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James N. Rosenau: Distant Proximities

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An Emergent Epoch

[G]lobalization is bringing peoples closer apart and places further together.

—John Rennie Short¹

THE NEWS on the state of the world is both good and bad. Each day brings word of a world inching slowly toward sanity even as it moves toward breakdown. And not only do these integrative and disintegrative events occur simultaneously, but more often than not they are also causally related. More than that, the causal links tend to cumulate and generate a momentum such that every integrative increment tends to give rise to a disintegrative increment, and vice versa. This intertwining of the good and the bad, the global and local, the public and the private, the coherent and incoherent—to mention only a few of the interactive polarities that dominate world affairs—is a central theme of the ensuing pages. It is a theme captured by the book's title, by the idea that what seems remote in the present era also seems close-at-hand, thereby compelling individuals and collectivities alike to cope continuously with the challenge of distant proximities.²

The same theme is implicit in the subtitle of the book. It does not refer to a new world order, an eventual world government, or a colonization of Mars. Rather, the subtitle highlights the insufficiency of globalization as a concept with which to organize understanding of world affairs. Not that the concept is vague or simply a buzzword shorn of meaning by being applied to too many diverse circumstances. On the contrary, there are concrete, empirical dynamics at work that can properly be regarded as processes and structures of globalization. But all the dynamics are extraordinarily complex and require considerable nuance to comprehend their deeper implications and widespread consequences. Beyond globalization, in other words, lies conceptual equipment that, if used as a supple-

¹ *Global Dimensions: Space, Place and the Contemporary World* (London: Reaktion Books, 2001), p. 19.

² My first formulation of this concept, now elevated to a book title, can be found in James N. Rosenau, "Distant Proximities: The Dynamics and Dialectics of Globalization," in Björn Hettne (ed.), *International Political Economy: Understanding Global Disorder* (London: Zed Books, 1995), pp. 46–65.

ment to the analytic tools commonly employed to probe globalization, can substantially clarify, enrich, and expand our grasp of the course of events as the twenty-first century unfolds.³

Indeed, a central argument of the book is that the best way to grasp world affairs today requires viewing them as an endless series of distant proximities in which the forces pressing for greater globalization and those inducing greater localization interactively play themselves out. To do otherwise, to focus only on globalizing dynamics, or only on localizing dynamics, is to risk overlooking what makes events unfold as they do. As one cogent observer put it,

I use the local and the global as prisms for looking at the same thing. . . . [I]t would be wrong to think that you either work at one or the other, that the two are not constantly interpenetrating each other. . . . [W]hat we usually call the global, far from being something which, in a systematic fashion, rolls over everything, creating similarity, in fact works through particularity, negotiates particular spaces, particular ethnicities, works through mobilizing particular identities, and so on.⁴

Other analysts express a similar perspective by contending that

[g]lobalization and localization unite at all spatial scales. There is little, and maybe nothing, that is global that does not have some sort of a local manifestation. And each local manifestation changes the global context. Place centredness is the amalgam of global change and local identity. Every place reveals itself at a variety of scales. Local perceptions are shaped by global influences, the combinations of which process local actions. These in turn are fuelled by local aspirations, many of which are the product of global images and expectations. All these local activities accumulate to create chaotic but global outcomes.⁵

It follows, then, that a secure grasp of world affairs requires, at the very least, forming a habit of pausing to assess any distant proximities that may underlie or flow from the situations in which one is interested.

In so doing, however, one quickly discovers that distant proximities are not simple interrelationships, readily discernible and easily understood. Distant proximities encompass the tensions between core and periphery, between national and transnational systems, between communitarianism

³ Key dimensions of this additional equipment are analyzed extensively in the remaining chapters of part I and throughout parts II and III.

⁴ Stuart Hall, "Old and New Identities, Old and New Ethnicities," in Anthony D. King (ed.), *Culture, Globalization and the World-System: Contemporary Conditions for the Representation of Identity* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997), pp. 61, 62.

⁵ Tim O'Riordan and Chris Church, "Synthesis and Content," in Tim O'Riordan (ed.), *Globalism, Localism and Identity: Fresh Perspectives on the Transition to Sustainability* (London: Earthscan, 2001), p. 3.

and cosmopolitanism, between cultures and subcultures, between states and markets, between urban and rural, between coherence and incoherence, between integration and disintegration, between decentralization and centralization, between universalism and particularism, between pace and space,⁶ between the global and the local—to note only the more conspicuous links between opposites that presently underlie the course of events and the development or decline of institutions. And all these tensions are marked by numerous variants; they take different forms in different parts of the world, in different countries, in different markets, in different communities, in different professions, and in different cyberspaces, with the result that there is enormous diversity in the way people experience the distant proximities of which their lives are composed. Whatever the diversity, however, locating distant proximities at the center of our perspectives on politics enables us to avoid the disciplinary trap of maintaining an analytic separation between foreign and domestic politics, as is the case when international politics and comparative politics are treated as different fields of inquiry, with each holding constant the dynamics at work in the other.

To identify a variety of complex tensions and polarities, however, is not to imply that they necessarily involve zero-sum relationships. Many do have this characteristic, as is clearly indicated in the assertion that “the fundamental conflict in the opening decades of the new century . . . will not be between nations or even between trading blocs but between the forces of globalization and the territorially based forces of local survival seeking to preserve and redefine community.”⁷ Yet, as will be seen, the tensions that sustain other polarities are nonzero-sum in character, with their globalizing dynamics serving to reinforce, or to be reinforced by, their localizing components. That is why distant proximities cannot be treated as simple relationships. They are rooted in complexity, in complementary as well as competitive processes.⁸

⁶ The reference here is to “an increasingly pervasive and contentious political struggle between a ‘discourse of pace’ linked, on the one hand, to accelerating transitions, speeding flows, overcoming resistances, eliminating frictions, and engineering the kinematics of globalization, and, on the other hand, a ‘discourse of place’ centered upon solidifying porous borders, bolstering breached containments, arresting eroded identities, and revitalizing faded essences.” Timothy W. Luke and Gearóid Ó Tuathail, “Global Flowmations, Local Fundamentalism, and Fast Geopolitics: ‘America’ in an Accelerating World Order,” in A. Herod, G. Ó Tuathail, and S. M. Roberts (eds.), *An Unruly World? Globalization, Governance and Geography* (London: Routledge, 1998), p. 73.

⁷ Richard J. Barnet and John Cavanagh, *Global Dreams: Imperial Corporations and the New World Order* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1994), p. 22. For a more extended formulation of the conflict between global and local dynamics, see Benjamin R. Barber, *Jihad vs. McWorld*, enlarged edition (New York: Ballantine Books, 2001).

⁸ For a useful essay on the distinction between competitive and complementary approaches to the tensions between globalizing and localizing dynamics, see Bob Bahador,

It follows that distant proximities do not revolve around the attentiveness of people to news from abroad. Even if the widespread preoccupation with worldwide terrorism after the attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon proves to be a temporary blip in a long-term pattern,⁹ to cite the numerous statistics depicting how little American media cover foreign developments and thereby sustain the parochialism of their audiences is not to negate the concept of distant proximities. Rather, the latter involve the foreign travel experiences of individuals and their friends, the messages they receive from relatives abroad, the ways in which their jobs are linked to or threatened by foreign trade, and a host of other word-of-mouth or electronic inputs that underlie the ever-greater interdependence of life in a shrinking world. Furthermore, while the parochialism of the American people may be considerable in terms of exposure to foreign news, the same cannot be said of counterparts in other countries, all of which have enough adjacent and regional neighbors to be continuously reminded of the proximity of distant events and trends. Nor may the parochialism of Americans return to earlier levels once the shock of the terrorist attacks has worn off. As one analyst put it three days after September 11, “This is the end: the end of an era, the era of our invulnerability. We will recover physically, even psychologically, but nothing will ever be quite the same again. A barrier has been irrevocably breached: a barrier against the world outside.”¹⁰

To comprehend the nature and dynamism of distant proximities, clearly we need to explore both the phenomena viewed as distant and those considered proximate before assessing how the tensions resulting from their interactions play out in diverse contexts. To do so, of course, is to move beyond objective circumstances. Distance is not measured only in miles across land and sea; it can also involve less tangible spaces, more abstract conceptions in which distance is assessed across organizational hierarchies, event sequences, social strata, market relationships, migration patterns, and a host of other nonterritorial spaces. Thus to a large extent distant proximities are subjective appraisals—what people feel or think is remote, and what they think or feel is close-at-hand. There is no self-evident line that divides the distant from the proximate, no established criteria for differentiating among statistics or situations that are reflective

“Fragmentation in an Era of Globalization,” *ASEN Bulletin*, No. 16 (winter 1999), pp. 9–16.

⁹ Evidence that the blip may be more than temporary is suggested by findings that “an eagerness to comprehend the world remains high nearly nine months later.” Barbara Crossette, “American Web Browsers Continue a Global Turn,” *New York Times*, June 2, 2002, p. 6.

¹⁰ Ronald Steel, “The Weak at War with the Strong,” *New York Times*, September 14, 2001, p. A27.

of either the more remote or the close-at-hand environment. In other words, nearness and farness connote scale as well as space. Both are ranges across which people and their thoughts roam; and as they roam, they can be active in both geographic locales and scalar spaces that have been socially constructed.¹¹ Each is a context, a “habitat of meaning,”¹² a mind-set that may often correspond with spatial distance even as there are other scalar contexts that can make the close-at-hand feel very remote and the faraway seem immediately present.¹³

To ponder the nature and ramifications of distant proximities in a time of vast changes, therefore, is to consider what, when, how, and why people experience some dimensions of their lives and some phenomena in their perceptual space as marvelously or threateningly close. In some cases wide intersubjective agreement prevails as to the appropriate spatial classification; in other cases controversy is intense over where lines between the distant and the proximate should be drawn; and it is both the areas of consensus and the disputes they sustain that underlie the dynamism of distant proximities as they are experienced by both individuals and their collectivities.

CLARIFYING THE POLARITIES

Having already mentioned several polarities, it is important to clarify their relations to each other and the sense in which they differentiate good from bad. Most notably, there is no necessary connection between the good-and-bad dimension of any of the polarities just noted. Some aspects of the several poles are desirable, and some are noxious. Globalization has *both* positive and negative features, as does localization, and much the same can be said about the coherence-incoherence and integration-disintegration polarities.¹⁴ Coherence and integration normally seem

¹¹ For a pioneering work on socially constructed space, see Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, trans. by Donald Nicholson-Smith (Malden, Mass.: Blackwell, 1991).

¹² Ulf Hannerz, *Transnational Connections: Culture, People, Places* (London: Routledge, 1996), pp. 22–23.

¹³ For a conception that differentiates among gravitational, topological, and attributional distances, see Alan K. Henderson, “Distance and Foreign Policy: The Political Geography Approach” (paper presented at the International Political Science Association Congress, Quebec City, August 1–5, 2000).

¹⁴ Václav Havel, the president of the Czech Republic, has observed that by itself globalization is “morally neutral. It can be good or bad depending on the kind of content we give to it.” He cited information about human rights as a good use of the concept, while his negative example was “the spread of silly sitcoms and even more stupid commercials,” which he contended conveyed a false picture of human life. Steven Erlanger, “Havel Urges Multinationals to Heed the ‘Voices of the People,’” *New York Times*, August 23, 2000, p. A8.

preferable to incoherence and disintegration, but it is not difficult to think of situations—South Africa during the apartheid era comes quickly to mind—with an excess of coherence that could benefit from a period of incoherence and disintegration.

In a like manner, nothing in the pages that follow should be interpreted as implying that the centralizing processes inherent in globalization are preferable to the decentralizing processes that accompany localization. It is all to the good when globalizing dynamics lead international organizations to concert their efforts against corruption or when corporations converge around new, more open attitudes toward environmental problems, but it is surely bad if states collude to ignore corrupt practices and corporations maintain their position that environmental threats have yet to be demonstrated. Similarly, it is all to the good when localizing dynamics lead to decentralizing processes in which opposition voices are encouraged and democratic practices expanded, but it is surely bad if these processes result in a fragmentation that tears communities apart and facilitates the rule of petty tyrants.

In short, more so than in the past because time and space have been so rapidly compressed, we live in an era of pervasive contradictions that give rise to polarities subject to diverse normative judgments. Such evaluations cannot be avoided, but they can be explicated as one works through the contradictions and interprets their implications. In this way there ought to be no confusion over the normative stance that underlies any empirical conclusions the analysis yields. Depending on the consequences to which they give rise—whether they elevate or denigrate individuals or groups—distant proximities can be viewed as expressive of a trend that portends future progress or one that points toward retrogression. In the case of some distant proximities, of course, their consequences have still to become fully manifest, and their normative implications thus remain correspondingly obscure.

Since distant proximities encompass polarities that are bound to take inquiry beyond globalization, it would be a mistake to view them as little more than a means of analyzing the processes and dynamics of globalization. Conceived in this larger context, globalization is but one component of the transformative dynamics that underlie the emergence of a new epoch in the human condition. It is, to be sure, a major component, but all too many analyses suffer from treating it as the primary component and thus risk underplaying the complexity of the emergent epoch. There is a need, for example, to recognize that localization is also a powerful force at work throughout the world, that cities, provinces, and other subnational groups are also seeking to realize their goals, that by 2030 some 60 percent of the world's people will live in cities, and that consequently localization is multiplying the range of policy environments as

globalization shrinks the world.¹⁵ We live in a messy world, one that is marked by sharp contradictions comprehensible only through nuanced analysis that accords significance to numerous forces that can—and often do—undermine, limit, or otherwise redirect globalizing processes.

Violins offer a useful metaphor for distinguishing between previous epochs in world affairs and the complexities of the one that is presently emerging. Just as a poorly built violin halts and dampens the sound of each note, confining it to its own limited frequency and ceasing as soon as the bow leaves the string, so has the world in earlier epochs tended to retain the effects of events locally, muffling their impact on other systems and restraining their duration. In contrast, the expansionary, enduring character of distant proximities in the present global system is analogous to a good violin. Every note triggers a series of overtones that resonate with the remaining strings through the body of the whole instrument, both amplifying and sustaining the sound. In the case of the violin it is the difference between mere sounds and music; in world affairs it is the difference between international politics and dynamics beyond globalization.¹⁶

LABELING THE EPOCH

But how to denote the emergent epoch? “Distant proximities” suggest its ironies, but it is hardly a label that would satisfy the many observers who seek a more descriptive designation of the new historical period that has accompanied the end of the twentieth century and the onset of the twenty-first.¹⁷ For some time attempts to summarize the numerous changes that generated the new period have followed two lines of reasoning and resulted in two main labels for the emergent epoch. The two approaches differ greatly in several respects—one being pragmatic and framed by politicians and journalists, while the other is philosophical and has evolved among intellectuals—but they share a lack of specificity about the essential underpinnings and nature of world affairs at the outset of a new millennium. The pragmatic line of reasoning acknowledges that present-day patterns and institutions are quite different from those of prior eras, but it does not seek to evaluate, much less synthesize, the differences or their long-run implications. Rather, it simply assumes the end of the superpower rivalry between the United States and the Soviet

¹⁵ On the potential ramifications of localizing trends, see Shahid Yusuf, “Balancing Globalization and Localization,” *Journal of Commerce*, Vol. 421 (September 24, 1999), p. 9.

¹⁶ I am grateful to Gottlieb J. Duwan, a violinist as well as a keen student of world affairs, for the violin metaphor.

¹⁷ For an extensive example of this felt need, see Symposium, “Naming a New Era,” *Foreign Policy*, No. 119 (summer 2000), pp. 29–69.

Union unleashed diverse processes that are altering the practices through which the politics, economics, and social life of communities, nations, and the world are sustained. Lacking specificity, the pragmatic approach tends to treat every development, whether it be familiar or unusual, as expressive of the new historical epoch, and thus it uses a label, the “post–Cold War” era, which hints at changes and differences without indicating what these might be. Indeed, by employing such a label, pragmatists conclude that the present is a congeries of unsystematic, even unrelated, forces that are propelling the world into an uncertain future. In addition, by positing conditions as “post” an earlier era, the pragmatic perspective implies that the present is a transitional period, as if new historical developments have to evolve and generate new global structures before the world can settle once again into stable circumstances such as marked the Cold War era of 1945–90, the interwar period of 1918–39, or the industrial age of the nineteenth century.

The other, more philosophical response to the dynamics that are transforming the present-day world is somewhat more precise in terms of specifying what has changed, but it also is murky about what sustains the changes and where they may be taking the world. And thus it, too, uses the “post” prefix as part of its label for the epoch, thereby also suggesting that a multiplicity of diverse and unstructured forces are at work that offer no hint as to what the world’s future may be like. In this case the label is that of “post-modernism,” a school of thought that has different meanings for different postmodernists who nonetheless share the conviction that basic changes have moved the world beyond modernity or, at least, into “late modernity.” Whether the era is seen as “post” or “late,” adherents of the various postmodernisms also share the belief that modernity has run its course because the notions of science and rationality that distinguish it have proven to be ill-founded. After all, many postmodernists assert, two devastating world wars, a deep economic depression, and the hydrogen bomb mark the age of science and rationality—hardly a recommendation for a modernist perspective. For all their criticisms of modernity, however, postmodernists do not offer an understanding of where the world is today and where it is likely to be tomorrow. Indeed, while some of them view the future as an ongoing process of constructed expectations, many postmodernists are inclined to argue that speculation about future developments is wasted effort, that any scenarios depicting paths into the future are hidden political moves designed to advance the particular agendas of the scenarist.

If it is the case that distant proximities have become so pervasive as to serve as the basis for an analytic framework, then the absence of a label suggestive of the nature, processes, and structure of the emergent epoch is especially glaring. Hence, in order to encourage a focus on the dy-

namics whereby the shrinking of social and geographic distances has rendered the environment of people, organizations, and communities both distant and proximate, here a concocted label will be used to convey the essential nature of the epochal transformation. The label is “framegration,” which is intended to suggest the pervasive interaction between fragmenting and integrating dynamics unfolding at every level of community.¹⁸ It is admittedly an awkward and grating label,¹⁹ but as such it serves as a constant reminder that the world has moved beyond the condition of being “post” its predecessor to an era in which the foundations of daily life have settled into new and unique rhythms of their own. Equally important, the framegration label captures in a single word the large degree to which these rhythms consist of localizing, decentralizing, or fragmenting dynamics that are interactively and causally linked to globalizing, centralizing, and integrating dynamics.

Of course, the framegration label can easily lead to oversimplification and misinterpretation. It risks treating localizing and decentralizing processes as forms of fragmentation and equating globalizing and centralizing dynamics with processes of integration. Such a conflation of these polarities would indeed be misleading. Localizing and decentralizing dynamics need not be the same as fragmenting processes, even though all three share a movement away from whole systems and toward less encompassing subsystems. To decentralize, for example, may well be to

¹⁸ One sociologist expresses the same thought by referring to “a massive, twofold process involving *the interpenetration of the universalization of particularism and the particularization of universalism.*” (Roland Robertson, “Social Theory, Cultural Relativity and the Problem of Globality” in A. D. King (ed.), *Culture, Globalization and the World-System* (London: Macmillan, 1991), p. 73; italics in the original. Another stresses the simultaneity of the demand for both “assimilation into the universal . . . [and] adhering to the particular, the reinvention of differences” (Immanuel Wallerstein, cited in *ibid.*, p. 69). Similarly, a political scientist notes that the world now faces two conflicting trends: “On the one hand, a need for collective action; and on the other, a search for closed communities.” Stanley Hoffmann, reported in the *World Economic Forum 1993*, p. 39.

¹⁹ Other single-word labels designed to suggest the contradictory tensions that pull systems toward both coherence and collapse are *chaord*, a label that juxtaposes the dynamics of chaos and order; *glocalization*, which points to the simultaneity of globalizing and localizing dynamics; and *regcal*, a term designed to focus attention on the links between regional and local phenomena. The chaord designation is elaborated in Dee W. Hock, *Birth of the Chaordic Age* (San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler, 1999); the glocalization concept is developed in Roland Robertson, “Glocalization: Time-Space and Homogeneity-Heterogeneity,” in Mike Featherstone, Scott Lash, and Roland Robertson (eds.), *Global Modernities* (Thousand Oaks, Calif.: Sage, 1995), pp. 25–44; and the regcal formulation can be found in Susan H. C. Tai and Y. H. Wong, “Advertising Decision Making in Asia: ‘Glocal’ versus ‘Regcal’ Approach,” *Journal of Managerial Issues*, Vol. 10 (fall 1998), pp. 318–39. I prefer the term *framegration* because it does not imply a territorial scale, and it broadens the focus to include tensions at work in organizations as well as those that pervade communities.

calculate that advantages can be enjoyed by voluntarily breaking up into smaller units, whereas to fragment is to imply that breakups derive from irresolvable tensions and conflicts. Similarly, globalizing and centralizing processes may not be the equivalent of those that serve to integrate. On the other hand, since the components of the several polarities can be overlapping and interrelated, merging them into a single label is not entirely an oversimplification. If it is viewed as an indicator of complexity, and if the dangers of oversimplification are recognized, the fragementation label has the virtue of sensitizing us to the contradictory tensions wherein the world is simultaneously moving in opposite directions.

Another virtue of the fragementation concept is that it inhibits narrow approaches to globalization. Much of the exploding literature on globalization casts its dynamics in strict economic terms—as processes that sustain or advance the power of corporations, that widen the rich-poor gap, that foster the integration of markets, that underlie the flow of investments—but such formulations seem needlessly limited. Diverse economic factors are indeed central to the configurations of the emergent epoch, but so are cultural, social, political, and ecological processes,²⁰ and their salience is highlighted by focusing on the ways in which local and global forces shape each other.

Fragementation also serves to underscore the contradictions, ambiguities, complexities, and uncertainties that have replaced the regularities of prior epochs. Consisting of nonlinear processes in which every effect is a cause of yet another outcome in a complex and endless array of feedback loops, these contradictions, ambiguities, complexities, and uncertainties are, in effect, the regularities of our age of fragementation. And no less important, they are rooted in the decline of ideological belief systems as a consequence of scientific developments and the clusters of values that constitute modernity. In the absence of viable alternative belief systems, many people can experience insecurity about the meaningfulness of life. Even before terrorism came brutally to the United States, the recent generations whose lives had been free of war and marked by high degrees of comfort and not a little affluence felt vulnerable and insecure. Paradoxically, the more risk-free the world seemed, the more risky it felt. In the words of one observer,

Now, is our world more dangerous? . . . It is. We are asking more of it, more comfort and therefore we are more vulnerable. The more secure we are, the more we feel the danger of losing our security. There are easy ways to inflict major pain with no major effort. People can intrude on our financial and

²⁰ Philip G. Cerny, “Globalizing the Political and Politicising the Global: Concluding Reflections on International Political Economy as a Vocation,” *New Political Economy*, Vol. 4, No. 1 (1999), pp. 147–62.

national-security systems in much easier ways. This is because of the interconnectedness of the world and its infrastructures.²¹

The sense of vulnerability, moreover, can lead to extreme reactions since

[u]nfortunately change, complexity and information overload are abstract phenomena, which are difficult to grasp. Therefore few people have as yet understood that they are at the root of the anxiety they feel. When trying to rationalize their vague feelings of unease, people will rather look for more easily recognizable causes, such as unemployment, pollution, crime, corruption or immigration. These phenomena, which have become both more visible and less tolerated, play the role of scapegoat: they . . . may lead to backlashes and irrational reactions, such as racism, intolerance and persecution of groups that are held responsible.²²

Incisive empirical examples of the fragmentative contradictions that pervade the emergent epoch abound. Quintessentially illustrative of the simultaneity inherent in such situations were the circumstances surrounding the Seattle meeting of the World Trade Organization (WTO) in late 1999: just as the WTO convened in an attempt to extend global integration of trade practices, so did numerous private groups and organizations converge on the city to march in the streets in opposition to the WTO and its policies. Perhaps even more illustrative were the terrorist attacks on the United States in September 2001: just as their disintegrative dimensions were rooted in resentments and hatreds fomented by poverty and challenges to tradition in the underdeveloped world, so were their integrative dimensions manifest in the pervasive sense of unity that the attacks fostered among Americans and their allies. Another contradictory situation is evident in this account of a period in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict:

What ails the peace process is not just a crisis of confidence. It's a crisis of logic. It's not only that each side doesn't trust the other; it's that nothing makes sense. Opposite causes produce the same effect: There are suicide bombers when the peace process moves ahead and suicide bombers when the process is stuck. And the same causes produce opposite effects: Mr. Netanyahu strikes a Hebron deal one day and undermines it the next by building in Har Homa; Mr. Arafat exposes a cell of Palestinian suicide bombers in Beit Sahur one day and kisses the leader of Hamas the next. Closure of the territories

²¹ Yacov Y. Haines, president of the Society for Risk Analysis, quoted in Tim Weiner, "Feeling Secure Is a Risky Business," *New York Times*, September 6, 1998, Sec. 4, p. 6.

²² Francis Heylighen and Jan Bernheim, "Global Progress II: Evolutionary Mechanisms and Their Side-Effects," working paper for CLEA study group "Evolution and Progress," May 24, 2000, p. 45.

increases Israel's security and decreases Israel's security. Everything that happens, for good or ill, seems utterly random. Oslo is no longer a peace process. It's a Tolstoy novel.²³

Table 1.1 summarizes still other instances of fragementation currently on the global agenda. Here it can be seen that its dynamics are operative in a wide variety of situations.

Of course, fragementative dynamics are not always as obvious as they are in the case of these examples, but the more one gets accustomed to viewing the course of events through fragementative lenses, the more will the underlying tensions and contradictions become manifest. There may be situations that are free of fragementative contradictions, but one would be hard-pressed to identify them on the current world scene.²⁴

Stated more generally, where people came to expect the Soviet-American rivalry to shape the course of events in the Cold War era, and where they became used to the ways in which U.S. hegemony shaped outcomes in the brief post-Cold War period, today they appear to have adjusted to the realization that outcomes stem from multiple sources, that they are transitory and ever subject to reversal, and that what happens at one level of community can rapidly and unexpectedly cascade across other levels. For reasons elaborated in subsequent chapters, in other words, elites, activists, and ordinary persons alike have come to understand intersubjectively that their lives are intertwined in crazy-quilt ways that may often be enhancing and perhaps just as often denigrating.

Awareness of the enhancing and denigrating consequences of distant proximities has the potential of becoming major sources of tension within and among collectivities. People whose life circumstances limit their experience of the distant to global television and prevent them from direct and recurring electronic and physical interactions with remote places may well evolve resentments of those whose movements are less restricted. Not class warfare but spatial-scalar warfare, in other words, may be in the offing. As one observer puts it,

[R]ather than homogenizing the human condition, the technological annulment of temporal/spatial distances tends to polarize it. It emancipates certain humans from territorial constraints and renders certain community-generating meanings extraterritorial—while denuding the territory, to which other people go on being confined, of its meaning and its identity-endowing capacity. For some people it augurs an unprecedented freedom from physical obstacles and un-

²³ Thomas Friedman, "The Physics of Mideast Peace," *New York Times*, September 15, 1997, p. A15.

²⁴ For a contrary perspective in which "the effects" of fragementation "turn out not to be as contradictory, nor even as different, as you might think," see Robert Wright, *Nonzero: The Logic of Human Destiny* (New York: Vintage, 2001), p. 204.

TABLE 1.1.
Instances of Interactive Fraggregative Dynamics

<i>Globalizing Forces</i>	<i>Localizing Forces</i>
The “free market” (international corporations, international hedge funds, currency exchange)	The dislocation of people and nations attributed to the irresponsible use of U.S. and Western venture capital; the growing gap between rich and poor within and between countries
Global political and economic institutions (the UN, the World Bank, the IMF, the World Trade Organization, etc.)	Resource scarcities caused by global warming, loss of arable land, and the destruction of the natural environment Mass migrations, prejudice, ethnocentrism, ethnic and racial hatred
English as the lingua franca	Movements to preserve heritage cultures whose basis is often language and customs
U.S. military, economic, and cultural strength	Resentment of American hegemony, terrorism
Modernists; science and technological innovations in information and transportation	Traditionalists; religious fundamentalism; nationalism

heard-of ability to move and act from a distance. For others, it portends the impossibility of appropriating and domesticating the locality from which they have little chance of cutting themselves free in order to move elsewhere.²⁵

In short, it is highly unlikely that the contradictions of the emergent epoch have escaped the attention of individuals. With the fragmenting forces of localization and the integrating dynamics of globalization so interwoven as to be products of each other, people have become increasingly aware of how fraggregative dynamics have intensified old identities and fostered new ones. However they may articulate their understanding, there are good reasons to presume that people everywhere have come to expect, to take for granted, that the advance of globalization poses threats to long-standing local and national ties, that some groups will contest, even violently fight, the intrusion of global norms even as others will seek to obtain goods, larger market shares, or generalized support

²⁵ Zygmunt Bauman, *Globalization: The Human Consequences* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998), p. 18 (italics in the original).

beyond their communities. The forces of fragmentation are rooted in the psychic comfort individuals derive from the familiar, close-at-hand values and practices of their neighborhoods, just as the forces of integration stem from their aspirations to share in the distant products of the global economy, to benefit from the efficiencies of regional unity, to avoid the dangers of environmental degradation, to contribute to coherent communities through policies of inclusion that expand their democratic institutions, and to yield to the implications of the meaning of the pictures taken in outer space that depict the earth as a solitary entity in a huge universe. Stated more succinctly, “There is a constant struggle between the collectivist and individualist elements within each human.”²⁶

OVERVIEW

The dynamics of fragmentation and globalization, not to mention those of complexity and the methodologies employed to study them, are so pervaded with values that no analyst can be neutral with respect to them. The most that can be achieved is explicitness on the part of each analyst about the underlying values, experiences, and analytic commitments that guide and inform his or her work. I have tried to be faithful to the virtues of explicitness in the postscript to this book (see chapter 19).

The next chapter wrestles with key conceptual challenges that have to be confronted in order to probe the underpinnings of distant proximities. Chapter 3 focuses on some of the prime sources and consequences that drive fragmentation, an analysis that facilitates, in the remaining chapters of part I, a recasting of global life in terms of how diverse individuals experience distant proximities. The chapters of part II set forth additional conceptual equipment that may be useful to comprehend a world that has moved beyond globalization to continuing clashes between integrative and fragmenting forces. The chapters of part III seek to delineate how individuals at the micro level and collectivities at the macro level interact to configure and sustain the structures, processes, and issues that constitute today’s global agenda.

Throughout, an effort is made to indicate that while globalization is a central dynamic of our time, it nonetheless needs to be cast in a more encompassing, fragmentative context if we are to deepen our understanding of how and why events unfold as they do. This effort rests on the premise that the empowerment of individuals in the emergent epoch—their enlarged capacities derived from new technologies; from their greater educational and travel opportunities; from their experience in having

²⁶ Harry C. Triandis, *Individualism and Collectivism* (Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press, 1995), p. xiv.

their collective actions topple or redirect governments, corporations, and other macro institutions; and from the advent of what has come to be called the “me” generation—contributes substantially to where the world is headed. This “triumph of individualism” is not always welcome, but its presence cannot be ignored in any effort to grasp the course of events.²⁷

²⁷ See, for example, James Dale Davison and Lord William Rees-Mogg, *The Sovereign Individual: Mastering the Transition to the Information Age* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1997); William D. Hitt, *The Global Citizen* (Columbus, Ohio: Battelle Press, 1998); and Richard Tomkins, “We Have Reached Utopia—and It Sucks,” *Financial Times*, December 16–17, 2000, Weekend p. I.