

Losing Control: Global Security in the Twenty-first Century

Paul Rogers

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This book belongs to the field of international relations. Its specialization is in the subfield of international security, with a critique of the realist paradigm – or power and control orientation in international politics. Its main argument is that the dominant realist approach in international security is unsustainable due to the equalizing effects of terrorism and the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction (WMD). The dangerous “revolts at the margins” threaten the status quo. The book is a plea to state officials in the Middle East, the United States, Europe, Russia, transnational corporations, and international organizations to adopt attitudes conducive to justice.

Since Rogers is questioning the extant realist orientation, one would expect him to outline the basic alternative principles for conducting international politics that could ensure justice, peace, and stability. Perhaps his heavy engagement with how the West tries to maintain control of the international order – as seen from the book’s title and discussions – weakened this perspective. The basic tension of what ought to be the correct rational structure of international interdependence, that which could enable this system “break out of the narrow view” or one-sided “perceptions” (p. 38), is not clarified. In short, what Rogers sees as replacing the old paradox (the cold war) for the present one (“violent peace”) is actually a continuation of

the same strategic logic in international politics: Both paradoxes emphasize the armed resolution of conflict.

He spends the first six chapters (2-7), discussing the realist paradigm since the cold war, highlighting the unsustainable nature of its logic of “liddism” (suppressing the address of reasons for dissent). From the title of chapter 5, “The New Security Paradigm,” one begins to anticipate a discussion of the new paradigm that would clarify the normative questions of justice and equality. However, the sense of the “ought” is not explicated systematically in this chapter. Chapter 7, “Shifting the Paradigm,” moves a bit more toward his implied normative framework. At the end of the book, predictions on whether this realist paradigm will undergo change were ambiguous and not grounded enough (p. 150).

Also, Rogers’ postcolonial approach to colonialism creates a contradiction. Early on, he links the international wealth division shaped by liberalism (e.g., trade patterns, debt crisis, and labor) to the colonial experience and the colonial era (p. 82). However, he argues later on that the present liberal system does not imply a direct neocolonial control of the world, but “just a shaping ... a world economy and polity in [the] US[’s] image (p. 139).” Shaping one society in the image of another violates self-determination, unless such a shaping proceeds with the expressed consent of the society being shaped.

Despite the above concerns, Rogers seems to correctly identify what could amount to a “new paradigm”—the issue of undeniable risk to the extant order posed by environmental changes, unsustainable trade relations, and resource conflicts. These issues seriously concern scholars like Rogers, and the world public – considering the persistent protest against summits of the G8 and the WTO (World Trade Organization). He shows his commitment to this new paradigm by calling for the resurrection of the CTBT (Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty), the prevention of WMD proliferation, fair world trade, debt cancellation, and good governance. In addition, he points out that an attitude transformation is crucial to any paradigm shift (p. 121).

Two further insights on the contemporary security question require praise. First, he argues that the shift to a new paradigm is not idealistic, but one based on necessity and the West’s survival interests. This survival interest would give birth to a new way of thinking and acting when the West has to deal with matters of security. Though one would be skeptical that such a realization does not necessarily translate into policy overnight, the evolution of a security discourse and practice seem to point in this direction. He also causes us to rethink security in fundamental ways by highlighting the

fact that 9/11 was carried out with knives and paper cutters. These weapons were effective only because of how the terrorists used them. Such a realization has caused deep worries in the United States and the whole world, forcing a rethinking of security in terms of the sociopsychological dimensions of reality: human will, alienation, and frustration.

To conclude, Rogers' plea for a new paradigm requires moving from power-driven bargaining to rational dialogue in international relations, an arena in which actors can focus on questions of what is equally acceptable to everyone or every society (the moral point of view). Islam's "universal desire" to address eternal questions of justice accords with Rogers' argument for the new paradigm, one that holds that a peaceful international order is possible only through justice.

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