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# Globalisation as Democratic Theory

Stephen J. Rosow

The changes taking place in the current world are in some meaningful sense 'global' but social science is not well equipped to understand them. Some recent approaches to globalisation recognise this. These suggest that we ought to tread cautiously, wary of thinking that we understand the changes taking place, wary of refusing the ambiguities and uncertainties globalisation presses upon us, and, most of all, wary of taking the global as some given new reality.<sup>1</sup> Globalisation enables multiple stories about the condition and possibilities of late modern politics.<sup>2</sup> It is multiple and contradictory, homogenising and fragmenting social worlds at the same time.<sup>3</sup> This essay probes implications for democratic theory from three of the more prominent narratives of globalisation.

I approach globalisation in this essay through democratic theory because the implications of globalisation for democracy are difficult to assay. My aim is not to judge whether one story of globalisation is better than another. It is to see what kind of space can be opened up within globalisation for thinking about democratic politics. Sections one and two register general suspicions about the implications of globalisation for democracy and about the language of 'globalisation'. Three prominent stories of globalisation are then addressed: neoliberal global capitalism; the internationalisation of the liberal democratic state; the development of a global 'culture'. In each case, I argue engagement with democratic politics is occluded. I do not suggest that the stories cannot raise issues of democratic theory, issues of responsibility, freedom, subjectivity, and accountability. In fact, they all do raise such questions. But the three stories assume that democratic politics remain vibrant enough to settle these challenges, when at the same time they manifest the inadequacy of contemporary democratic practices to do so.

The first narrative of globalisation—as neoliberal global capitalism—leaves aside political questions about the legitimacy of its distributions of wealth and power. It assumes that the nation-state remains robust enough to discipline

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I would like to thank the anonymous reviewers of *Millennium* for their helpful comments.

1. An explicit argument to this effect is made in John Dunn, 'Political Science, Political Theory and Policy-Making in an Interdependent World', *Government and Opposition* 28, no. 2 (1993): 242-60. See also R.B.J. Walker, *Inside/Outside: International Relations as Political Theory* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993).

2. Philip G. Cerny, 'Globalisation and Other Stories: The Search for a New Paradigm for International Relations', *International Journal* 51, no. 4 (1996): 617-37.

3. James H. Mittelman, 'The Dynamics of Globalisation,' in *Globalisation: Critical Reflections*, ed. James H. Mittelman (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner, 1996), 1-19.

compliance to regimes of free trade and globally competitive markets, and that the democratic state's legitimacy is not threatened by the generated inequality and by the appearance of a transfer of authority and accountability to non-elected, global regulatory organisations. Inequality and political accountability are thus 'remainders' in this story. In other words, the story presents neoliberal capitalism as fitting seamlessly with globalisation when in fact it does not. Globalisation generates actors and contingent developments which do not fit in the story of neoliberal global capitalism. Critical accounts of neoliberal global capitalism highlight the misfits and ways in which they are disciplined.

Neoliberal globalisation prefers a certain model of state which must be produced. Moreover, it favours a transnational consensus about this type of state, which is supposed to best manage neoliberal global capitalism. This connects the first story of globalisation to a second in which the liberal democratic state becomes the international norm in a transnational consensus. The globalisation of liberal democracy raises issues of freedom and responsibility, which it subsequently occludes as it assumes that democratic practices remain confined within nation-states, but are, nevertheless, conditional on a global consensus. Remaindered in this story is how that consensus is to be produced and how the alternative visions of possible democratic states, and of global democratic practices, are marginalised and defeated.

The second story leads, then, to a third story of globalisation as a transformation of modernity through the development of a new global culture, one rooted in consumerism and producing a new culture of individualism. In short, the global consensus is to be created from the (economic) ground up, demanded by subjects loyal first to a consumer oriented global economy and only secondarily to their national state (or, for that matter, any political organisation). But if this is the supporting subjectivity of globalisation, it is unclear what is left of democracy. Raising the question of the global construction of subjectivity raises questions of democratic subjectivity as well: what does citizenship, political responsibility, and freedom mean in a culture beyond the nation-state? My conclusion speculates on how a democratic theory might begin to approach these questions.

## Globalisation and Democracy

Democracy circulates within globalisation in complex and multiple ways.<sup>4</sup> From the empowerment of immigrants in global cities,<sup>5</sup> to the transnational legal codes which constrain states (even liberal democratic ones) to be more democratic than they would otherwise be, to opening spaces for social movements within and across state boundaries, democracy seems to be moving rather briskly. This is in

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4. See David Held, *Democracy and the Global Order: From the Modern State to Cosmopolitan Governance* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1995), and David Held and Anthony McGrew, 'Globalisation and the Liberal Democratic State', *Government and Opposition* 28, no. 2 (1993): 261-88.

5. See Saskia Sassen, *Globalisation and its Discontents: Essays on the New Mobility of People and Money* (New York: New Press, 1998).

spite of the fact—created by the multiple and contingent nature of social change—that, in effect, we know as little about democracy in the context of globalisation as we do about globalisation.

The ambiguity is effaced by the mediatisation of democracy. 'Globalisation' is produced within the news media and popular culture. Most often, democracy circulates within globalisation in a rather undemocratic way: as spectacle. Democracy is a rather underspecified symbol consumed by readers and audiences of the news media who watch, and more or less passively participate in, democracy being protected and spread throughout the world. Democracy's triumph in the world is presented as a series of political slam-dunks worthy of Michael Jordan. Bombarded by images of how the world all wants to be democratic like us, the post-Cold War world is made to appear manageable. But spectacular democracy confines democracy to the media-driven form that has developed in liberal democratic states, especially the United States, in which the participation, and indeed it seems even the attentions, of the citizenry are limited.

But it is difficult not to think that just as the real social payoff of Jordan's basketball skill is the number of basketball shoes or hot dogs his image can sell (only two of his many commercial endorsements), the real payoff of the spectacular circulation of democracy in the early twenty-first century is how many markets it can pry open for global capital.<sup>6</sup> It is difficult not to have the sense that the moral certainty of spectacular democracy only thinly veils a moral disquiet. The passive televisual experiencing of democracy being protected and spread throughout the world makes possible an escape from the moral and political responsibilities of those in the West who benefit most from the global economy. People see the contingency of the global world as objects outside their everyday lives, and as being dealt with, more or less adequately, by the institutions of the nation-state. When the contingencies appear to break away from the ability of established institutions and political elites to manage them, the mediatised framing of them (as minute spots on the news, or as simulacra of television's movie dramas, for example) limits the extent to which they are politicised.

But it is precisely the nature of 'we' that globalisation calls into question even as televisual democracy reaffirms the adequacy of the traditional forms of political community. At least since the revival of democratic theory in the eighteenth century, the *demos*, the 'we' of democracy, has been associated with the sovereign territorial state. As a result, it is not surprising to find arguments that the transgressions of national sovereignty—the limited ability of states to regulate global corporations, the ceding of juridical and policy-making authority to international organisations, the increasing vulnerability of people to disease and ecological disasters originating outside one's state—mark trouble for democracy. These troubles are certainly real, and they begin to suggest the range of tasks

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6. On the linkage between spectacle and consumerism see especially Guy Debord, *Society of the Spectacle*, trans. Donald Nicholson-Smith (New York: Zone Books, 1995). For an account of global capitalism which uses Michael Jordan as symbol and hinge, see Walter LaFeber, *Michael Jordan and Global Capitalism* (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 1999).

globalisation sets for democratic theory. The nation-state is widely recognised to be so troubled, but the spectacle of democratic states triumphing in the world deflects the ways in which the 'we' of the nation-state no longer fits too well in the global.

Globalisation, on the one hand, promotes spectacular democracy which reinforces the current form of the liberal democratic state, while on the other, it seems to attenuate the hold of the nation-state on the imaginary of democracy. Forms of democratic action, if not yet democratic subjectivity (so far global democratic citizenship has little meaning), overflow the borders of the nation-state in multiple ways about which we have at best only an incomplete understanding, but which surely problematise democratic subjectness in the nation-state.

This essay begins to think about democracy in this transgressive space in which democracy remains dynamic even as the modern *demos*, the nation-state, fits democracy less and less well. The aim is to cultivate a democratic ethos reflective of the tentativeness and incompleteness of our understandings of the transformations taking place in the current world, a theory which remains wary of, yet open to, some notion of 'global democracy'. I seek a democratic ethos which is aware and critical of the ways globalisation reinforces a form of spectacular democracy and which is supportive of experiments with forms of democratic politics beyond the nation-state.

To this end, two sorts of issues will be raised about the predominant stories of globalisation discussed below. One has to do with the contestability of the central concepts of democratic theory, especially the concepts of equality, freedom, responsibility and subjectivity. The other has to do with revisions of the constitutional form democracy might take in the setting of globalisation, along with the possibilities for democratic politics beyond the nation-state.

## Globalisation: Territorialising the Late Modern World

Columbus, Tzvetan Todorov tells us, took possession of the island which revealed itself to him as he approached land after months at sea by naming it, along with its inhabitants.<sup>7</sup> As such, Hispaniola became a territory which could be located on a map, and in time and space by latter travelers—including Columbus himself—who sought to use it as an object for their purposes.

The space of Hispaniola was created as a territory; it did not exist as such prior to Columbus's naming and taking possession of it. 'Hispaniola' was not just a description of an island, it was a metaphoric and metonymic sign linking the island and its inhabitants to Spain, Europe, and Christianity. The name signalled a political process of territorialisation. The practice of territorialisation followed certain rules—planting the flag, declaring the sovereignty of the King and Queen, mapping the island's borders, and cataloguing its contents (physical and human)—which constituted the island as a particular space distinct from its surroundings and

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7. Tzvetan Todorov, *The Conquest of America* (New York: Harper and Row, 1982).

marked it as the possession of European sovereigns. By calling the island 'Hispañola', and subsuming the inhabitants under this signing of the space as a territory, the sovereign agents for whom Columbus acted could more easily organise and administer it. By naming the island and its inhabitants Columbus created a territory in which the land represented resources to be exploited, and the inhabitants subjects to be administered by the Queen and King and exploited by traders, and religious missionaries. Hispañola enclosed a physical environment, a natural setting, and the social world of the native peoples and rendered it subject to European conceptions of space and time.

My suspicion is that globalisation encloses the current compression of time and space, the intensification of interdependence, the increased volume of trade as well as flows of capital and people, the ecological dangers, and the new cultural indeterminacy of the late modern world in a similar fashion, assimilating them to the traditional concepts of modernity. In Robert Cox's terminology, globalisation normalises a 'spatial orientation of mind' in which 'the future is imaginable only as the further development of tendencies apparent in the present'.<sup>8</sup> As such, globalisation becomes a new territory and its elements more easily turned into resources to be exploited and its subjects more easily organised and administered. Within the new 'territory' of globalisation, the technologies of telematics and computerisation, and the new subjectivities of global corporations, social movements, immigrants, and refugees, among others, can be organised and given meaning and direction. Territorialising Hispañola allowed the impositions of colonial governance, missionary Christianity, and new forms of private property, whereas the territorialising of globalisation allows the impositions of information management, rules of multilateralism, and the regulatory discipline of markets and states.

As Hispañola was to Columbus, globalisation is being considered an object without a meaning of its own prior to its constitution as a territory. And just as Hispañola was given meaning by Columbus in terms of its otherness, its difference from Europe, globalisation is given meaning by predominant stories about it in terms of its otherness, its difference from the modern nation-state. Hispañola had no name, at least none functional within the politics of the Europeans. Its inhabitants, not being Christian, were assumed to have either no subjectivity at all (to be merely a part of the landscape) or were understood as non-European, especially non-Christian. The strangeness of the landscape led Columbus to catalogue its beauties; its difference from Europe in this respect demonstrating to him the glory of God's creation. And yet, Columbus sought to assimilate the difference to the categories of the Europeans; in doing so he generated remainders and resistances.

Again, the dominant stories of globalisation, I think, act in the same way. They approach globalisation as an object without meaning, to be given meaning only in so far as its difference can be assimilated to familiar categories of the politics of

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8. Robert W. Cox, 'A Perspective on Globalisation', in *Globalisation: Critical Reflections*, 21-30.

nation-states. This is the sense I want to take from the quote from Cox above. Forcing globalisation's difference into traditional 'spatial' categories creates remainders and resistances which prompt for political theory renewed investigation of the concepts and scope of democracy.

### Globalisation as Neoliberal Universalism

Globalisation is perhaps most familiar in the form of a neoliberal universalism. As a metaphor of world order, globalisation usually names the global as a space dominated by global markets, suggesting

that all peoples and states are equally subject to the logics of globalisation, which are on the whole beneficial and necessary, and that societies have no choice but to 'adapt' to the new international economic conjuncture.<sup>9</sup>

Free trade and free capital movements together with new technologies are creating a singular 'borderless world'.<sup>10</sup> A capitalist prosperity is spreading throughout the globe at an unprecedented rate while culture is converging on a universal liberalism.

This homogenising vision of a global social and economic world did not arise primarily as an academic discourse. In part, it emerged as a technical discourse of multinational business which reorganised capital flows and corporate structures in order to take advantage of emerging markets, and sought to hedge losses in one national market with investments in others. It also emerged as an ideology among business elites, in the reworked consciousness of economic globetrotters, executives whose everyday experience and lifeworld was perceived increasingly to be bound less to territorial locales than to corporate boardrooms, first-class compartments of aeroplanes, and the inner sanctums of five-star hotel chains.

This story retains its origins as a description of an economic transformation in its treatment of politics. Globalisation is primarily driven by technology and the revival of markets on a global scale. States remain the primary political units, however they are more stringently disciplined by global markets and international managerial organisations to deregulate production and capital flows, reduce social programs, and limit organised labour. The globalisation of neoliberal capitalism dismantles the state's power to regulate its national economy (or delegitimises a collective will to do so because regulation is seen as counter-competitive) through deregulation, tax cuts, and bilateral and multilateral free trade agreements. Increasing inequality, the intensification of poverty,<sup>11</sup> the invisibility of the poor in

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9. Claire Turenne Sjolander, 'The Rhetoric of Globalisation: What's in a Wor(l)d?', *International Journal* 51, no. 4 (1996): 603-16.

10. Kenichi Ohmae, *The Borderless World: Power and Strategy in the Interlinked Economy* (London: Harper Collins, 1990).

11. Sjolander, 'The Rhetoric of Globalisation'.

aggregate statistics about national competitiveness and aggregate growth,<sup>12</sup> and the unaccountability of international organisations are not central features of globalisation. Democratic politics need not undergo a similar global transformation because these resistances are left to be faced by national states, not by reimagining democracy in some way. Participation in the new global order is not considered political but economic; perhaps, for some at least, it is social. Politically, national states are left to manage the fallout from neoliberal globalisation. Liberal democratic politics as usual is assumed to be able to do so.

But a counter-story to neoliberal globalisation renders the political difficulties as central, and suggests that challenges to democracy that neoliberalism produces are not solved as a matter of course by the new, deregulated and 'weakened' form of the liberal democratic state.

Steven Gill, for example, argues that the complexity and possibilities of the current global conjuncture come from the fact that no clear resolution has emerged out of the challenges to the Fordist welfare state by the Thatcherite and Reaganite attacks of the 1970s and 80s.<sup>13</sup> Neoliberal globalisation 'involves the spatial expansion and social deepening of economic liberal definitions of social purpose and possessively individualist patterns of action and politics' deepening the penetration of 'market civilisation' into everyday life.<sup>14</sup> Neoliberal globalisation simultaneously precipitates and seeks to manage an 'organic crisis' in which 'there has been a growth in the structural power of capital, its contradictory consequences mean that neoliberalism has failed to gain more than temporary dominance over our societies'.<sup>15</sup> The contradictions of neoliberalism are embodied in the ideological profession of free trade, market liberalism and so on, while in fact it

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12. See Sassen, *Globalisation and its Discontents*. Neoliberalism establishes the individual as the site of government regulation, continuing the practice of earlier forms of capitalism and of the welfare state, while asserting the determination of the structure of the world economy (the demands of 'competitiveness') when setting trade, monetary, and industrial policy. Put more substantively, neoliberal globalisation argues that competitiveness is now globally structured and that the conditions of capital accumulation are inevitably and necessarily global. This privatisation of individual responsibility then connects up with the feminisation of work in the global sector and the constructing of the poor as other, a potentially hostile, backward, dirty force to be kept at bay. See also Sjolander, 'The Rhetoric of Globalisation', 614-15 n. 10.

13. Stephen Gill, 'Globalisation, Market Civilisation, and Disciplinary Neoliberalism', *Millennium: Journal of International Studies* 24, no. 3 (1995): 399-423. John Ruggie's, 'At Home Abroad, Abroad at Home: International Liberalisation and Domestic Stability in the New World Economy', *Millennium: Journal of International Studies* 24, no. 3 (1994): 507-26, similarly situates neoliberal globalisation within the legitimisation problematic of the capitalist state, although without the Gramscian framework of Gill. Embedded liberalism (Ruggie's term for the state/society complex of the post-World War II political economy) is inappropriate to the institutional and political challenges of the world economy of the 1980s and 90s but has not yet been replaced by another set of compromises and institutional arrangements which are able to hold the allegiances of economic and political managers, let alone the societies to whom they would be accountable. For a somewhat different account of globalisation as entailing a normative crisis of the late capitalist state, see Philip G. Cerny, 'Paradoxes of the Competition State: The Dynamics of Political Globalisation', *Government and Opposition* 32, no. 2 (1997): 251-74.

14. Gill, 'Globalisation', 399.

15. *Ibid.*, 401-2.

promotes not 'free competition as idealized in neoclassical theory, but [by] *oligopolistic neoliberalism*',<sup>16</sup> which 'subject[s] the majority of the population to the power of market forces whilst preserving social protection for the strong'.<sup>17</sup>

Neoliberal globalisation, Gill argues, is a far-reaching disciplinary ensemble, involving a 'new constitutionalism,' a new juridical system

reflected in the conditionality policies of the Bretton Woods organizations, quasi-constitutional regional arrangements such as NAFTA or Maastricht, and the multilateral regulatory framework of the World Trade Organisation.<sup>18</sup>

Neoliberal discipline also involves micro-power, and 'panoptic practices' in the form of 'mechanisms of surveillance' by both firms and states (we might add quasi-private knowledge industries connected to foundations and universities).<sup>19</sup> Firms can use their vast data bases about populations not only to enhance profit by manipulating consumer behaviour, but they also may

discipline individuals via sanctions or inducements: such as the denial or provision of private credit, health care, and insurance, or genetic testing and biological monitoring of workers to identify and perhaps exclude those who are unfit or potentially costly to corporate health plans.<sup>20</sup>

Gill continues '[G]overnments in the OECD and elsewhere have invested heavily in new technologies to create and manipulate data bases for tax collection, social security, immigration, social control, and criminal enforcement' thus making 'aspects of civil society and the state form more panoptic, and indeed coercive, in nature'.<sup>21</sup>

Neoliberalism, then, cannot ignore the political issues it raises, issues about the reconceptualisation of democracy and about the possibilities of global democratisation. Its depoliticised cosmopolitanism suggests the need for a political framework the story of neoliberal global capitalism does not provide. Here, neoliberalism connects to a second story of globalisation, the internationalisation of the liberal democratic state. While this second story arises in the context of post-Cold War security debates, it increasingly absorbs the remainders of the first story in its promotion of a global consensus about the liberal democratic state as the normal political form.

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16. Ibid., 405, emphasis in original.

17. Ibid., 407.

18. Ibid., 412.

19. Ibid., 416.

20. Ibid., 417.

21. Ibid., 417-18.

## Globalising Liberal Democracy

The second predominant narrative of globalisation is the globalising of the liberal democratic state. A shared framework has emerged in which liberal democracy is assumed to be the only form of democracy worth encouraging (and that Western liberal democratic states are appropriate models of what a liberal democratic state can be). The result has been to establish a new cartographic practice for naming political space as democratic, one which establishes a valued democratic community of states based on a shared liberal democratic culture (which is not itself in need of investigation) and an 'outside' of illiberal democracies and non-democratic states dominated by forces which threaten liberal democratic civilisation.

This discourse is redrawing the boundaries of the political world, replacing the world of alliances among nation-states with one of internal connections among liberal democratic states set off against a hostile array of non-liberal, undemocratic powers (states and others) outside. This new cartographic practice redraws the boundaries of democratic possibility in which territory, in the sense of a physical, topographic referent, is derivative. Islamic civilisation, as Samuel Huntington understands it for example, can be located in physical territory, but this location appears to be beside the point.<sup>22</sup> Yet, the global world is a territorialised one. The representation of political space remains realist as it seeks to reimagine the global space of liberal democracy.<sup>23</sup>

As R.B.J. Walker argues, international relations has been 'one of the most spatially oriented sites of modern social and political thought'.<sup>24</sup> After the Cold War, the acceleration of social time and the deepening of interdependence among communities has been assimilated to the modernist impulse to retain a spatial supremacy over temporality, and to spatial figuring of enemies.<sup>25</sup> Identity in this discourse of global liberal democracy continues to be reaffirmed against an outside world of danger and anarchy. But the cartographic logic in the post-Cold War order is no longer one which insists quite so intently as before on drawing boundary lines between states. The globalising of the realist language of representation charts a world in which sovereignty is reaffirmed. But sovereignty must now take the form of a liberal democratic state disciplined by and embedded in a network of rules and practices which define the global space of liberal democracy not as an alliance of states but as a culture and civilisation set off against a hostile world of non-democratic others.

The outside of liberal democratic civilisation is a nightmarish anarchy of terrorists, fundamentalists, and, to a lesser extent, protectionists. The world outside

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22. Samuel P. Huntington, 'The Clash of Civilizations', *Foreign Affairs* 72, no. 4 (1993): 22-49.

23. See Richard Falk, 'State of Siege: Will Globalisation Win Out?', *International Affairs* 73, no. 1 (1997): 128-29.

24. Walker, *Inside/Outside*, 13 n. 3.

25. Robert Cox makes the same point with reference to a Braudelian concept of temporality. See 'A Perspective on Globalisation', in *Globalisation: Critical Reflections*, 21-30.

is one of persistent threat to a democratic world. In a world in which national security fades into the security of a democratic culture, law, regulation, and social discipline can now emanate from outside the nation-state (in international organisations, bilateral and multilateral trade regimes, and global markets) and still be represented as necessary for the protection and security of the democratic community. Liberal democracy is threatened as a 'civilisation' and 'culture' in which nation-states are still significant, but which they do not any longer determine. Hence, the enemy is not an undemocratic state, but instead undemocratic civilisational and cultural forces like fundamentalism (including for many 'identity politics') and terrorism that operate inside and outside of states.

The double move with regard to politics in this discourse is to reaffirm that democracy takes place within states, and to constitute a particular liberal democratic civilisation as the site of security threats which trumps the sovereignty of individual states. The result is to depoliticise democratic politics: to eliminate either any need to assess the quality of the liberal democracy inside or to imagine global or even transnational forms of liberal democratic participation and accountability. This depoliticisation has met with resistance from both right and left: reactionary neofascist populisms which see the 'New World Order' as a conspiracy against the sovereignty of the nation-state, and social democratic attacks on the unaccountability of international organisations as well as worries about the ability of national governments to protect the poor, labour, and minorities against the effects of global capitalism.

As an example, Fareed Zakaria's influential essay in *Foreign Affairs* draws a distinction between liberal and illiberal democracy.<sup>26</sup> He catalogues liberal versus illiberal democracies and invokes the 'other' of illiberal democracy in order to establish the virtue of liberal democracy. In Zakaria's discussion, the key to transforming illiberal democracies (which he describes as not having 'matured' into liberal democracies) is not a political transformation so much as a transformation of 'civic life' which he identifies primarily as accepting the norms of a capitalist economy, decentralising state authority, and overcoming particularistic 'ethnic' identities in favour of a singular national one. His understanding of political liberalism is limited to the establishment of a constitutional system of checks and balances which protects and cements the cultural solidarity. The danger to democracy, he asserts, is within democracy itself.<sup>27</sup> This formulation allows Zakaria to simultaneously constitute democracy as a culture and civilisation which subsumes and overrides the sovereignty of the nation-state, and the world as a bifurcated space of good and bad democracies. The spectre of too much or strong democracy haunts the world; the problem of democracy in the twenty-first century is 'to make democracy safe for the world'.<sup>28</sup>

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26. Fareed Zakaria, 'The Rise of Illiberal Democracy', *Foreign Affairs* 76, no. 6 (1997): 22-43.

27. *Ibid.*, 42.

28. *Ibid.*, 43.

Zakaria points to the need to contest the basic concepts of democracy, and to recognise experimentation with democracy whose centre is not the nation-state. This suggests a need to reassess the conceptual and normative structure of democracy. But Zakaria simply asserts that a particular type of liberal democratic state—one in which a 'civic' transformation and consensus in civil society replaces political contestation over the meaning of democracy—closes down this investigation. Moreover, the civic consensus which now becomes the crucial defining practice of 'mature' democracy is a global one. The United States may be the leading power in this, but even the US is subject to a universal consensus; even the hegemon's politics need be limited and chastened by the cultural consensus. In short, Zakaria points to the experimentations with democracy but only to promote a secure, self-certain entity requiring little if any introspection into how the meaning of democracy is or might be transformed by globalisation.

I want to counterpoise to Zakaria's globalisation of liberal democracy an alternative reading which explicitly contests the conceptual foundations of democracy and its global possibilities. In his essay on liberation theologies and liberation theories, Fred Dallmayr puts the issue succinctly:

in the aftermath of the Cold War, Western liberalism and liberalization have emerged as the triumphant ideological panacea, spreading its effects around the globe. Yet precisely at this point, a curious dilemma has arisen: the embroilment of liberty and liberalism itself with domination. This entanglement is by no means fortuitous or merely the result of hegemonic designs. Just as under market auspices liberal individualism easily shades over into egocentrism, the rise of modern science and technology has transformed the Cartesian *cogito* into a surveyor and master of the natural universe, a transformation often captured by such labels as 'logocentrism' or 'anthropocentrism'. The question that surfaces—in the footsteps of Las Casas—is whether human liberty can be severed from domination and mastery or, in Nietzschean terms, whether human freedom can be cultivated without animosity or resentment against nature, the world, and the variety of human cultures.<sup>29</sup>

Zakaria's narrative of the globalisation of liberal democracy reeks of Nietzschean resentment. Rather than engaging alternative conceptions of democratic politics and possibilities after the Cold War, the self-certainty of liberal democracy closes its ranks around a particular form and lashes out at those who would resist and challenge it. The story of global democratisation is one of the internationalising of a particular neoliberal form of the liberal democratic state resentful that the post-Cold War world challenges not only communism but also liberal democracy itself.

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29. Fred Dallmayr, *Alternative Visions: Paths in the Global Village* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 1998), 73.

Those who critique liberal democracy by promoting other forms of democracy are 'immature' and 'dangerous'.

The internationalisation of the liberal democratic state depoliticises global democracy by ignoring the violence which brought the new consensus into being. It is possible to see the renewed experimentation with democratic politics during the later half of the Cold War and since quite differently. As for post-colonial states, we should note that often democratic possibilities emerged in response to liberal democracies, especially the United States, and that these democratic possibilities were disciplined and often controlled from outside by liberal democratic states. In Latin America, for example, the United States overthrew democratically elected governments. The experimentation with democratic government globally was in fact cut short and disciplined by liberal democratic states. Experimentation with democracy in post-Soviet states can also be seen as conditioned and disciplined by liberal democratic states. The creation of these states as liberal capitalist democracies modelled on Western, especially American, democracy, was disciplined through the conditionality of Western economic aid.

Talk of a 'third way' (neither capitalist nor socialist) which animated resistance movements in Eastern Europe during the 1980s was silenced as much by outside forces as by internal developments. The question of democracy in these states was initially posed on much broader terms than whether to adopt liberal democratic capitalism. The debate was over on what terms and in what ways would these states might be integrated into an increasingly global economy, one in which democratisation could be involved in transnational networks and regimes of rights, and not limited to prevailing models of liberal capitalist democracy. In short, it is the cartographic practice of dividing the world into liberal and illiberal democracies—created by suppressing other potentially more democratic alternatives—which needs to be explained if the limits and possibilities of democracy in the globalising world are to be understood.<sup>30</sup>

The second story of globalisation, then, absorbs the remainder of the story of neoliberal global capitalism, recognising that globalisation transforms political and not just economic life. It suggests that liberal democracy now depends on creating a consensus across borders, states, and cultures. After the Cold War, not only do the political systems of the former 'Second' and 'Third' Worlds need to be reassessed, but so do those of the 'First'. In place of this reassessment, however, the story of the internationalisation of the liberal democratic state offers only resentment against those who would not accept the victory of the liberal democratic state in the form of a global consensus. The story closes down the possibility that such a consensus could be formed *politically* because this would raise the possibility that the liberal democratic state be challenged by alternatives. The formation of the consensus is remaindered, left to a revival of a civic consensus in support of a neoliberal state in civil society, a consensus insulated

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30. See Michael J. Shapiro, *Violent Cartographies: Mapping Cultures of War* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997).

from political contestation and sustained by political interventions during and after the Cold War to prevent democratic alternatives from arising or taking hold. The problem is that the consensus cannot be created from within the liberal democratic state alone; it requires acceptance by other states and cultures which cannot be assured to embody the same liberal values in their civic life. The internationalisation of the liberal democratic state, then, implies a larger transformation of modernity, a cultural transformation in the creation of a single, dominant global culture. But a larger cultural transformation is not present explicitly in this narrative of globalisation.

### Globalisation/Modernity

The third story of globalisation I want to address is the way globalisation has prompted interventions into debates about modernity. This is a debate about how globalisation has transformed the culture of modernity. It would be impossible to summarise all of these interventions, but mentioning several will indicate the range of issues involved. Anthony Giddens, for instance, emphasises how globalisation disembeds key elements of modernity and re-embeds them in distant spaces.<sup>31</sup> Ulrich Beck highlights the way in which modernity is intensified in globalisation; the intensity of the effects of industrialisation, capitalism, and the nation-state's drive for territorial security, create a qualitatively different 'risk society' which at once continues modernity while altering the experience of insecurity and danger.<sup>32</sup> Roland Robertson sees globalisation as marking a new totality of social relations, a new arrangement of homogenisation/fragmentation, in which culture and especially religion take on renewed importance.<sup>33</sup> Arjun Appadurai similarly sees an increased importance for culture, emphasising the ways in which the imagination of social and personal possibilities are opened up in the late modern global order.<sup>34</sup>

However one cuts into them, these interventions in political and social theory attest to an ontological unsettling, if not overturning, of modernity. More than asserting any new secure structure of reality, these interventions are most significant for unsettling key features of modernity. Taken together, these interventions promote a mood of uncertainty which is engendering at once fascination, wariness, hope, and a new openness to difference. Called into question are—and these are only some of the themes—the role of culture and identity in

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31. Anthony Giddens, *The Consequences of Modernity* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1990).

32. Ulrich Beck, *The Reinvention of Politics: Rethinking Modernity in the Global Social Order* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1997), *Risk Society* (London: Sage, 1992), and *Democracy Without Enemies*, trans. Mark Ritter (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1998).

33. Roland Robertson, *Globalisation: Social Theory and Global Culture* (London: Sage, 1992).

34. Arjun Appadurai, *Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalisation* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996). For a range of interventions regarding globalisation and modernity, see Mike Featherstone, Scott Lash, and Roland Robertson, eds., *Global Modernities* (London: Sage, 1995) and Fredric Jameson and Masao Miyoshi, eds., *The Cultures of Globalization* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1998).

politics, the impact of the acceleration and velocity of social life, commodification on a global scale (commodification of all aspects of social life and the global reach of commodity circulation and production), and the globalisation of information and culture industries. Together these theories suggest ways in which modernity is becoming unsettled in its ability to secure some trajectory of development and modernisation, as well as its ability to secure a way of knowing the world.

What all of these appreciations of the implications of globalisation for modernity share is their emphasis on transition and on undecidability. They seem to imply, without necessarily stating the point, that the democratic potential of globalisation rests not with a new model of democracy but rather with the process and action through which a new global order is being created. Democracy connects here to a renewed sense of freedom; Beck, for example, sees promise in the undecidability (which he describes in terms of a new, radical scepticism and doubt) of the transition (a transition he describes not from modernity to post-modernity but from traditional, industrial modernity to a new phase of reflexive modernity he calls 'risk society').<sup>35</sup>

These interventions, then, resist the temptation to territorialise globalisation. They resist substituting a new secure global identity (neoliberal capitalism or internationalised liberal democracy) in place of or as supplement to an identity based in the nation-state. It is possible to speculate, however, that, unlike these critical interventions, a story of globalisation as a cultural transformation is emerging in which global culture is territorialised. This story resolves the ambiguity of the transition into a new culture, replacing the 'plurality of imagined worlds' with an imagined global world.<sup>36</sup>

Globalisation, this story goes, comes together in the nexus of mass culture, global capitalism, a culture of commodification, and the speed of global communication and movement. In the absence of a national culture to stabilise individual identity, people increasingly have recourse to a global marketplace in which it is possible to cobble together one's identity from various sources, made available to the self through media images which escape regulation either by nation-states or by a dominant national culture. The global culture may follow the lead of contemporary American culture, but this only testifies to the popularity of American culture; American culture is the culture of choice (this argument about the universal appeal of American culture is familiar in arguments about the end of the Cold War). The global culture breaks down all mediations between the individual and the global; popular culture, advertising, travel, economic interdependence, among other cross-border movements enable the reimagining of community as global rather than national. Collective imagination now succumbs to 'global dreams'.<sup>37</sup>

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35. Beck, *Reinvention of Politics*, especially 94-109.

36. Appadurai, *Modernity at Large*, 5.

37. One interesting way in which this culture is now produced is through synergies between celebrities such as Michael Jordan or Michael Jackson who define a certain moral and normative horizon of ideals and possibilities for self-making, and commodities which entangle individuals directly in networks of

In this global individualism, democracy is resolved into a global market democracy. The singular global culture's claim to being democratic rests in its implicit claim of 'equality of opportunity'—anyone throughout the world regardless of culture can participate as an individual like anyone else—and its appearance of unregulated individualism, allowing autonomy to all to be 'their own person'. Cultural multiplicity is absorbed into global commercial markets and thereby depoliticised.

The global culture appears flexible enough to fit neatly with any of the selves which inhabit the local sites within it. To borrow from the advertising milieu and stable of images of the global culture, if everyone gives '110 per cent' they do so in their own way; being 'like Mike' (Michael Jordan) doesn't mean being Mike, but participating in his image in your own distinctive way (we can all buy Nike's Air Jordans but we all wear different sizes and some tie the laces, others don't). As other territorial venues lose their ability to define the individual (one's individuality is less and less linked, for example, to the nation-state in which one lives, if one no longer speaks a distinctive language, or wears clothing and uses gestures which mark the person as of a specific national culture, etc.) the individual body replaces the body politic as the mediation of global territoriality. In such an order in which the images which regulate moral ideals and the possibilities for self-making are produced in a mediatised global popular culture, there is no need for an active, engaged politics on the part of citizens. 'Autonomy' as a 'democratic' subject consists not in the constitutional right to participate in collective decision-making and in the formation of a common good, but in the right to buy what one wants and to remake one's own body in any way one chooses. The former is assumed to be a possibility, but rendered unnecessary by the latter.

The internationalisation of liberal democratic states (globalisation story two) would seem to match this cultural order well, providing a minimalist framework in which individuals are free to choose their own lifestyles, values, and identities. Moreover, the speed and volume of global cultural flows eludes state regulation and hence appears to limit the possibilities for political tyranny. Any state which wants to benefit in the new order must comply.

But there is resistance; there are selves which do not match up with the global culture. The dominant story seeks to absorb them in the open play of the economy and of popular culture. But the same subjectivity that is free to cobble together an identity out of globally available images and symbols may not accept the distribution of available identities at any given moment. For example, he/she may choose ethnic, religious, or national identities which close borders to world trade rather than open them. If people are free to create themselves, they are also free to contest and politicise those identities that are pressed on them. The global self, it would seem, proliferates judgements. The choices people make about their

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meaning and provide the tools through which individuals can produce their own selves. Although weak on the cultural side, see Walter LaFeber, *Michael Jordan and Global Capitalism*. Stronger on the cultural implications of global synergies as well as the challenges to democratic politics is Richard Barnet and John Cavanaugh, *Global Dreams* (New York: Touchstone Books, 1995).

religion, gender, nationality and ethnicity, are all laced with normative and moral judgements which overflow the global market culture and may spill over into political contests. The global culture based on a personalised free choice of individuals, cannot guarantee that its results will be limited within its borders. It cannot guarantee that the selves it creates will endorse it or will fit smoothly into its borders. The story of a singular global culture is likely to generate a world of competing stories.

Therefore, the global culture requires a politics it cannot provide and which it determines to be outside its borders. Resistance to the culture is deemed to come from fundamentalists, renegade nationalisms, economic protectionists and others (who are not, therefore, actually free to choose their own selves). But these possibilities are inside the selves who compose the global culture, marking dissonances and sparking political contests. Appadurai, for example, sees the global culture as a 'tension between global homogenisation and global heteroginalisation'.<sup>38</sup> This struggle creates complex selves who inhabit multiple landscapes at once, each with contradictory implications for self-making. Struggles to determine gender, economic position, religious affiliation, sexual preference, and ethnic identity are at odds with one another inside the self, especially once it is freed from the sovereignty of identities based in the nation-state. Moreover, the contest among possible identities generates political mobilisations of different sorts. In other words, in Appadurai's reading, globalisation is likely to proliferate political spaces rather than confine them to a singular global culture administered by a political shell of liberal democratic states.<sup>39</sup>

The possibility of contesting homogenisation is implicit in the subjectivity which produces, and is produced by, the global culture (the self who freely cobbles together its identity from multiple, global sources). This self is propelled into political activity which constitutes the global culture as an undecidable collection of, in Appadurai's words, '*imagined worlds*', that is, the multiple worlds that are constituted by the historically situated imaginations of persons and groups spread around the world'.<sup>40</sup>

Beck describes this politics of global culture as 'subpolitics'.<sup>41</sup> Beck analyses the new condition of the self in globalised modernity as 'individualisation' by which he means '*first*, the disembedding of industrial-society ways of life, and, *second*, the re-embedding of new ones, in which the individuals must produce, stage, and cobble together their biographies themselves'.<sup>42</sup> He goes on to say: 'This type of individualisation does not remain private; it becomes political in a definite, new

38. Arjun Appadurai, *Modernity at Large*, 32.

39. As Appadurai notes, 'The transformation of everyday subjectivities through electronic mediation and the work of the imagination is not only a cultural fact. It is deeply connected to politics, through the new ways in which individual attachments, interests, and aspirations increasingly crosscut those of the nation-state'. See his *Modernity at Large*, 10.

40. Appadurai, *Modernity at Large*, 33, emphasis in original.

41. See Beck, *Reinvention of Politics*, especially in 'Subpolitics-The Individual Returns to Society', 94-109. Appadurai describes this politics somewhat differently as 'subversive micronarratives'.

42. *Ibid.*, 95.

sense'.<sup>43</sup> The new politics generated is not the formal politics of political parties and institutionalised organisation, but a politics rooted in everyday life: 'Subpolitics means social arrangement from below'.<sup>44</sup>

The individualism of global modernity demystifies the institutions of industrial modernity, not only the formal institutions of the state; all the institutional unities and corporatist wholes of industrial society are recognised as constructions of individuals and hence subject to interventions by the newly individualised subjects. Indeed Beck insists that this is not a choice on the part of individuals, as if being disembedded or freed from the traditional institutions of modernity left individuals as purely private, atomised beings. Rather, he sees the new individual as re-embedded in social networks, networks constituted reflexively, as reactions to the risks they pose to the lifeworld of the individual. The new individualism of a global society proliferates spaces of politics, especially in the environment (Beck's primary concern) but in all spheres in which individuals must negotiate public spaces: healthcare, gender, nuclear power, etc.

Beck and Appadurai help us to see that the global is not really a political space (in the sense of a territory) at all. It is at once a fissure (or a series of fissures) in the seams of the nation-state system, and a proliferation of multiple political spaces. It is a space in which politics proliferates as a performance of action, rather than as a systematic legitimisation of institutions and authorities. The predominant stories of globalisation do not endeavour to address these developments. At most, the first two raise questions about how the liberal democratic state might need to transform its institutions, adopting neoliberal deregulatory policies to be globally competitive, or entering into an international consensus to enforce the norm of the liberal democratic state against other illiberal democracies or non-democratic states. But as I have tried to show in each case there are crucial remainders which signal a need for both reengaging democracy's basic concepts and for questioning the assumption of its limited territorial base in the nation-state.

My aim in the conclusion to this essay is to speculate on the possibility of a global democratic theory which is more open to the performative character of a global democratic politics (and hence cuts through its spectacular form), a theory which does not treat globalisation as a new territory but values the proliferation of political spaces. This theory would see global space as fluid, open, and contestable. The promise of a democratic global politics in such a theory is not the ability to adjust to a new phase of capitalism, or to defend liberal democracy against non-liberal democracies, but to construct new kinds of political spaces.

## Conclusion

Democratic subjectivities and subjectness (membership and constitutionality) are emerging globally. Moreover, these are ambiguous global constructions. Those

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43. Ibid., 97.

44. Ibid., 104.

who consider membership and action in human rights organisations, or who associate their citizenship with promoting women's empowerment, gay rights, or the wellbeing of refugees, or limiting nuclear power or genetically engineered produce also act as members of nation-states. Their citizenship is not a global citizenship in the sense of an eighteenth century cosmopolitanism (the 'citizen of the world' or 'citizen of humanity'). Their identities do not exclude or trump national identities; indeed, they cannot since the juridical and ideational institutions of the nation-state continue to govern and frame the local experiences of most—but certainly not all—people. Their subjectivity and their subjectness as democratic citizens are split and undecidable because they must be and act at times as nationals (even if they 'choose' not to, their actions are still conditioned by the national contexts from which they emerge), while at other times they are citizens in some broader, global sense.

The various stories of globalisation which follow a logic of territorialisation depoliticise democratic politics. Democracy is resolved into either the liberal democratic state as it has developed in Western capitalist states, or into a private identity as consumer in a global order in which politics itself has no place because it is valued as superficial. Each ignores the interplay of national and global, of here and there, of agency and structure. But globalisation ambiguates these in a number of significant ways which pull people simultaneously in different directions. The territorialising stories of globalisation do not allow for the construction of identities which partake of both simultaneously, selves who accept the conflicts and negotiate the simultaneous pulls of the national and the global. They therefore miss the emerging forms of transnational democracy being experimented with by migrant labourers, social activists, some businessmen, some political leaders and diplomats, scientists, physicians and others.

How does democratic cosmopolitanism look if it is deterritorialised and at the same time avoids development as a form of universalism? How might democratic theory resist the pull to be either national or global, to be both at the same time and hence to be neither? I say 'neither' because one element of such a theory must be to proliferate new kinds of spaces of political action moving in and through established institutional settings. In a sense these are not 'spaces' in that there can be no definable closure to them; they are spaces in which politics in its active dimensions defines politics. A deterritorialised democratic theory might usefully revisit theories such as those of Hannah Arendt which emphasise citizenship and the limits of institutionalities, and are open to contingency.<sup>45</sup>

A deterritorialised democratic theory I think should not ignore institutional forms but it must distance itself from them.<sup>46</sup> Instead it should focus on the active side of

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45. For an interpretation of Arendt along these lines see Bonnie Honig, *Political Theory and the Displacement of Politics* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1993).

46. I want to resist so-called 'cosmopolitan democracy' for this reason. See David Held, *Democracy and the Global Order: From the Modern State to Cosmopolitan Governance* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1995) and Daniele Archibugi and David Held, eds., *Cosmopolitan Democracy: Agenda for a New World Order* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1995).

democratic citizenship and practice, on questions of civic virtue, of responsibility, of the ethical requirements of being a democratic citizen. Such a theory will need to fold in institutional and constitutional arrangements adequate to it, as well as theories of democratic equality and political organisation, but it will need to do so in ways in which constitutionality does not produce too much closure and is not able to trump forms of action which would resist the boundaries any formal political structure and organisation sets up. Perhaps questions of the demands that global inequality presses on democratic citizenship (the way the local community embeds both national and global inequalities, often in complex relation to one another), or the democratisation of transnational governance and non-governmental organisations might provide useful first cuts into a more open, ambiguously territorial theory of democratic constitutionality.

I am suggesting here a return of Alexis de Tocqueville's insight that freedom and democracy are mutually dependent—but not the same—yet always somewhat out of tune. Freedom defines an irrepressible movement, a spontaneity of action which always presses against boundaries and is always pressing beyond them, hence the relevance of Tocquevillean freedom for a deterritorialised theory of democracy. Likewise, Arendt's consideration of freedom as inherent in political action (although she limits it to 'public' as opposed to 'private' realms) is pertinent. Tocqueville may have lodged freedom a bit too securely in an individualist civil society, a danger corrected by Arendt who situates it firmly in agonistic politics. Deterritorialised global democratic theory, perhaps, points to such a combination of Tocquevillean freedom: an irrepressible movement of the self which overflows the institutional and administrative forms which would contain it, and Arendtian politics: an agonistic struggle which celebrates contingency in the creation of political community.

I conclude, then, with a bit of provocative dissonance. Tocqueville and Arendt have rarely been taken as guides for international theory, perhaps because their resistance to the closure of politics within the state opens up the possibility of thinking about a politics beyond the state, even if they did not themselves explore it. Ironically, the inability of globalisation to be territorialised by any or by a combination of the stories surveyed in this essay allows it to point the way to a return of theories of freedom and democratic action in political theory.

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