation, both within states and across them.

The books offer a theoretical and empirical intervention into interlocking debates about how much globalization has transformed domestic and international politics. By examining how globalization shapes the political opportunity structures across multiple spheres of public activity, the authors seek to transcend an increasingly unproductive divide in international theory.

This divide traditionally revolved around the role of the state in mediating the demands of interdependence. Traditionalists consider globalization greatly overrated, resembling earlier periods of high economic interdependence and relative prosperity. Even where globalization has created new transnational challenges, the creation of international government is neither effective nor normatively desirable. As Hedley Bull famously argued, any international government would tend inexorably toward either inefficient anarchy or unbearable tyranny.² To the extent that increasing interdependence creates a demand for global governance, it should take the form of international regimes and institutions based upon the convergence of state interests. On the other hand, advocates of world order, like Richard Falk, have long called to both strengthen and democratize global political institutions.³ From this perspective, the state system has become manifestly inefficient and dysfunctional with regard to global threats, processes, and demands. Instead of reasserting state power or organizing state cooperation through regimes, these theorists advocate effective supranational institutions capable of articulating and defending global interests.

The books under review attempt to transcend this debate by developing, implicitly or explicitly, a third, “transformationalist” possibility: the emergence

and John Fossum, eds., *Democracy in the European Union: Integration through Deliberation* (Oxford, U.K.: Oxford University Press, 2000); J.H.H. Weiler, “European Democracy and Its Critique,” *West European Politics* 18, No. 3 (1995), pp. 4–39.

²Hedley Bull, “The State’s Positive Role in World Affairs,” *Daedalus* 108 (1979), pp. 60–73. For a defense of intergovernmentalism in the European context, see Andrew Moravcsik, *The Choice for Europe: State Power and Social Purpose from Messina to Maastricht* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1998).

³Richard Falk, *On Humane Governance: Toward a New Global Politics* (Cambridge, U.K.: Polity Press, 1995).

of a global political arena that reshapes the conditions and dynamics of both domestic and international politics without the corresponding emergence of an international state. The authors perceive the possibility of an “international domestic politics” of democratically legitimated decisions in the emergence of a globalized political arena.

The perceived urgency of rethinking the theoretical foundations of democracy and international politics rests on an empirical claim about globalization. *Global Transformations* represents an impressive, if not decisive, intervention into the debates about the novelty, significance, and scope of the globalization of economies, politics, and culture. “Skeptics” about globalization, such as Ethan Kapstein, Linda Weiss, Paul Hirst, and Stephen Krasner contend that the state retains considerable power in the face of global economic forces (pp. 5–7).⁴ This skepticism buttresses the traditionalist position, suggesting that states retain much more influence and power than globalization enthusiasts admit. Politics remains an essentially national affair, and to the extent that globalization matters, it is in the recasting of power relations among domestic actors that might affect the articulation of state interests. A second position, whose advocates David Held terms “hyperglobalizers” (pp. 3–5), considers globalization to be a fundamentally new epoch in human history, in which old categories and concepts no longer apply. For authors like Thomas Friedman and Kenichi Ohmae, global economic forces are increasingly the only politics that matter, as states are stripped of their efficacy before global market forces.⁵ In this “borderless world,” the ruthless competition imposed by global financial markets and the benefits to be derived from the international economy overwhelm the preferences of domestic citizens and impose a single standard of political economy and a narrow range of acceptable behaviors upon all states. According to the transformationalist position, “Contemporary globalization is reconstituting or ‘re-engineering’ the power, functions and authority of national governments” (p. 8). States have not disappeared, and indeed in many dimensions of political, economic, and cultural life they have become more powerful and more active

⁴Ethan Kapstein, *Governing the Global Economy: International Finance and the State* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1994); Linda Weiss, *The Myth of the Powerless State* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1998); Paul Hirst, “The Global Economy: Myths and Realities,” *International Affairs* 73 (1997); Stephen Krasner, “Economic Interdependence and Independent Statehood,” in Robert Jackson and Alan James, eds., *States in a Changing World* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993).

⁵Thomas Friedman, *The Lexus and the Olive Tree* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1999); Kenichi Ohmae, *The End of the Nation-State: The Rise of Regional Economies* (New York: Free Press, 1995). For an important recent critique of this position, see Robert Gilpin, *The Challenge of Globalization* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2000).

(p. 436). *Global Transformations* rejects both the enthusiasm of the hyperglobalizers and the skepticism of the traditionalists, offering a more guarded set of conclusions about the reshaping of contemporary politics.

Global Transformations offers the best available empirical and theoretical overview of these debates. It also provides a formidably systematic set of conceptual distinctions, analytical conclusions, and relevant evidence; this book should become a standard text on the subject. Within the sometimes cumbersome terminology and taxonomy lurks a sharply incisive appreciation of how globalization has reshaped politics at the national, state, and international levels. Few who read this work will be able to adhere to a pure skeptics' position. The "intensity, extensity, velocity, and impact propensity" of global processes documented here (see overview on pp. 14–29, box 1.1, p. 21) overwhelm the skeptics' statistical presentations of comparable international financial flows in the late nineteenth century. Responding to this common historicizing move, *Global Transformations* maintains that globalization cannot be reduced to one of its many manifestations, but instead must be interpreted as an interrelated and mutually constituting set of processes. Among the dimensions of globalization analyzed in this comprehensive overview are military relations and "the expanding reach of organized violence" (chap. 2), global trade and global markets (chap. 3), global finance (chap. 4), corporate power and global production networks (chap. 5), migration and refugees (chap. 6), culture (chap. 7), and the environment (chap. 8). Traditionalist analyses that focus on a single dimension of globalization to dismiss its novelty fundamentally miss the point: these processes as a coherent whole have qualitatively and quantitatively reshaped the infrastructure of politics, economics, and culture.

Yet *Global Transformations* does not endorse the hyperglobalizer position. Sovereignty has not been "wholly subverted," but rather has become less absolute and has taken on new meanings within "criss-crossing loyalties, conflicting interpretations of rights and duties, [and] interconnected legal and authority structures" (p. 81). This conceptualization focuses more upon the shifting opportunities for political action than upon decisive or structurally determined political outcomes.

In contrast to the hyperglobalizer assumption that globalization has changed everything, *Global Transformations*' exhaustive discussion of the various indices of globalization forces observers to recognize that transformation has not been homogeneous. State power has been recast far more decisively in some issue domains than in others and, in many cases, has become more rather than less determinative.⁶ Reaction to globalization remains more of an option in

⁶For elaboration of this theme, see Susan Strange, *The Retreat of the State* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998); Robert Cox, *Approaches to World Order* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996).

some issue domains than in others, and the ability to resist or shape the pressures of globalization depends upon the institutional competence and particular conditions of states. Globalization might have more impact on domestic coalitions and state institutions than on state power itself.⁷

Despite the great popular attention paid to global markets and finance, the dimension of globalization that seems least debatable in its novelty is the spread of global communications (p. 363). Although corollaries of current levels of trade, finance, investment, diplomacy, and military competition can be reasonably located in the past, there seems to be no precedent for the speed, depth, and penetration of modern communications. Communications technology has reshaped the opportunity structure of contemporary politics, making almost every political issue one of international rather than purely domestic interest. Many of the political manifestations of globalization, such as the rise of intrusive global human rights norms and the proliferation of international and transnational organizations, can plausibly be accounted for within the context of communications technology.

Beyond simply the technological dimension, to a much greater degree than in the past there seem to be common global debates and discourses over world order, culture, and power. The truly global discourses over Samuel Huntington's theory of clashing civilizations, or the universality of human rights, or the intersection of states and nongovernmental organizations at U.N. conferences on the environment, population, and women, seem to herald the existence of a global political arena. Common political debates do not imply or assume the emergence of a single, homogenized world culture. Held sees the emergence of a "global politics. . . the extension of political power and political activity across the boundaries of the modern nation-state" (p. 49). As the authors put it, "globalization does not prefigure the end of politics so much as its continuation by new means. The prospects for 'civilizing' and 'democratizing' contemporary globalization are thus not as bleak as some suggest" (p. 444). These discourses, addressed to a global public, reveal the contours of an emergent international public sphere. The "cosmopolitan" project articulated in *Global Transformations* (as well as in *Re-Imagining Political Community*) "attempts to specify the principles and the institutional arrangements for making accountable those sites and forms of power which presently operate beyond the scope of democratic control" (p. 449).

Re-Imagining Political Community, which can be read as a more philosophically inclined companion piece, presents in fifteen chapters the views of twenty political theorists on the question of democracy and globalization. This book

⁷ Geoffrey Garrett, *Partisan Politics in the Global Economy* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1999); Robert Keohane and Helen Milner, *Internationalization and Domestic Politics* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996).

envisions “build[ing] a political project for a different world order” (p. 199), summarized by Daniele Archibugi as one “capable of promoting democracy on three different but mutually supporting levels: (1) democracy inside nations; (2) democracy among states; (3) global democracy” (p. 209). The authors take as given that globalization has significantly undermined the core of national democratic government and expanded the communities of fate once bounded by nation-states.⁸

In his contribution to *Re-Imagining Political Community*, Held argues that “the locus of effective political power can no longer be assumed to be national governments. . . . The idea of a political community of fate. . . can no longer meaningfully be located within the boundaries of a single nation-state” (pp. 21–22). If the political community is no longer bounded by the nation-state and states no longer control effective decisions, then how can liberal electoral democracy continue to legitimate the political system? Rather than exploring this as an empirical question, as is done in *Global Transformations, Re-Imagining Political Community* adopts a more theoretical perspective on the possibilities for representation, participation, and effective government. Although the authors vary in their prescriptions, most converge on the need for some form of effective cosmopolitan citizenship in which individuals are empowered and authorized to participate in policy formation at the international level. James Crawford and Susan Marks write that a “global democracy deficit” threatens the foundations of both domestic and international law (p. 79). As in the European Union debates, this democratic deficit is conceptualized as double edged: democracy at the national level has become increasingly meaningless as real decisions are made at a higher level, and these higher-level institutions are largely exempt from democratic oversight or accountability (pp. 227–229).

Re-Imagining Political Community conceives of cosmopolitan democracy as follows: “Deliberative and political decision making centers beyond national territories are justified when cross-border or transnational groups are affected by a public matter, when ‘lower’ levels of decision-making cannot resolve the issues in question and when the issue of the accountability of the matter at hand can only itself be understood and redeemed in a transnational, cross-border context” (p. 8). In other words, where it makes no sense to hold state governments accountable for outcomes, political institutions must emerge to offer such accountability. Such functionalist logic, postulating the emergence of an outcome because of the imputed need for that outcome, will convince few critics. The authors unfortunately offer hardly more than a normative enthusiasm for democratization in support of this projection. The democratization of globalization is generally offered as a possibility, but little evidence is provided

⁸ Andrew Linklater, *The Transformation of Political Community* (Columbia, S.C.: University of South Carolina Press, 1998).

that this is a likely development. Richard Falk's warning that "the rudimentary glimmering of global civil society is not sufficient to ensure the realization of substantive democracy either within states or in relation to the United Nations" offers a sobering corrective to some of the more enthusiastic articulations of cosmopolitan democracy (p. 323). Is there more to the cosmopolitan democracy project than the idealistic aspirations of its authors?

Reading *Re-Imagining Political Community* against the empirical evidence of *Global Transformations* suggests that the prospects for the realization of cosmopolitan democracy lie within the emergence of an international public sphere.⁹ From ideas associated with Jürgen Habermas, it is possible to see in the rise of global media, communications technology, the Internet, and common political discourses the foundations of such an international public sphere.¹⁰ The idea of a world public, within which cosmopolitan citizens can theorize, debate, and find solutions for common problems and concerns, in a very real sense transcends the traditional debate between anarchy and world government. It also moves beyond "governance" and international regimes, which allow states to coordinate their action without implying transnational political participation. Recognizing the problematic implications of both an international state and functional international regimes, these theorists instead develop the premise of a disembodied global public opinion to which states, corporations, and individuals can be held accountable.

Martin Kohler makes the case in *Re-Imagining Political Community* "that a transnational public sphere is emerging through which social interest groups are able to participate in international affairs" (p. 232). In the human rights arena, for example, David Beetham posits "an international public opinion to which governments in all regions are seen to be accountable, even though they may not acknowledge such accountability themselves" (p. 64). In contrast to the historical conception of the public sphere, in which citizens struggle to make the state accountable to reasoned criticism, these international public spheres have neither legal citizens nor a single authoritative center upon which to focus. Instead, the international public sphere is its own referent. Public discourse seeks to affect the policies of governments, international institutions, and individuals around the world, rather than aiming only at a national audi-

⁹James Bohman: "The Globalization of the Public Sphere," *Philosophy and Social Criticism* 24, No. 2/3 (1998), pp. 199–216, and "International Regimes and Democratic Governance," *International Affairs* 75, No. 3 (1999), pp. 499–513; Marc Lynch, "The Dialogue of Civilizations and International Public Spheres," *Millennium: Journal of International Studies* 29, No. 2 (2000).

¹⁰For Habermas's own analysis of international public spheres, see "The European Nation-State," in *The Inclusion of the Other* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1999), pp. 106–127, and "The European Nation-State and the Pressures of Globalization," pp. 46–59.

ence. As Kohler argues, this transnational public sphere cannot simply adopt the practices of domestic public spheres; cosmopolitanism, rather than nationalism, would define the community of interests and the relevant, legitimate public of affected citizens (pp. 244–247). Held, among others in the cosmopolitan democracy project, describes in *Global Transformations* this transformation in terms of the recognition of “overlapping communities of fate,” which would define the relevant unit of political action more effectively than would the boundaries of nation-states (p. 445). Active participation in these transnational public spheres might add substance to such identities, allowing these overlapping communities to identify each other and, even more, to identify with each other and act collectively based on this identity.

The project outlined in these two books holds out an essentially positive conception of a reconstructed democracy as a solution to the core problems of globalization. The enthusiasm for such a project might be contrasted with the fears and suspicions held by many Third World intellectuals and politicians, for whom even a democratized globalization threatens more than it promises opportunities.

Hassan Hanafi, a leading Egyptian Islamist intellectual, articulates a common fear by conceptualizing globalization as the consolidation and extension of an exceptionally potent brand of neocolonial hegemony, in which the cultures and even the wills of the colonized peoples are finally conquered.¹¹ Critics of globalization regularly equate it with the unchecked power of capitalism freed from political constraint or accountability. From such a perspective, the deliberative conception of democracy developed here seems a pale and weak antidote. Of what value are the deliberative fora and transnational networks celebrated in these books compared to the deeper structural reality of a relentless global capitalism that strips away the powers of postcolonial states and the authenticity of their cultures? How could the concerns and arguments of these non-Western peoples have equal standing and power in a global public sphere dominated by neoliberalism, Western culture, and Western media? Some of the contributors recognize these concerns, as in Held’s discussion in *Re-Imagining Political Community* of the “differential access to power” in globalization (p. 14), but often their implications do not seem to be fully accepted in the authors’ enthusiasm for their project.

The protests against the WTO, IMF, and World Bank in Seattle embody the multiple sides of this dilemma. On the one hand, the protestors articulated the widespread fear that globalization defies the control or input of the people it affects; on the other hand, the success of the protests at mobilizing a diverse coalition demonstrated their nascent but unfocused power to force global dia-

¹¹Hassan Hanafi, “Globalization between Reality and Delusion,” in *What Is Globalization?* (originally in Arabic) (Beirut: Dar al-Fikr, 1999).

logues by monopolizing the international media and frustrating the conference proceedings. Forced to justify their policies before an attentive global public, the World Bank and the IMF admitted that their role had “become a matter of growing public debate” in which they must participate.¹² The ambiguities of the protests against international economic institutions do not end there. Even as protestors mobilized against the WTO by invoking the interests of the developing world, official representatives of developing states generally participated in the proceedings, hoping to shape the rules of globalization to their advantage. When thinking about democracy in a global context, is official participation in the deliberations, bargaining, and cutting deals on the inside less relevant than the noisy social movements on the outside? This question insistently points international theory to fundamentally contested debates in democratic theory about elite democracy and popular participation.

Janna Thompson’s contribution to *Re-Imagining Political Community* most directly engages with the problem of internal differences in democratic theory. While reviewing four major theories of justice (table 9.1, p. 181), Thompson explains that international relations theorists cannot simply adopt an uncontested, unproblematic notion of democracy. By raising such issues, the authors in *Re-Imagining Political Community* develop a political theory of international relations under conditions of globalization; as they would be the first to admit, much work needs to be done to flesh out the contours of this debate.

Both *Global Transformations* and *Re-Imagining Political Community* emphasize structural conditions and philosophical considerations and remain oddly apolitical in their development of an international democratic theory. *The Power of Human Rights* analyzes the impact of a globalized political space on national politics within a single issue area. Through focused comparisons of human rights successes and failures, the book seeks to understand the response of repressive regimes to international and domestic human rights criticism.

Drawing on earlier work by Margaret Keck and Kathryn Sikkink, *The Power of Human Rights* highlights the role of transnational networks, individuals, and organizations with shared beliefs and goals whose cooperation is facilitated by the increased access to communications, information, and international norms.¹³ To explain the shift from human rights abuses to more general compliance with human rights norms, *The Power of Human Rights* develops a somewhat mechanistic “spiral model” of norm change. This model attempts to capture the dynamic, contentious process by which transnational human rights networks struggle to bring about change in the behavior of repressive regimes.

¹²IMF communiqué quoted in *New York Times*, April 17, 2000, p. A1.

¹³Margaret Keck and Kathryn Sikkink, *Activists beyond Borders* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1998).

The cases discussed in this book typically begin during a period of particularly severe repression. Human rights networks take advantage of communications technology and global norms to bring human rights violations to the attention of global public opinion. The targeted state typically first passes through a “denial” phase, in which it rejects the applicability of human rights norms to its situation. Sustained criticism in the international public sphere sometimes drives such a state to enter into an argumentation period, in which the regime makes tactical concessions to the international human rights community to silence the criticism. These tactical concessions, largely driven by the regime’s need to “restore its good name” in international society, empower the domestic activists. Armed with the regime’s admission of the principle of human rights, the human rights networks then increase mobilization around demands to honor these principles in practice. In response to the frequent use of such cynical discourse by human rights offenders, the authors usefully develop the concept of “rhetorical action.” In rhetorical action, political leaders make strategic arguments in pursuit of tactical objectives, without intending to actually engage in a communicative process.

Although rhetorical action is aimed at diverting forces for change, *The Power of Human Rights* demonstrates how the regime can find itself trapped by its own argumentation, adjusting its behavior in order to maintain consistency in the face of incessant scrutiny. As compliance with human rights norms becomes institutionalized, in political practice as well as in domestic legal systems; it becomes “rule governed” behavior. In the final stage of this spiral model, human rights acquire “prescriptive status,” in that the states and citizens come to accept the validity of the norms, not simply the expediency of compliance.

The ability of transnational networks to mobilize even in highly hostile environments and to modify state behavior is striking, but not all of the conclusions of *The Power of Human Rights* support aspirations for a democratized globalization. The finding that seven of the eleven cases (eight, counting Indonesia) experienced significant change toward human rights compliance only after a regime change (p. 241) raises troubling questions about the process of persuasion in international politics. If changing the norms mechanism means replacing one unconvinced leader with another more sympathetic leader, we might conclude that one political coalition has defeated another rather than that argumentation has been persuasive. This conclusion offers disquieting support to the dictator’s complaint that human rights campaigners are little more than internationally supported power seekers bent on the dictator’s overthrow. The dialogues over state human rights practices described in the case studies often owe far more to bare-knuckled political struggle than to reasoned discourse. International organizations like the United Nations, in which Held places his hopes, play an insignificant role in most of the cases discussed here. Nevertheless, this book offers compelling evidence that the rise of global networks and media has substantially affected power relations in domestic politics, empow-

ering human rights activists and placing some regimes on the defensive at least some of the time. Crucially, *The Power of Human Rights* does not assume the inevitable victory of the human rights campaigners or the unidirectional spread of human rights norms; instead, it demonstrates the shifting conditions within which the campaigners fight their political battles.

Read against the other two books under review, *The Power of Human Rights* refreshingly restores politics and agency to the structural story of globalization. In the case studies, abundant evidence is provided for the strategic options created for domestic political activists by economic, political, and communications globalization. Transnational networks provide crucial resources to domestic activists. Rather than an amorphous force, globalization might here be conceptualized more as a progressive restructuring of the opportunity structure of politics. The struggles for human rights are domestic, but they are waged with recourse to global norms, supported by transnational networks, and shaped by appeal to global public opinion. The increasing, pervasive significance of the global media in these struggles fleshes out empirically the transnational public spheres developed theoretically in *Re-Imagining Political Community*. Global media allow societal actors to bring human rights abuses directly to global public opinion and to increasingly circumvent states and the conventions of traditional diplomacy. The spread, often involuntary, of transparency forecloses the option of ignoring or denying international criticism of human rights practices.

Reading these contributions together leaves little doubt that globalization, which includes the emergence of a nascent international public sphere, has significantly affected the political opportunity structure in the contemporary world. At the domestic level, political action increasingly must take into account transnational networks and international forces; yet this does not mean that domestic politics has lost importance or relative independence. The primary significance of globalization for *The Power of Human Rights* is the ability of domestic actors to mobilize international resources to influence the behavior of states.

At the international level, globalization seems to demand some new structure for the articulation and execution of transnational political interests and norms. Rather than surrendering to the default “tyranny of financial markets” or the unaccountable dictates of supranational and international institutions, cosmopolitan citizens need to generate new public spheres within which a legitimate cosmopolitan politics can evolve. What is needed is not necessarily achieved, and Hanafi’s fears cannot be easily dismissed. The cosmopolitan democracy project offers an idealized, largely apolitical conception of democracy, which sidesteps the fundamental challenges of power, culture, and wealth. *The Power of Human Rights*, by highlighting the political struggles within these transforming structures, nicely captures the contingent nature of power relations within the evolving global political community.