

BOOK REVIEW

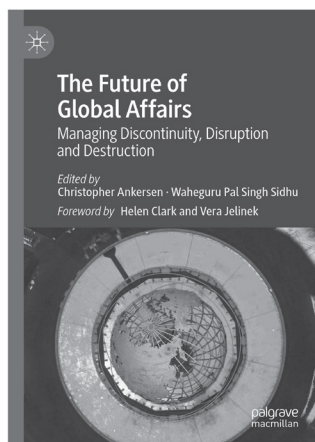
THE FUTURE OF GLOBAL AFFAIRS

Managing Discontinuity, Disruption and Destruction

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**THE FUTURE OF GLOBAL AFFAIRS:
MANAGING DISCONTINUITY, DISRUPTION
AND DESTRUCTION**

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With the onset of globalisation, diverse and multi-layered social processes are simultaneously at work, causing constant interactions between multiple actors in an increasingly interdependent world. Consequently, growing interstate conflicts, the burgeoning of transnational terrorist outfits, violent takeovers by extremist groups of hitherto ungoverned spaces, secessionist movements and civil wars have virtually started characterising contemporary times. Besides, proxy wars between major powers such as the United States and Russia in Syria, renewed nuclear competition between states, challenges stemming from climate change as well as the management of cyber technologies have made this world a turbulent place. Certain milestone events after the Cold War such as 9/11, the financial crises of 2008 and COVID-19 too have had global ramifications. After writing a solid introduction, the editors have chosen to address most of these complex issues that constitute global affairs which, simply put, signify activities that take place across the world outside the scope of a single state.

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On the whole, the volume is a collection of thought-provoking essays that steadily promote the study of global affairs persuasively. Let me proceed to offer a few glimpses of this excellent collective travail.

Michael F. Oppenheimer, while shedding light on the turbulent future of international relations, draws attention to the Vienna Conference of 1815 which brought peace in Europe till 1914. However, what was the cost of such peace? Were the events such as the Opium War (1839–1842), the suppression of the Indian revolt in 1857 and the conquest of Egypt in 1885 integrated into the landscape of peace? Coming to contemporary times, the author is perceptive about the connection between nationalism and populism in the sense that both can be the cause and the effect. He argues that even if the process of globalisation will not end with rising nationalism, economic weakness and the emergence of multipolarity, it will profoundly alter its character and greatly reduce its economic and political benefits. Ankersen's deftly handled historical overview of international relations demonstrates how the world with a kaleidoscopic future lacks an enduring image. John V. Kane's systematic analysis demonstrates effectively with illustrations the manner in which empiricism can provide strategies to avoid the adverse impact of the post-truth/fake world and get at the truth. Christian Busch, while reflecting on the prospects towards enlightened capitalism, has argued that the resurgence of populism is a result of discontent and decreased trust in governments and institutions. He conceives unusually nationalistic policies as ways to consolidate power. While commenting on neo-liberal globalisation, the author has presented a more nuanced argument by discussing Stiglitz's penchant for welfarism and critique of neo-liberalism.

Jennifer Trahan's essay on international justice and International Criminal Courts (ICC) systematically analyses case studies of atrocities committed in Syria, Myanmar and Iraq. Despotism rulers in Africa such as Omar al-Bashir of Sudan and Jomo Kenyatta of Kenya refused to submit to either ICC or to accept the Rome Statue dealing with international crime. In this context, China's closer association with autocratic regimes in Zimbabwe (Robert Mugabe) and Sudan (Bashir) and implicit support to their atrocities could have illuminated the hindrances in delivering international justice through bodies like the ICC.

Anne Marie Goetz's spirited piece on how undiplomatic feminist foreign policy necessarily has to be makes refreshing reading. As Swedish foreign minister Margot Wallstrom launched a scathing attack on medieval countries like Saudi Arabia for denying women their basic rights, she was denied an opportunity to speak before the Arab League a month later. Besides, attacking an oil rich state(s) also had its cost on foreign policy. It is obvious that hierarchical regimes with masculine hegemonies and unequal entitlement make feminist social change projects relevant by standing against the systemic and global subordination of women. In light of several state- to gender-related conflicts, it is worth taking a look at Thomas Hill's essay on the significance of conflict transformation education if we intend to build peaceful societies and a peaceful world.

Jens Rudbeck's perspective on a changing agenda for development has not overlooked the traditional problems of poverty and malnutrition. However, the existence of these problems has been attributed to violent internal conflict and fragile state institutions. After dwelling on the UN's Millennium Development Goals (MDG) with the target date of 2015, and the UN's Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) with a target date of 2030, Rudbeck deals with poverty reduction efforts in the world. As the author's findings suggest, the forecast for Africa in this area is grim as its share of the poor will increase from 60 per cent of the total poor on the planet in 2016, to 80 per cent in 2023, to 90 per cent in 2030. By 2030, South Sudan will emerge as the most fragile state in the world. In the process of dealing with the impact of cybertechnology, Pano Yannakogeorgos has dealt with perpetrators of harm in cyberspace, including nation states, subnational actors, disgruntled employees and vulnerability hunters.

Carolyn Kissane's essay on the upending of geopolitics of energy is full of possibilities. If demands for deep decarbonisation, climate change mitigation and adaption are driving new policies, the rise of the United States as an energy superpower owning shale production is a noteworthy development. Factors including dwindling significance of the Organisation of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC), the rise of Russia as a petro-state, and the role of China as a challenge and opportunity for global energy will conjointly shape the energy scenario. Michael Shank has underlined

the challenges of climate change and, in workman-like fashion, reflected on the required behavioural changes from the grassroots level to face the global problems of climate change.

W. P. S. Sidhu's thoughtful and comprehensive essay, at the end, while handling intricate issues related to peace and security, nuclear non-proliferation, development and human rights, has offered nuanced reflections on the UN's management of unrealistic expectations. I was struck by how he has mentioned changing realities in the world political economy. For instance, the adoption of the SDG coincided with the economic rise of the Global South and, for the first time in 150 years, the combined output of three leading emerging powers—China, India and Brazil—is about to equal the GDP of longstanding industrial powers of the Global North, including Canada, France, Germany, Italy, the United Kingdom and the United States. Besides, South–South cooperation is no longer a slogan but an actual reality owing to growing trade, investment, and finance and technology transfer among southern countries.

Having provided a few essential arguments of all the essays, I would like to add that former US President Trump's idiosyncratic style of functioning and the gloomy ambience within the United States during his tenure have inevitably shaped the texture of these writings. Furthermore, the fact that all the contributors belong to the Centre of Global Affairs of New York University is a strength as well as a weakness of the volume. On the one hand, it has helped colleagues to evolve and develop studies in global affairs with a sharper focus through cogent writings, and, on the other, it has, plausibly, robbed this effort of a diversity of perspectives. All said and done, this is a very competently produced work which will make essential reading for students and scholars of globalisation and global affairs.

