



Ulrich Beck
Power in the
Global Age

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Power in the Global Age
A new global political economy

ULRICH BECK

Translated by Kathleen Cross

polity

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The Hazy Power Space of Global Domestic Politics

Today, we Europeans act as if Germany, France, Italy, the Netherlands, Portugal, and so forth, still existed. Yet they have long since ceased to exist, because as soon as the euro was introduced – if not before – these isolated nation-state containers of power and the equally isolated, mutually excluding societies they represented entered the realm of the unreal. To the extent that Europe exists, there is no longer any such thing as Germany, or France, or Italy, or Britain, and so on, as these exist in people’s heads and in the picture-book accounts of the historians. This is because the borders, responsibilities and exclusive experiential spaces on which this nation-state world was based no longer exist. But if all this is gone, if all we are doing is thinking, acting and researching in zombie categories, what comes along – or has come along – to take its place?

This is the question which this book raises and attempts to answer, developing a very wide-ranging and fundamental analysis of the social, economic and political transformations of the modern age. In this account the distinction that has underpinned our view of the world to date, namely that between national and international spheres, is being dissolved in what remains a somewhat hazy power space of global domestic politics. Nonetheless, it was this distinction that helped to shape the world of the first modernity, including its key concepts (and theories) of society, identity, state, sovereignty, legitimacy, violence and state authority. This book therefore asks: how might we conceptualize a world and a set of global dynamics in which the problematic consequences of radicalized modernization effectively eliminate the cornerstones and logics of action – certain historically produced fundamental distinctions and basic institutions – of its nation-state order? The answer that is developed and explicated in the following chapters goes as follows: the new global domestic politics that is already at work here and now, beyond the national–international distinction, has become a meta-power game whose outcome is completely open-ended. It is a game in which boundaries, basic rules and basic distinctions are being renegotiated – not only those between the ‘national’ and ‘international’ spheres, but also those between global business and the state, transnational civil

society movements, supranational organizations and national governments and societies.

If those things that fall within the ‘national’ framework are no longer national and those that fall within the ‘international’ framework are no longer international, then the political realism of the national outlook is a false realism. Its place is taken instead – so this book contends – by a *cosmopolitan realism*, which needs to be fully explored conceptually in terms of its logics of power. Cosmopolitan realism focuses not only on the crucial role of global economic power and global business actors in relations of cooperation and competition among states, but also on the strategies of transnational civil society movements, including ‘uncivil’ – that is, terrorist – networks which mobilize privatized violence against states for their own political purposes.

Cosmopolitan realism, or Machiavellianism, provides an answer to two questions in particular. First, what are the strategies by which global business actors impose their own rules of action upon states? And, second, how can states for their part win back political meta-power *qua* states in relation to global business actors, in order to impose a *cosmopolitan regime* on global political capital that encompasses political freedom, global justice, a secure social order and ecological sustainability? This *New Global Political Economy* acquires its relevance and explanatory power, on the one hand, from the fact that it is expounded as a theory of power about the strategic scope for action available in a transnational economy; on the other hand, it also takes up the counter-question suggested by this, namely, how can the world of state-organized politics (with its basic concepts, its strategic sphere of power, its institutional possibilities and constraints) be opened up to the challenges not only of the global economy but also of the global problems that are a consequence of modernization?

There are a number of signs pointing to the fact that a culture of globality is advancing upon us and possibly even gaining in dominance – among other things, the fact that, in the maelstrom of globalized modernization, global problems have long since become an everyday reality. Climate change, environmental destruction, food risks, global financial risks, migration, the anticipated consequences of innovations in genetics, human genetics, nanotechnology, and so forth, all serve to call into question in a quite tangible way the very foundations of social life. The nation-state has ceased to be the source of a frame of reference that encompasses all other frames of reference and enables political answers to be found. Moreover, the terrorist attacks of 11 September 2001 teach us that power does not translate into security. In this one radically divided world, it is likely that security will only be achieved once people’s willingness and ability to see the world of unrestrained modernity through the eyes of the other, through the lens of difference, have been awakened at a cultural level and have become a part of our everyday existence. The task of creating a *cosmopolitan common sense* of this sort – a spirit

of recognition of the difference of others which pervades ethnic, national and religious traditions and brings them to life in the course of mutual exchange – is, after 11 September, no longer merely an idle, naïve verbal conjuring trick, but has become much more a question of survival – not least the survival of militarily superior states.

In this respect, this book can be read as an answer to the question of how the neo-nationalist turn in many parts of the world can be countered intellectually, morally and politically. Once the power sphere of global domestic politics is opened up conceptually and politically, beyond the old categories of ‘national’ and ‘international’, prospects emerge for a cosmopolitan renewal of politics and the state.

Globalization is not destiny; it can be shaped and influenced. Indeed, it has the capacity to reinvigorate what has classically been known as ‘politics’ and to give it new foundations. This message is the theme of a trilogy of which this book forms the first part. *Power in the Global Age* deals with the way in which the national and international forms of ‘legitimate domination’ (Max Weber) are being dissolved and its rules rewritten in the globalized power game of mobile capital, states and social movements. This situation requires a change of perspective from the national to the cosmopolitan vision, one whose realism and meanings – as well as its dangers – are explained and developed in *The Cosmopolitan Vision*. In the final part of the trilogy, *Cosmopolitan Europe* (co-authored with Edgar Grande), this perspective is put to the test and illustrated by means of concrete historical examples.

Ulrich Beck

Preface

The people we elected have no power.
And the people that have power weren't elected.
Demonstrator's placard

What are the foundations of legitimate domination in the global age?¹ The worrying aspect of this question lurks unarticulated in the background of every controversy of our time and provides the impetus for this book: we think we know what we are talking about when we use the words 'politics' and 'state', and yet we know full well that we *don't* know what we are talking about. Everybody knows that politics takes place in parliaments, in governments, in political parties and in election campaigns. Yet is it not these very pre-packaged answers to every inquiry about the grounds of legitimate domination that prevent us from understanding the language of the power struggles that rock the world?

We blithely carry on believing that we know to which authorities we must appeal if we want public welfare issues dealt with at long last. But then we read in the financial pages of the newspaper that capital flows are moving here and there according to the rules of a global market that eludes all nation-state controls. Our daily lives are profoundly influenced by the export of jobs, flexible production siting, information flows, global symbolic systems and supranational organizations such as the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund and the European Union. We witness the way in which 'global ecological crises' and the 'international political economy' – key problems on which experts hold differing opinions – increasingly determine the political agenda. Listening to legal experts, we are given the impression that it is no longer states alone that create and administer international law(s). Local activist groups act globally while global corporations call the shots locally, managing at the same time to avoid their legal obligation to pay commercial taxes. States threaten – and engage in – military intervention in other states based on the appeal to human rights. And, to highlight one final example, the universalization of 'the terrorist threat' leads even democratic military powers and states down the dangerous path of granting themselves

a general ‘licence to kill’ anyone suspected of being a ‘terrorist’. We can no longer rule out the possibility that we are sliding inexorably towards an age of ‘perpetual peace’ in which the boundaries to ‘perpetual war’ can no longer be drawn – that a kind of ‘peace’ has set in which is worse than war. But in this context of blurred and confused boundaries and distinctions, what does it mean to speak of ‘legitimate domination’?

What is currently taking place – so this book argues – is a creative self-destruction of the nation-state-dominated ‘legitimate’ world order. This is a highly ambiguous development, but one which also contains the possibility (alongside many other possible scenarios) of a ‘cosmopolitan vision’, the development of politics towards what we might call a ‘cosmopolitan state’. Note, the issue is not that of a clash of civilizations, but rather of the struggle for a human culture in which very different traditions are able to live alongside one another. No wall can protect the countries of the centre from the humanitarian disasters occurring in other parts of the world. The new dangers facing humanity from the modern risk society make no distinctions of race, nation or continent.

There is a new cosmopolitan realism in the air! The concept of cosmopolitanism has been a part of Western civilization’s philosophical and political tradition since at least the time of Kant, but, in order to glean a realistic critique of prevailing conditions from it, some ‘dusting off’ is required: the term needs to be subjected to a ‘redemptive critique’ (Walter Benjamin). By ‘cosmopolitan’ I do not mean the elitist, idealistic concept that serves as an ideological spearhead for the imperial designs of transnational elites and organizations. What I am thinking of instead are the values of an acknowledged, lived diversity that pervade every social situation and historical context, a ‘cosmopolitan common sense’ that takes a hold of large sections of humanity and enables them to shape seemingly unstoppable developments.

At the start of the third millennium the maxim of national *realpolitik* – that national interests must be pursued by national means – needs to be replaced by the maxim of cosmopolitan *realpolitik*, namely ‘the more cosmopolitan our political life, the more national and successful it will be.’ Only a politics that is multilateral is capable of opening up unilateral options for action. If global problems did not exist, they would have to be invented, as they create a common transnational context. The national zero-sum game of sovereignty that exists in many people’s heads is proving to be historically false: interdependence can and must be created and understood as a plus-sum game in which all the parties involved make power gains.

It is this seemingly paradoxical core proposition of the new cosmopolitan realism that this book sets out to elucidate. In an age of global crises and risks, the politics of ‘golden handcuffs’ – the creation of a close-knit network of transnational dependencies – leads states to regain their national independence, along with and in spite of the power gains made by a highly mobile global business constituency.

Highly contradictory cultural currents encounter one another in very limited spaces and enter into what are often highly conflict-laden associations. Bilingualism (that is, the ability to let go of one's fixation on what is familiar), lives lived out in multiple locations, constant mobility, more and more people holding dual passports, lives that straddle more than one border – all this creates a complex web of divided loyalties, without those identities experienced as original being abandoned in the process. To have both roots *and* wings – provincialism linked with the wealth of experience gained from being an active citizen of the world – could become the common denominator of a civilization made up of societies containing heterogeneous global cultures. And, as a result, it may even provide an answer to the fundamental question on everybody's lips: what kind of order does the world need?

This acknowledgement of difference – not to be confused with state-prescribed versions of happy multicultural co-existence – opens up a multi-dimensional sphere of possibilities, but is not without its own radical internal contradictions. It is not merely an issue of the growing gap between rich and poor, of global pockets of welfare and global poverty traps between North and South. Nor is it exclusively an issue of the conditions necessary for a life lived in dignity, or of the possibility and impossibility of creating a global-sized mini-welfare state, a 'globalized Keynesianism', even if the latter were geared solely towards the *minima moralia* of basic needs. It is about much more than this. Cosmopolitan vision has to do with the way in which basic nation-state institutions can be opened up in the long term, from below as well as from within, to the challenges of the global age. It has to do with the way minorities, foreigners and the socially excluded are treated. Above all, however, it has to do with the role of the state and of governments in these contexts, a role that is fundamentally changing and whose contours still need to be defined. It has to do with the problems thrown up in the process of consolidating and reconstituting democratic societies in the global age, and the role of different groups' and parties' human rights in this. It has to do with the question of what functional equivalents there might be to the state, and in particular with the question of how outbreaks of violence stemming from people's disappointments and humiliations can be countered preventively.

Cosmopolitan vision thus combines respect for the dignity of those who are culturally different with an interest in the survival of each individual. In other words, cosmopolitanism is the next big idea to follow on after the historically worn-out ideas of nationalism, communism, socialism and neo-liberalism, and this idea *might just* make the improbable possible, namely the survival of humanity beyond the twenty-first century without a lapse back into barbarism.

The coercive dynamics of the global market economy have transformed the rules of global politics. With the removal of the boundaries around economics, politics and society, a new struggle for power and counter-power

has got underway. Furthermore, the rules of legitimate domination itself are being renegotiated. However, there is no cause for jubilation at the knowledge that a new, irrevocable ‘cosmopolitan modernity’ is emerging, since that knowledge is necessarily accompanied by a great deal of ambiguity – indeed, how could it be otherwise after the experience of unbridled totalitarian politics in what was a twentieth century marked by one catastrophe after another? There is a specific reason for describing the whole ideology of the nation-state-based economy, society and politics retrospectively as the *first modernity* and distinguishing it from what as yet remains a somewhat hazy *second modernity* (defined by global ecological and economic crises, widening transnational inequalities, individualization, precarious forms of paid work and the challenges of cultural, political and military globalization). That reason is to overcome the ‘protectionist reflex’ that has paralysed Europe as well as other parts of the world, both intellectually and politically, since the collapse of the bipolar world order. Accordingly, it is the *meta-transformation* of the economy, politics and statehood in the global age that constitutes the focus of this book. What had seemed to be highly stable ideals and coordinates of change are themselves undergoing a transformation, as are the foundations and basic concepts of power and domination, legitimation and violence, the economy, the state and politics as well. The key question of *how* the second modernity might become a cosmopolitan modernity is directed towards the realization of an alternative order with political freedom and social and economic justice at its centre (rather than the rules of the global market). Globalization is being fashioned by the powerful against the interests of the poor. There is no advancement of cross-cultural interaction among different societies; instead, the interests of one particular society are being pursued in opposition to those of all the others. By contrast, the cosmopolitan imagination represents the universal interests of humanity itself. It is an attempt to rethink interdependency and reciprocity beyond the limits of national axioms and national arrogance, in the sense of a cosmopolitan *realism* capable of stimulating and sharpening our faculties of perception to take in the unfamiliar, ‘glocally’ networked societies in which we live and act.

This book owes more to conversations with friends and colleagues than any other that has emerged from my workshop. Edgar Grande, who embodies the creativity of our jointly run ‘Reflexive Modernization’ research centre in Munich, helped to establish its conceptual shape in a series of conversations that went on for whole days at a time. Christoph Lau, likewise a creative pillar of our research centre and co-developer of the theory of reflexive modernization on the empirical side, witnessed the frequent appearance of each new version of this text and offered his insightful comments with characteristic humour. I also owe a great deal to workshop conversations with Boris Holzer, one of the very few people who are comfortable in very different social scientific cultures. Almut Kleine endured the many hardships

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It was both a pleasure and a privilege to be able to participate in the intellectually stimulating environment at the London School of Economics and Political Science fostered by its then director, Anthony Giddens; that environment has played a crucial role in shaping the cosmopolitan imagination of this book. This particularly includes conversations shared with Mary Kaldor, David Held, Saskia Sassen, Richard Sennett, Ralf Dahrendorf, Stanley Cohen, Don Slater, Roger Silverstone and many others besides; also, in the context of Goldsmiths College, conversations with Angela McRobbie and Scott Lash. And, last but not least, Jürgen Habermas took the time to talk through an earlier version of this book with me. I owe more to my intellectual fellow traveller Johannes Willms than I can recount here. Above all, though, this book represents a part of my never-ending conversation with Elisabeth Beck-Gernsheim, for which ‘gratitude’ is too weak a word.

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Ulrich Beck

Introduction: New Critical Theory with Cosmopolitan Intent

At the beginning of the third millennium, the future of humanity suddenly appears undecided – a turn of events predicted, among others, by Friedrich Nietzsche, Karl Marx, Immanuel Kant and Max Weber.¹

Just 150 years ago Nietzsche urged that ‘Europe ought to decide . . . that the long drawn-out comedy of its petty states and the divided will of its dynasties and democracies should finally come to an end. The time for petty politics is past: the very next century will bring with it the struggle for mastery over the whole earth – the *compulsion* to grand politics.’

Before this, Immanuel Kant evoked the vision of the cosmopolitan ideal behind this grand politics as follows: ‘To consider oneself, according to internal civil law, as an associate member of a cosmopolitan society is the most sublime idea a man can have of his destination. One cannot think of it without enthusiasm.’

Karl Marx predicted that it was the process of capital becoming global rather than state politics that would break through the axioms of national politics and open up the game of grand politics. ‘In place of the old local and national seclusion and self-sufficiency, we have intercourse in every direction, universal interdependence of nations. As in material, so also in intellectual production. The intellectual creations . . . become common property. National one-sidedness and narrow-mindedness become more and more impossible, and from the numerous national and local literatures, there arises a world literature.’ Finally, Max Weber spelt out the implications of this for the study of history. ‘But at some point there is a change: the significance of positions that had previously been accepted uncritically starts to become unclear, and well-trodden paths disappear in the gloom. The light of the great cultural problems has moved on. It is then that the academics, too, prepare themselves for a change in standpoint and conceptual apparatus, in order to look down upon the flow of events from the heights of thought.’

2 Introduction

1.1 The meta-game of world politics

These and other perspectives, paradoxes and implications of the compulsion to grand politics can be developed and elucidated using the concept of the *meta-game of world politics*.

By ‘meta-game’, I mean that the old world politics, which worked by *applying* the rules, and the new world politics, which works by *changing* the rules, are fully intermeshed with one another: they cannot be separated out, whether in terms of specific actors, strategies or alliances. It is becoming clear that, in the twilight zone between the passing of the national era and the emergence of the cosmopolitan era, political action is following two completely different and yet mutually interwoven scripts. In other words, there are two different acting ensembles on the world stage performing two different plays in accordance with each perspective, such that there is a highly paradoxical interweaving between the established and the alternative political drama, between that which is closing down and that which is opening up. The realization that this is so – however easy it may be to prove – makes for confusion not only in people’s thinking but also in reality itself. It is precisely this actually existing confusion of categories, scripts, plays and actors – the rewriting of the theatrical works of world politics even as they are being performed – that characterizes the essence of the meta-game.²

The systems of rules governing world politics can be identified according to institutions and organizations. *Institutions* refer to the underlying rules for the exercise of power (*Macht*) and domination (*Herrschaft*), in other words, formal and informal codes of behaviour that serve to facilitate or to prescribe certain forms of national and international political practice. Thus, for example, the institutions of the nation-state power game in the first modernity include state control over a limited territory, international recognition and diplomacy, a monopoly on the use of violence, and legal sovereignty, as well as welfare-state safety nets, basic civil and political rights and so on. Whereas institutions establish the basic norms and forms, as it were, of political action, that is, the categorical framework of political action, *organizations* refer to particular actors that have a certain number of members, financial and spatial resources at their disposal, and a certain legal status. By way of a rough simplification, I differentiate between three organizations that are part of the meta-game: states, global business actors and actors from global civil society.

According to the prevailing theoretical controversy, the interplay of institutions and organizations can be characterized and decoded through two logics of action, which James March and Johan Olsen call the *logic of expected consequences* and the *logic of appropriateness*. According to the logic of consequences, political action follows a rational calculus of behaviour that obeys the principle of maximizing a given set of unexplained preferences.

Examples of this include classical games theory and the neo-classical economy. The logic of appropriateness, by contrast, understands political actions as a product of power, roles and identities, which stimulate appropriate behaviour in given situations (March and Olsen 1989; Krasner 1999).

The theory of the meta-game cuts across the logic of expected consequences and the logic of appropriate behaviour by following a *logic of rule change*. This means that the old nation-state international institutional order is not an ontological given but is itself what is at stake. The relationship between institutions and organizations is turned around. Institutions no longer prescribe the space and the framework within which organizations engage in political action; instead, it is organizations – such as global business actors – that are *breaking out* of the institutional box and are forcing a reconsideration of the ‘national *a priori*’ of political action.³

Thus, to speak of a rule-changing meta-game of world politics is to invoke a second *Great Transformation* (Polanyi 1944). It is no longer states alone that constitute the arena of collective action in the sense of prescribing the space in which political action occurs and the system of rules to which it is subject – including the indispensable social institutions for making decisions and implementing them collectively. The reflexive meta-game raises, *in reality*, the question of the extent to which the very foundations of state power *themselves* become the object of global political and global economic strategies of power. Yet this means that it is globalization and not ‘the state’ that defines and changes the arenas of collective action. A *second-order* transformation becomes the key issue: the Great Transformation of the state-centred order *per se*! The exclusive scenario according to which nation-states and the system of international relations between states determined the space of collective political action is broken down from both the inside and the outside at the same time, and is successively replaced by a more complex, border transcending subpolitical and global political meta-power game, one that changes the rules of power, is full of paradoxes, unpredictable and open-ended.⁴ Exactly what does this mean, though?

1.2 The old game can no longer be played

Globalization has two meanings. Now that a new game has begun, the rules and basic concepts of the old game – even if it continues to be played – no longer have much connection with reality. At any rate, the old game, which goes by many names, such as ‘nation-state’, ‘national industrial society’, ‘national capitalism’ or even ‘national welfare state’, can no longer be played *on its own*. This simple game was rather like a game of draughts, where each player has a homogeneous set of pieces and is allowed to make certain moves with them. Globalization, however, has introduced a new space and framework for acting: politics is no longer subject to the same boundaries as

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before, and it is no longer tied solely to state actors and institutions, the result being that additional players, new roles, new resources, unfamiliar rules and new contradictions and conflicts appear on the scene. In the old game, each playing piece made one move only. This is no longer true of the new, nameless game played for power and domination. The ‘capital’ pieces, for example, have created a new kind of mobility for themselves, similar to the knight or the rook in chess – in other words, there are striking differences and strange polyvalencies in the strategic quality of both pieces and moves. What is more, though, the old and the new actors have first to find or invent – that is, to define and construct – their own roles and resources on the global playing board. It is not only the new *moves* in the game that are unclear, so are its new *objectives*. With draughts the aim was to get rid of all the opponent’s pieces. If the new game were chess, the aim would be to place the king in checkmate. But not even that much is certain; nothing has been decided or arranged.

In the old political game of ‘national (welfare) state’ the aim was to achieve the greatest possible security for all. Does that still hold true? The goal of politics was to bring about a ‘social democratic age’ (Dahrendorf 1970), to achieve the maximum amount of social equality against a background of national homogeneity. How much cultural difference, how much social inequality should or must be permitted? In the old national–international game, it was the rules of international law that prevailed, which meant that, within state boundaries, you could do what you liked with your own citizens. Do these rules still apply? Or is it rather the case that the vague rule of ‘limited sovereignty’ has long since come into effect? Any state involved in ‘ethnic cleansing’ or serious human rights violations against its own citizens can reckon with becoming the target of ‘humanitarian intervention’ by the international community, based on the notion of global citizens’ rights and human rights. Can heads of government, ministers or ambassadors who have blatantly violated the global civil rights of their own state citizens still rely on diplomatic immunity, or must they face the prospect of being arrested and brought before a court in the country they are visiting?

In the old game there were certain rules about fairness: anyone who throws a six either has to sit out a turn, or else is allowed to make two moves in the same turn. Then there was the rule that once one player has made their move it is the other player’s turn, so that play alternates. Does this still apply? Or does it apply only in specific circumstances – within certain power relations – and not for other players under different conditions? Who decides which rules apply and which do not? In the transition from one era to the next, politics is entering a peculiar twilight zone, the twilight zone of *double contingency*. Nothing remains fixed, neither the old basic institutions and systems of rules nor the specific organizational forms and roles of the actors; instead, they are disrupted, reformulated and renegotiated during the course of the game itself. Just how far this will go is also unclear, since it depends

on contingent circumstances, like the goals and alternatives of politics in general.

The thing about the meta-game argument is that the players' scope for action essentially depends on their self-definition and on their redefinition of the political. They themselves are the precondition for success. New opportunities for power can *only* be generated through critique of the nation-state orthodoxy and through new categories that point the way towards a cosmopolitan outlook. Anyone caught clinging to the old draughts dogma (e.g. the fetish of 'sovereignty') will be jumped over – or steamrollered – without even being allowed to complain about it. It is the *costs* that states incur by clinging to the old rules of draughts that provide the conditions for a cosmopolitan shift in perspective. In other words, methodological nationalism – the insistence that the meta-game of global politics is and always will be a national game – turns out to be extremely costly. It distorts our view and simultaneously prevents us from recognizing new moves and new resources of power. Indeed, the possibility of transforming the win–lose or lose–lose rules of the meta-game into win–win rules, from which the state, global civil society *and* capital can all benefit in equal measure, remains untapped theoretically, empirically and politically. In effect, it is a reversal of the Marxist principle that being determines consciousness: consciousness, or awareness, of a new situation – the cosmopolitan vision – maximizes players' options in the meta-game of global politics. The best way of transforming one's own position of power (and perhaps even the world of politics) is to change one's outlook on the world – a sceptical, realistic view of the world, but equally a *cosmopolitan* one!

The neo-liberal agenda is an attempt to capture the momentary historical gains of globally and politically mobile capital and fix them institutionally. Thought through to its radical conclusion, the capital perspective posits itself as absolute and autonomous, and thus uses the strategic power and strategic options presented by classical economics as a way of developing subpolitical and global political power. According to this scheme, what is good for capital is good for all: everyone will get richer, and ultimately even the poor will benefit, or so the promise goes. The seductiveness of this neo-liberal ideology, then, lies not in giving selfishness a free rein or in maximizing competition, but in the promise of global justice. The implication is: maximizing the power of capital is *ultimately* the better way towards socialism. *That* is why the (welfare) state is superfluous.

What the neo-liberal agenda also insists upon, however, is that in the new meta-game capital gets two playing pieces and two moves. Everybody else still gets only one playing piece and one move, as they did before. The power of neo-liberalism is therefore based on a radical inequality in terms of who may break the rules and who may not. Changing the rules remains the revolutionary privilege of capital. Everybody else is condemned to conform to them. The nation-based view of politics (and the methodological

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nationalism of political theory) cements capital's superiority in the game and confirms the power advantage it holds by virtue of having broken away from the national game of draughts. However, the superiority of capital is essentially based on the fact that states do not follow its lead, and that politics holds itself captive within the cast-iron framework of the nation-based draughts rules. So who constitutes the counter-power, the opponent of globalized capital?

1.3 The counter-power of global civil society

As far as public awareness and a range of studies are concerned, the role of counter-power to a capital that defies the rules falls not to states but to global civil society and its plural actors. In the old game of 'capital' against 'labour', relationships between power and counter-power were conceived of in terms of the master-slave dialectic. The counter-power of the slave – the worker – lies in the fact that he can withhold his labour. The core of this counter-power is the organized strike: workers down tools and stop working. One of the limitations of this counter-power is the fact that the workers have work and therefore employment contracts – in other words, they have to be members of an organization in order to be able to go on strike. They also face the threat of being fired (locked out) in return. This is the basis of capital's counter-power. This form of master-slave dialectic continues to exist, but is undermined by capital's new 'country-hopping' mobility. Events that occurred in Germany during the summer of 2001 offer an example of how this happens.

VW, a profitable global corporation, wanted to make new employees work longer hours while paying them less – and everybody thought this was a marvellous idea! The trade unions, Germany's Social Democratic chancellor, Gerhard Schröder, and, of course, the employers, too, all praised the new model for setting a good example, not only in the automobile industry but elsewhere as well. Soon enough the employers demanded that the salary structure be 'opened up' – in a downwards direction, of course. This meant 'flexibility', which in turn meant that working conditions and wage rates became trapped in a downwards spiral under global competitive conditions. VW had threatened to build the new VW minivan in either Slovakia or India. The reason the 'labour party' and the trade unions were celebrating was because they succeeded in preventing this from happening. It also meant, however, that in future people in Germany would be expected to work more – namely at weekends as well – for much lower wages and lower social insurance contributions on the part of the employers. *This* sort of globalization makes workers in the rich welfare states particularly nervous, as they fear being dropped from a great height. The idea of engaging in international sol-

idity occurred to nobody – and neither, for example, did the notion that German workers were taking away jobs from Slovakian workers.

In contrast to this, the counter-power of global civil society is based on the figure of the *political consumer*. The consumer stands *beyond* the master–slave dialectic. His counter-power results from being able to refuse to make a purchase, at any time and in any place. The ‘weapon of non-purchase’ cannot be restricted in terms of location, time or commodity. It is dependent on certain conditions, such as a person having money in the first place or there being a surplus of products and services available for consumers to choose from. And it is these conditions – that is, the plurality of opportunities to buy and consume – which bring down the subjective costs of penalizing *this* product from *this* corporation through organized non-purchase.

What is fatal for the interests of capital is that there is no counter-strategy to confront the counter-power of consumers. Not even all-powerful global corporations can make their consumers redundant. Unlike workers, consumers are not members, nor do they wish to become such. And the blackmail threat of shifting production to other countries, where the consumers still behave themselves and accept whatever is put before them, is an utterly inadequate instrument. In the first place, the consumer is globalized and as such is highly desirable to corporations. And in the second place, it is not possible to respond to consumer protests in one country by moving to other countries without going through considerable contortions. Moreover, it is not even possible to play consumers’ national solidarity off against one another. The nature of consumer protests is that they are transnational. *The consumer society is the actually existing world society*. Consumption knows no limits, in terms either of manufacture or of use. Consumers are everything that workers are not. This is what makes their counter-power such a threat to the power of capital – and so far they have hardly begun to exploit it.

While the counter-power of workers – in line with the master–slave dialectic – is tied to direct spatio-temporal interactions and contractual relations, the consumer has none of these territorial, local or contractual ties. With good networking and carefully planned mobilization, the free, unbound consumer, once organized transnationally, can be modelled into an effective weapon. Going on strike is a risky thing for an individual; not buying certain products and thereby casting a vote against the politics of corporations, on the other hand, is completely free of risk. Nonetheless, this counter-power of the political consumer has to be organized: without advocacy actors from civil society, the counter-power of consumers remains a blunt weapon. Thus the limits of consumer counter-power lie in the limits of organizational capacity. A buyers’ boycott is directed at non-members; as such, it is hard to organize and requires a carefully planned dramaturgy in the public media,

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a staging of symbolic politics. With insufficient publicity, it will fall apart. Money is and always will be the prerequisite. No purchasing power, no consumer power. All this places immanent constraints on the counter-power of consumers.

1.4 The transformation of the state

There is no getting away from the task of redefining state politics. The advocates and actors of global civil society are no doubt indispensable in the global game between different powers and counter-powers, especially in terms of establishing global values and standards. However, the abstract notion of the state and politics undergoing fundamental change tempts us into accepting the grand illusion that, in a world no longer bound by economic and cultural constraints, a new extra-political desire for peace will prevail. The new humanism of civil society suggests the soft conclusion that the contradictions, crises and side-effects of the current Second Great Transformation might be civilized by this new symbol of hope, namely, civil society acting at a global level. However, this conceptual figure belongs among the museum pieces of the unpolitical.

Given that this is so, the key realization is that the meta-game can *only* be transformed from a lose-lose game into a win-win game through a transformation of state politics (and of political and state theory). So the key question is: how can and must the concept and organizational form of the state be opened out and refashioned to meet the challenges of economic and cultural globalization? How does the cosmopolitan self-transformation of the state become possible? Or, to put the question differently, who are the 'democratic princes', in the sense of a cosmopolitan Machiavellianism, of the second modernity?⁵ The answer is: the cosmopolitan prince is a collective actor. But which one? Are the new princes the heads of corporations who will make Schumpeter's 'creative destruction' a global affair? Or will perhaps the new Davids – the actors of Greenpeace and Amnesty International – be the ones to defy the Goliaths? Or can the heroes of the demolition of the welfare state be thought of as the princes – those who call themselves 'modernizers' as they implement the neo-liberal agenda? I think not. However unpolitical the notion is that global civil society might be capable of providing a substitute for the renewal of state politics, the notion that *civil society seizes power* is equally new and untested. It is this kind of symbiosis between civil society and state that I call a '*cosmopolitan state*'. The sought-after democratic princes of the global age would thus be the cosmopolitan renewers of the state. The key question for the stabilization of global civil society, for global, mobile capital and also for the renewal of democracy – in other words, the question as to the win-win rules of global politics – is how the

ideas, theories and institutions of the state might be liberated from national narrow-mindedness and opened out to the cosmopolitan era.

In order to avoid a discussion about the false alternative between a politics of state and a politics of civil society in the global age, it is necessary to distinguish clearly between *state*-centredness and *nation*-state-centredness. No matter how right it is to get rid of the nation-state fixation – the state no longer being *the* actor in the international system, but rather *one* actor *among others* – it would nonetheless be wrong to throw the baby out with the bath-water and, while aiming critique at the nation-state-fixed outlook, to lose sight of the state's potential capacity to act and to transform itself in the global age. Thus the meta-power game means that states, too, must be conceived of, made and researched as entities that are contingent and politically changeable. The question that then arises is: how does the transnationalization of states become possible?

It is by no means the case – as is usually implied – that the politics of globalization are dictated by the globalization of the economy. In its response to the challenges of globalization, politics certainly does have strategic options, which can be identified – and this is crucial – according to the extent to which they either remain *within* the framework of the old nation-based game of draughts or else *break* with it. What is at work here is the rule that governs the decline in nation-state power: *those who play only the national card in the global meta-game will lose*. What is needed is a complete change in perspective; in other words, the following principle also holds: *the counter-power of states develops as they become transnationalized and cosmopolitanized*. Only if states succeed in catching up with mobile capital and redefining and reorganizing their positions of power and game moves can the decline in state power and authority be halted internationally, indeed turned into its very opposite.

It is necessary to distinguish between two types of transnational self-transformation of states – *false* and *genuine* transnationalization strategies. Transnationalization can be a move within the old nation-state game; if so, it remains attached to the latter and is aimed at bringing about a 'new state reason' (K.-D. Wolf 2000). Thus, for example, alliances between the World Trade Organization (WTO) and individual states may enable the latter to gain sovereignty in terms of domestic politics, in relation to the demands of civil society for greater political involvement, for example. Domestic political opposition, for example, can be trumped using Europe, NATO or the WTO, and so on. However, transnationalization can also break with nation-based premises and assumptions to represent a first step in the emergence of a cosmopolitan state or confederation of states. It is in the latter case that I speak of genuine transnationalization.

The meta-game enables everybody to play a double game with reversed roles – the buck of failure is passed to one's opponent along with the politics of bitter pills. What arises from this is a politics of the '*cunning state*'

(Randeria 2003): state politicians deny their own power in order to be better able to exercise it. In the meantime, they hand over responsibility for the consequences of their decisions – or the lack thereof – to the other side, or else offload it onto the new *carte blanche* for inertia, namely globalization. As versatile converts to whatever is new, heads of government can emphasize their weakness vis-à-vis the new world powers – the WTO, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and so on – in order to justify themselves to their own electorates, while simultaneously evading responsibility for their inactivity. Meanwhile, WTO actors swear by their old role as experts, protesting scientific neutrality and thereby forcing through their worldwide foreign domestic policy against elected governments, wherever they may be. Power holders throughout the world denounce the new ‘imperialism of human rights’, insisting on ‘cultural difference’ – in other words, the right to cultural difference – but use this as a weapon in their domestic battles to eliminate political opposition and freedom of opinion. NGOs proclaim and defend (the self-legitimacy of) human rights, but this global mission is also a tool they use in competition against one another over the begging bowls of ‘global problems’, from which they themselves are fed.

1.5 Terrorist groups as new global actors

Having been globalized through the mass media, the horrific images broadcast from New York and Washington on 11 September 2001 enabled terrorist groups to establish themselves at a single stroke as new global actors to rival states, business and finance, and civil society. Terrorist networks can be thought of as NGOs that are committed to violence. Like the non-governmental organizations of civil society, they act in a non-territorial, decentralized way – that is, both locally *and* transnationally. While Greenpeace tackles environmental crises and Amnesty International human rights violations committed by states, terrorist NGOs have the state monopoly on violence in their sights. However, this means that, on the one hand, this kind of transnational terrorism is not necessarily always *Islamic* terrorism: it can be bound up with all manner of goals, ideologies and fundamentalisms. On the other hand, a distinction needs to be made between the terrorism of national liberation organizations, which are tied to particular territories and nations, and the new transnational terrorist networks, which act independently of territory and across national borders, and as a result severely undermine the nation-based grammar of the military and of warfare in general.

If the military gaze to date has been focused on its counterpart, that is, on other nation-state military organizations, and on deflecting their attacks, now it is transnational threats from substate perpetrators and networks that pose a challenge to the entire state edifice. We are now experiencing in the military domain what has previously happened in the domain of culture,