

SECOND EDITION

Global Politics in the Human Interest

Mel Gurtov

GLOBAL POLITICS IN THE HUMAN INTEREST

Second Edition, Fully Revised

Mel Gurtov

LYNNE RIENNER PUBLISHERS • BOULDER & LONDON

In Chapter 7, there is a line from Sting's song, "Russians."
Sting, "Russians"; © 1985 Magnetic Music Publishing, Ltd.
Represented by Reggatta Music, Ltd./Illegal Songs, Inc.
Administrated by Atlantic Music Corp. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

Published in the United States of America in 1991 by
Lynne Rienner Publishers, Inc.
1800 30th Street, Boulder, Colorado 80301

and in the United Kingdom by
Lynne Rienner Publishers, Inc.
3 Henrietta Street, Covent Garden, London WC2E 8LU

© 1991 by Lynne Rienner Publishers, Inc. All rights reserved

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Gurtov, Melvin.

Global politics in the human interest / Mel Gurtov.—2nd ed.

p. cm.

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN 1-55587-255-7 (paper)

1. International relations. 2. International economic relations.

3. World politics—1945- I. Title.

JX1391.G87 1991

327'.09'045—dc20

91-9276

CIP

British Cataloguing in Publication Data

A Cataloguing in Publication record for this book
is available from the British Library.

Printed and bound in the United States of America

The paper used in this publication meets the requirements
of the American National Standard for Permanence of
Paper for Printed Library Materials Z39.48-1984.

Explorations in Peace and Justice:
New Perspectives on World Order

•

GENERAL EDITORS

Elise Boulding

Richard Falk

Samuel S. Kim

Saul H. Mendlovitz

R. B. J. Walker

For my daughters,
Alia, Marci, and Ellene

“... in the bloom of life, like the sun
at eight or nine in the morning.
Our hope is placed on you.”

Preface to the Second Edition

This second edition of *Global Politics in the Human Interest* takes account of world political developments to the end of 1990, including the momentous changes in Europe and the Soviet Union. Wherever possible, I have updated information from the first edition, and in many instances supplemented it with additional ideas that have come to mind or been prompted by new scholarship. I have also added one case study, on Brazil's rain forests.

I have been extremely pleased with the warm reception that greeted the first edition of *Global Politics in the Human Interest*. I would like to thank the many professors and students who have used the book in classes and who have given me such supportive comments.

I would also like to record my appreciation of several people who helped bring the second edition to fruition: Mary Krug, who did a wonderful job of word processing; Liu Meiru, who assisted with research; Christina Burnside, who contributed to the section on Soviet environmental problems; and Gia Hamilton and Sarah Tomasek, for their careful (and caring) editing. Finally, I very much appreciate Lynne Rienner's personal interest in having a second edition come out; it couldn't have happened otherwise.

Mel Gurtov

Preface to the First Edition

Teaching world politics has made me acutely aware not only of the limited perception most U.S. students have of other societies. That is hardly a novel discovery. But I have also become more aware of, and concerned about, the direction most studies of world politics seek to take students: away from recognition and appreciation of the world's diversity; away from an understanding of how closely interlinked peoples and societies really are—that what happens “out there” really does affect what happens at home; toward acceptance of conflict and violence as the unalterable pattern of state politics; and toward embracement of the “American way” as the only reasonable path toward a satisfactory world order.

Hence this book, the chief purpose of which is to propose a relatively new way of looking at world politics. It challenges conventional thinking and hopes to awaken readers to a global crisis that directly affects them. My approach is not merely to define the dimensions of this crisis but to redefine national and global security in ways that promote the human interest. By “the human interest” I mean satisfaction of the basic material and nonmaterial needs of the overwhelming majority of the planet's people, especially in the underdeveloped countries but also in the so-called developed world.

Two contrasting global trends also motivated my writing: profound inequalities between and within nations whose fates are increasingly interdependent; and the emergence of projects and ideas at many levels that have the potential to move human society toward greater equity and sustainability. The first of these trends is, of course, dominant in world politics, and as such is a principal cause of dangerous instabilities: arms races, state as well as group terrorism, war, revolution and counterrevolution, resource and ecological crisis. Yet, if we can understand how all these forms of violence—to ourselves, to others, to the environment—are structured into political-economic systems and into the international behavior of states, we have the conceptual basis for transforming the rules in humane ways. And as the rules change, a new global agenda is fashioned for restoring security at every level of human activity.

Underlying my analysis is a set of values, identified as Global Humanist (see Chapter 3), that distinguishes my approach from most other studies of world politics. Human-centered values, such as peace and social justice, are

increasingly being recognized as important tools for defining, analyzing, and resolving the great world-scale problems of our time—and doing so while avoiding becoming captive to particular political institutions and ideologies. But to emphasize values, as Saul Mendlovitz reminds us, is to cut against the grain of the social sciences, which traditionally have been biased “against work that explicitly utilizes preferences and values as a way of defining problems to be investigated, and as a standard to be used for what will be considered an adequate solution to the problems.”¹ My own personal and political evolution leads me to conclude that the credibility of social science research rests to an important degree on the explicitness with which we identify our own values and how they affect what and how we analyze.² There is simply no such thing as value-free research.

Some years ago, in a process that began with rethinking U.S. intervention in Indochina, I gradually moved away from a traditional, U.S.-centered conception of international politics. This book is a road stop on that continuing journey of personal and political renewal. I owe a profound intellectual and emotional debt to a rather diverse group of contemporaries, including Carl Rogers, Paolo Friere, Ram Dass, George Kennan, and Richard Falk. And by their example as well as their written work, Gandhi, Martin Luther King, Jr., John Vasconcellos, and Daniel Ellsberg have also inspired and changed me. I doubt that any of these people would reflect on world politics in the same way I do. But I would like to think that they would regard what I have written as a contribution to making the world a little bit better.

I also wish to thank Dariush Haghighat, a doctoral student from Iran, for his skillful research on several of the case studies in this book. He has been a joy to work with. We both are grateful to the University of California, Riverside, for an intramural research grant and the opportunity to travel to Washington, D.C., during 1986. At that time I interviewed key people in several of the globalist organizations mentioned in Chapter 7, and I would like to express my appreciation for their help: John Marks of Search for Common Ground; Nancy Graham of the Institute for Soviet-American Relations; and Mark Rilling of the U.S. Institute of Peace.

The manuscript profited from the counsel of Ray Maghroori, Elise Boulding, and Sam Kim, each of whom read it in its entirety and offered valuable suggestions for improvement. I thank them as well as several anonymous reviewers. Of course any errors or omissions are my responsibility alone. Finally, the actual production of the manuscript could not have been accomplished without the wonderful skills of Aline Messer in Riverside and Peggy Tombleson in Portland.

My final words of thanks are for my family: my wife, Leigh Anne, and my daughters, Ellene, Marci, and Alia. Their love and gentleness are a constant inspiration to work harder at being a global citizen.

M.G.

Global Politics In The Human Interest

Contents

List of Charts	ix
Preface to the Second Edition	xi
Preface to the First Edition	xiii
1 CRISIS AND INTERDEPENDENCE IN CONTEMPORARY WORLD POLITICS	1
Global Insecurity, 1. A Brief Report on the State of the Planet, 4. Interdependence, 6.	
2 REALISM AND CORPORATE GLOBALISM IN THEORY AND PRACTICE	13
The Realist Perspective, 13. Corporate Globalism and the World Economy, 21. Rivals or Partners?, 29. A Case Study: Postwar Planning for the "American Century," 35.	
3 WORLD POLITICS IN GLOBAL-HUMANIST PERSPECTIVE	41
The Search for a Third Way, 41. Values, Methods, Measurements, Objectives, 43. The Oppressed, 57.	
4 THE THIRD WORLD: HUMAN RIGHTS AND UNDERDEVELOPMENT	73
Defining the "Third World," 73. A Third World Country Profile, 77. Case Studies of Crisis and Renewal: China, 89; South Africa, 96; Nicaragua, 102; The Philippines, 106; South Korea, 111; Brazil, 116.	

5	ARMS AND INSECURITY IN THE FIRST WORLD	119
	The Military Crisis of the First World, 119. The Nuclear Danger, 121. The Human Costs of the Nuclear Game, 141: in the Soviet Union, 141; in the United States, 149. The Price of Being Number One, 153.	
6	THE QUEST FOR AUTONOMY AND SECURITY IN THE SECOND WORLD	157
	The New Meaning of Power, 157. Toward a United Europe, 161. The Changing Strategic Picture, 163. Some Second World Case Studies: Japan, 167; Canada, 174; Poland, 178.	
7	IN THE HUMAN INTEREST: AN AGENDA FOR TRANSFORMING WORLD POLITICS	183
	Lessons for the Future, 183. Thinking Globally, 187. The Prospects for Humanity, 210.	
	Notes	213
	Bibliography	243
	Index	261

Charts

2.1	Alternative Values	15
2.2	Alternative Norms and Structures	16
2.3	Foreign Sales and Profits of the 50 Largest U.S. Transnationals	24
4.1	Distribution of World Income	78
4.2	Income Distribution in the Third World	80
5.1	U.S. and Soviet Nuclear Arsenals in 1983	126
5.2	Economic and Social Ranking of U.S. and USSR Among 142 Countries	143

Crisis and Interdependence in Contemporary World Politics

This dominant culture set the tone and standard for most of Shikasta. For regardless of the ideological label attaching to each national area, they all had in common that technology was the key to all good, and that good was always material increase, gain, comfort, pleasure. . . . And all this time the earth was being despoiled. The minerals were being ripped out, the fuels wasted, the soils depleted by an improvident and short-sighted agriculture, the animals and plants slaughtered and destroyed, the seas being filled with filth and poison, the atmosphere was corrupted. . . . These were maddened creatures, and the small voices that rose in protest were not enough to halt the processes that had been set in motion and were sustained by greed. By the lack of substance-of-we-feeling.

—Doris Lessing, *Re: Colonised Planet 5, Shikasta*

The splitting of the atom has changed everything save our mode of thinking, and thus we drift toward unparalleled catastrophe.

—Albert Einstein

GLOBAL INSECURITY

Someone once defined fanaticism as “redoubling your efforts when you have lost sight of your original objective.” The blind pursuit of national security fits this definition of fanaticism perfectly. As state leaders invest more and more political, human, and economic resources in weapons, aid programs, alliances, and the exploitation of resources, the security of persons, societies, and the planet as a whole actually seems to decline. In the industrialized, technologically advanced countries of the

First and Second Worlds,* insecurity is mainly reflected in acute anxiety about the efficacy of political systems and frustrations about the ability of capitalism or socialism to deliver the “good life” except at very high social and ecological costs. In the underdeveloped countries of the Third World, where three-fourths of the world’s population of about 5 billion people live, insecurity takes a more basic form: the daily quest for survival.

The causes and consequences of this pervasive insecurity, and the extent to which its different forms are interrelated and mutually reinforcing—the degree, for example, to which the quest for security in the First and Second Worlds takes place largely at the expense of the Third World, yet also has profound economic and social impact on their own societies—are the principal subjects of this study. The reasons are simple: The human costs of global insecurity are staggering; the narrow understanding of “national security” by most state leaders keeps these costs high and mounting; the penetration of every aspect of world politics (such as alliances, the ecosystem, global finance and trade, and people’s movements and exchanges) by this global crisis has created great foreboding but equally great hesitancy to take remedial action; and, as a result, the prospects for planetary survival itself are not optimistic.

State leaders everywhere invariably seek to put the best possible face on their own situations, and many serious scholars persist in arguing that humankind will resolve today’s problems just as it resolved yesterday’s. Indeed, events in 1989 and 1990 gave some cause for optimism. Massive demonstrations challenged the legitimacy of single-party states from China to Czechoslovakia, and in most cases toppled them. The Berlin Wall, the symbol of Germany’s and Europe’s division, came down on November 9, 1989. German reunification was completed less than a year later. The creation of a single market among the twelve countries of the European Community was set to start in 1993. This radical alteration of the map of Europe took place against the background of revolutionary changes in Soviet–U.S. relations. Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev, whose “new thinking”

*The definitions of First, Second, and Third worlds used throughout this book differ from those commonly employed. “First World” here designates the superpowers—the United States and the Soviet Union. “Second World” refers to the advanced economies of Europe, East and West, Japan, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand. “Third World,” as discussed in Chapter 4, embraces a wide spectrum of economically “underdeveloped” (even if rapidly industrializing) societies, including not only those in Asia, Africa, Latin America, and the Middle East, but also several in Europe (namely, Portugal, Spain, Greece, Turkey, Albania, and Bulgaria). No categorization is entirely satisfactory; the main virtues of this one are that it sets the two superpowers, with their unparalleled global influence, apart from the other industrialized and politically influential states of the Second World, and that it draws attention to how much Second World states have in common despite evident differences in their social systems.

essentially discarded the old rules of the cold-war game, was the single most important figure. His mid-1990 summit meeting in Washington, D.C., with President George Bush continued U.S.–Soviet arms talks that had already led to the first actual reductions, and destruction, of nuclear weapons in the postwar period. The peace-keeping role of the United Nations revived, with missions in diverse locations such as Afghanistan, Cambodia, and Namibia. Prominent human-rights activists were freed from captivity, including Nelson Mandela after twenty-seven years in South African prisons.

Events such as these, when compared with the baleful character of international relations only a decade earlier, would appear to herald a new era of peace and security. Then, war and preparations for war dominated world politics: the intense nuclear arms competition between the United States and the Soviet Union, the enormously costly eight-year conflict between Iran and Iraq, and the seemingly endless civil and interstate violence in Africa and Southeast Asia. Driven by this short-term comparison, some commentators were quick to proclaim the “end of history,” in the sense that the demise of the Soviet empire and the seeming victory of Western liberalism in Eastern Europe had opened the way to a stable, if rather boring, epoch devoted mainly to technological development.¹

But has “history” ended? The contention of this book is that although the cold war has largely ended in Europe and led to a lessening of tensions elsewhere, a global crisis remains *when international and national security issues are evaluated from a planetary and long-term perspective*. Proclamations of victory in the cold war may be politically satisfying in some circles; but they are no substitute for analysis, particularly when they ignore events in the Third World. As we will see, increasing poverty, environmental neglect, military spending, and weapons development, not to mention numerous armed conflicts within and between states, are among the signs that global insecurity is deepening. Such insecurity is beyond quick technological or diplomatic fixes. As U Thant, the former secretary-general of the United Nations, forcefully put the issue in 1969:

I do not wish to seem overdramatic, but I can only conclude from the information that is available to me as Secretary-General, that the Members of the United Nations have perhaps ten years left in which to subordinate their ancient quarrels and launch a global partnership to curb the arms race, to improve the human environment, to defuse the population explosion, and to supply the required momentum to development efforts. If such a global partnership is not forged within the next decade, then I very much fear that the problems I have mentioned will have reached such staggering proportions that they will be beyond our capacity to control.²

In its essentials, the secretary-general’s warning has come true. Although planetary extinction has thus far been averted, the depth and scale of the problems U Thant cited have indeed increased to nearly unmanageable

proportions, as I document in the next section. Few government leaders have shared his sense of urgency; most have acknowledged one or another aspect of a global crisis, but have not considered that the problems are symptomatic of a contagious and potentially fatal disease. Life, and politics, go on as before.

It is indeed strange that at one and the same time, monumental leaps of scientific creativity occur for the benefit of humankind while political leaders stick to tired formulas and outdated rituals in pursuit of self-interest. The practice of politics has not kept pace either with scientific advances or with global ecological, economic, military, and social changes. U Thant appealed for a “global partnership” because he believed the future of the human species itself was imperiled. But the governments he addressed were not (and clearly still are not) ready to integrate global changes into narrowly national perspectives. And therein lies a crisis of our times that is equally as burdensome as any U Thant described: a crisis of political will in the nation-state system.

The emphasis throughout this book is on information, explanation, and argument. This chapter begins with some basic facts about the global crisis and what they tell us about the changed shape of world politics—in a word, its *interdependence*. I introduce the two schools of thought that dominate writing and thinking about world politics—Realism and Corporate Globalism—along with a third school—Global Humanism—the values and analytical method of which I use throughout the present study. In Chapter 2, Realism and Corporate Globalism are critically examined. An extended discussion of the contemporary world economy and a case study of how it was shaped after World War II enable us to see the ways Realism and Corporate Globalism both compete and collaborate in their real-world application. Chapter 3 elaborates on Global Humanism as an alternative perspective with specific relevance to global human needs. The Third World’s oppressed are given special attention here, for they constitute the global majority. This discussion sets the stage for a more specific investigation of insecurity from a human-interest point of view, in the Third World (Chapter 4), the First World (Chapter 5), and the Second World (Chapter 6)—in each case buttressed by brief studies of particular countries. The concluding chapter is policy oriented: It lays out an agenda for changes addressed to the main features of the global crisis.

A BRIEF REPORT ON THE STATE OF THE PLANET

The scope of the global crisis becomes apparent from the following figures:

- Over 2 billion people in the Third World (including four of five persons living in rural areas) do not have access to clean water. A rough estimate by the World Bank and UNESCO is that about half of them (a billion people) are chronically malnourished.³

- Despite advances in world literacy, there remain thirty-four countries with over 80 percent illiteracy.⁴
- About 300 million people in the Third World were unemployed or underemployed in the late 1970s, as were about 22 million people in the industrialized capitalist countries. By 2000, it is estimated that well over 1 billion people will be seeking employment in the Third World alone.⁵
- Approximately 1.2 billion people, overwhelmingly in the Third World, were living in absolute poverty in 1989—a figure equivalent to the population of China. Their incomes generally range between \$200 and \$400 a year. They live in countries with the world's largest and fastest-growing populations.⁶
- The world population, according to the World Bank, is expected to be well over 6 billion by 2000. In the mid-1980s, it was commonplace to say that world population was growing by “another Mexico” (80 million) annually, whereas by 1990 the phrase had changed to “another Bangladesh,” or about 100 million people every year.⁷
- At current rates of depletion, by the year 2000 the Third World's forests, especially in tropical zones, will be reduced by one-half (thus intensifying an already serious shortage of firewood for fuel). Up to 1 million plant and animal species out of a total of 5 million may become extinct. One-third less topsoil will be available for food production. Already, world food reserves have shrunk to only a 40 days' supply, from over 100 days in 1960.⁸
- The developed-world states (those in the First and Second Worlds) currently account for more than four-fifths of the world's income but only one-fourth of its population. (The United States, with about 6 percent of the world's population, consumes over 30 percent of its total product.) By contrast, the underdeveloped states account for three-fourths of the world's population but less than one-fifth of its income.
- Arms expenditures worldwide have roughly doubled in twenty years, reaching \$940 billion in 1985—well over \$2 billion a day. Over 80 percent of that amount is spent by the two superpowers, which together possess nuclear destructive power equivalent to about 5,000 World War II's. In all, about 20 percent of the world's scientists are involved in military research and development.⁹
- Third World governments, especially those under military rule, are the primary customers for arms sold by the United States, the Soviet Union, and various European suppliers. They buy three-quarters of all marketed weapons. They are paying for the arms with their own scarce resources and with money borrowed from the banks and governments of the developed countries, to which the Third World