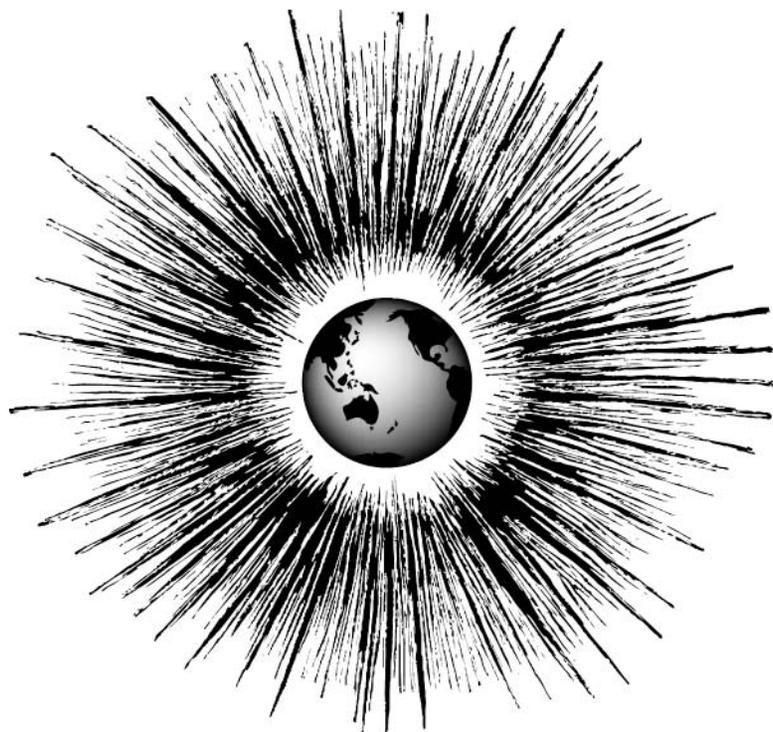


# JWSR Call for Book Reviewers



The *JWSR* Book Review department publishes reviews of books on the same topics for which *JWSR* solicits articles, as described in the *JWSR* editorial policy. We also disseminate reviews of reference works and other books containing quantitative or qualitative data useful for world systems research.

We solicit volunteers to review books. If you would like to write book

reviews for *JWSR*, please notify the Book Review Editor of your areas of interest and any other information which may be helpful for determining which books are best suited for you.

We also encourage suggestions of books for review from readers of *JWSR*, book authors, and publishers.

**For more information, please contact:**  
Edward Kick, [books@jwsr.org](mailto:books@jwsr.org)

Advertising space is also available. For more information, please contact:  
Eric Titolo, [admin@jwsr.org](mailto:admin@jwsr.org)

## BOOK REVIEWS

Richard Falk

*The Great Terror War*

Reviewed by Emanuel Gregory Boussios

Neil Smith

*The Endgame of Globalization*

Reviewed by John Gulick

Assaf Razin and Efraim Sadka

*The Decline of the Welfare State: Demography and Globalization*

Reviewed by Nicole Wolfe

Noam Chomsky

*Failed States: The Abuse of Power and the Assault on Democracy*

Reviewed by Steven Sherman

Jeffrey T. Jackson

*The Globalizers: Development Workers in Action*

Reviewed by Brian J. Gareau

Richard Falk. 2003. *The Great Terror War*. New York: Olive Branch Press. 203 pages, ISBN 1-56656-460-3 paper.

[http://www.interlinkbooks.com/product\\_info.php?products\\_id=1387](http://www.interlinkbooks.com/product_info.php?products_id=1387)

Richard Falk, an international law scholar and an advocate of human rights struggles across the globe, scrutinizes the modern challenge of megaterrorism. Falk cleverly outlines the implications of the several US responses to the threat of megaterrorism: the U.S. and allied response to the Taliban and al-Qaeda in the war in Afghanistan; the broader war in Iraq; the 'standstill' in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict; the domestic focus on security and patriotism; the intensified unilateralism of the Bush administration.



Falk puts forth the claim that megaterrorism can be differentiated from other forms of terrorism, because of its genocidal intent and its global reach. Falk argues that there

are broader implications of this war on terrorism and winning or losing this war on terrorism could have tremendous long-term ramifications in world politics. He simultaneously relies upon and criticizes the discourse of the "war on terrorism" as a means of responding to current (and preventing future) terror attacks. After outlining a comprehensive historical framework, he goes on to provide new insights into the entire range of issues that must be addressed if terrorism is indeed to be eradicated. Falk, often a strong critic of the American use of military force in foreign conflicts, "agreed" with the U.S. government meeting the challenge in waging war against the Taliban regime in Afghanistan. Falk called this "a proper strategy" that included a justified war of self-defense focusing in on al-Qaeda. He argues that is necessary to have a continued focus in reshaping international law enforcement. Part of the solution would be to strengthen global institutions, such as the United Nations. This would require shoring up funding to the U.N., and granting the organization broader peacekeeping and humanitarian functions. Falk also advocates addressing the causes that recruit people to this form of fundamentalism, such as that seen in the followers of al-Qaeda. Falk argues it is essential not to forgive individual terrorists, but to change the social conditions that give rise to terrorism.

Falk debates the notion that the Bush administration has exploited the initial war in Afghanistan and the challenge of stamping out Al Qaeda into an unlimited, perpetual war for US domination. Bush has altered the notion of "national liberation struggles" (a claim Falk similarly made of the struggle of the Vietnamese people during the Vietnam War) as acts of terrorism lacking legitimacy. These movements are sanctioned and are isolated movements in threatening nations, in what Bush labels "rogue" states. The threat does not stop

at al-Qaeda these threats include Iraq, Iran, Cuba, Libya, and Syria. Falk generally upholds the UN Charter's prohibition on non-defensive force. He backed the U.S.-initiated war in Kosovo and its attack on Afghanistan (which was not limited to attacking Al Qaeda) because he privileges the ideal of transnational government over national sovereignty. Falk, however, argues that although the challenge to confront the Al Qaeda threat is justified, the assault on Iraq or any other country is not. Still, Falk acknowledges that in order to confront megaterrorism, the United States has been forced (i.e. Sept. 11) to take action, at times in ways that are not sanctioned by international law and by the institutions of global governance. Falk argues, however, that international law and institutions ought to be made to catch up with reality as soon as possible. The Kosovo war—not legitimated by a United Nations mandate, was a necessary war from a humanitarian perspective. This military engagement, Falk argues, strengthened rather than weakened the international principle of coercive action for humanitarian crises.

The Bush administration's stance against megaterrorism has roots from earlier administrations. Falk argues that the Clinton administrations sponsored an "unreserved embrace of predatory globalization," comparing this to Bush's "worldwide empire-building and warmongering." Henceforth, the US approach has meant "unconditional authorization for state violence." However, Falk's characterization of this violence is too broad a definition. From attacking civilians and their homes, whether done by states or by anti-Castro exiles, Chechen rebels, Palestinian suicide bombers, or Animal Liberation Front fundamentalists, these are a form of terrorism.

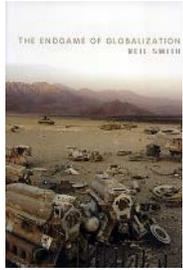
I challenge Falk's judgment in which he maintains that Iraq, Iran and North Korea have a right to weapons of mass destruction. Falk, an advocate of limiting American power, may have stepped too far in his elastic concept of international law and global governance. Clearly, the system of checks and balances in place holding the might of the world's only superpower would be stretched too far by allowing the supra armament of these nations. Yet, I can imagine that creatively stretching the interpretation of international law and manipulating the favor of the United Nations to fortify America's current efforts might be smart diplomacy. Even if these steps are simply a stamp of legitimacy for these military actions rather than a means of checking the U.S. superpower.

Richard Falk brings a thoughtful perspective to the current crisis in dealing with megaterrorism. His sociopolitical and moral imagination, fortified by his realism and vision of hope, make his analysis one of a true visionary. Falk's work is consistent with his desire to contribute to a safer, fairer, more humane world.

Emanuel Gregory Boussios  
 Department of Sociology  
 Stony Brook University  
[emanuel.boussios@stonybrook.edu](mailto:emanuel.boussios@stonybrook.edu)  
 © 2006 Emanuel Gregory Boussios

Neil Smith. 2005. *The Endgame of Globalization*. New York: Routledge Press. 240 pages, ISBN 0-415-95012-0 hardback. <http://www.routledge.com/>

What an existential relief it is to read an iconoclastic appraisal of the theory and practice of US foreign policy over the course of the last century devoid of the infuriating insipidities that populate standard works in the field. More often



than not allergic to the materialist method—be this convention of habit or calculated obscurantism—orthodox scholarship on US geo-strategy typically disfigures its subject matter beyond recognition. It takes publicly espoused goals (“securing the interests of the American people,” “spreading human rights,” etc.) of particular foreign policy doctrines more or less at face value; it then treats these doctrines as if they are actual drivers of policy, rather than coded rationalizations of policies supported for back-stage reasons that cannot, for

purposes of ideological cover, be expressly revealed in the doctrines themselves. One sad consequence is that policy disputes are routinely misconstrued as contests in which diametrically opposed principles unmoored from concrete actors’ battle for supremacy. Smith acidly cuts through this sort of misleading incoherence. A key motif of *The Endgame of Globalization* is that disproportionate attention paid to front-stage schisms between “conservative realists,” “liberal internationalists,” and other familiar camps cloaks an unsavory truth: all such camps share a devotion to a US-centered and US-advantaging regime of global capitalism (p. 15). An undue emphasis on tactical differences about how best to achieve this commonly held program—distorted through the prism of rival commitments to alternative sets of “values”—masks this strategic unanimity.

To a critical observer of US imperialism seasoned enough to rise above the reams of nonsense published on the topic, this hardly rates as an earth-shattering revelation. Veteran historians such as William Blum, Gabriel Kolko, and dozens of other eminent radical scholars have exhaustively documented as much. Fortunately, what is most intriguing about *The Endgame of Globalization* is the refreshingly innovative spin Smith puts on this hoary theme. He compellingly argues that successive US endeavors to establish itself as the final arbiter of a bourgeois planet have inevitably failed because the US is genetically incapable

of creating and managing a worldwide politico-economic framework that in the end does not bias its own accumulation and security imperatives (p. 2). More provocatively yet, he locates this habitual failure in the indissolubly nationalist deep structure of the US compulsion to style itself as the ultimate champion of an open international community of entrepreneurial republics. So potent is the propensity to regard the mythologized “American experience” as the paragon of a property-owning democracy toward which all free peoples aspire, that architects of a US-centered globalism are irredeemably blind to the ways in which the US’ pretense to be an agent of universal right betrays marks of particularism and thus undercuts itself, the “irrational rationalism of a nationalized Locke” (p. 174). The germ of nationalism in the kernel of US campaigns to “benevolently” oversee the global system has time and again been the undoing of its bids for a sustainable primacy.

As evidenced by his laudable eschewal of neo-Marxist jargon, Smith is trying to reach a learned public with a politically timely message, one set up in the opening chapter (“Endgame Geographies”) and echoing throughout the whole book: the unilateralist streak of the Bush the 43<sup>rd</sup> Administration, the credo of pre-emptive war waged against putative rogue states, and other hallmarks of Bush’s foreign policy are not exceptional departures from the previous conduct of the US state. If in exaggerated form, they rather represent the latest incarnation of a long line of attempts by the US to situate itself at the essential middle of a globe-encircling empire (pp. 11–12), be it a strictly informal one or one adjoined by the rump client state or protectorate. And in stark contrast to those who conveniently forget that Clinton’s cabinet positioned the US as the “indispensable power” and the last enforcer of transcendent virtue, bombing sovereign countries without UN sanction, Smith avers that Bush and company are trying to finish the job started by others of ensuring that the US is the hub of post-Cold War globalization, albeit through abnormally coercive techniques (p. 25, pp. 154–155).

Before tracing Bush’s grandiose mission to forge a global order pivoting upon US prerogative back to the kindred missions of Bush’s forebears, Smith addresses the “illiberal liberalism...of a nationalized Locke” (p. 174) that in the final instance is the Achilles’ heel of these serial undertakings. More so than the projects for a US-centered and US-privileging global capitalism themselves, it is their recurrent undermining by an “American nationalism...founded on globalist claims” (p. 15) that defines the fundamental affinity between them. All were subverted or marginalized by that wing of the US governing elite that could not abide a US globalism colored in a cosmopolitan hue, and all gave way to a more brazenly US-centric globalism that spoke the polarizing language of unconditional friends and enemies and acted accordingly, thereby guaranteeing

its very diminution. In Chapter Two (“Liberalism and the Roots of American Globalism”) Smith traces the periodic spasms of a US imperialism that is one part salvational, one part jingoist, and inescapably self-destructive to the strange career of US liberalism, suggesting that such crusades have faltered in part because the US’ largely provincial populace rapidly grows resentful when the imagined beneficiaries of US “generosity” ungraciously reject it (p. 35). He tops off the chapter with the always salutary reminder that liberal hagiographies of US globalism conveniently downplay that Manifest Destiny in action extirpated Amerindian cultures and, in any event, the US would have resorted to the grubby overseas land grabs favored by the European big powers were the surface of the post-Conference of Berlin world not already carved up (pp. 47–50).

It is in Chapters Three (“A Global Monroe Doctrine?”) and Four (“A Half Loaf: Bretton Woods, the UN, and the Second Moment of US Ambition”) where Smith really soars, for here he adeptly proves the heuristic worth of his central thesis by empirically illustrating it in action in the wake of the two World Wars. Wilson’s agenda for a League of Nations was something quite other than a naively utopian gambit for an inclusive regime of global governance that transcended traditional European balance of power politics, as conventional diplomatic histories would have it (pp. 58–59). Rather, Smith shows, it was a cognizant effort to remodel the international political economy on a multilateral Open Door philosophy that would advantage ascendant US capital (pp. 69–72, pp. 76–77), although one that was not above abrogating its own lofty principles in order to buttress Western racial superiority (pp. 66–68), to get European imperialists on board (pp. 66–68), or to protect its customary mercantile dispensations in Latin America (pp. 64–65, p. 67). Marshalling his big idea to great effect, Smith argues that the true sign of Wilson’s “failure” at the Paris Peace Conference was not his capitulation to European *realpolitik* (pp. 69–70), but instead his inability to persuade hard-headed “America firsters” in the US Congress (wrongly dubbed “isolationists,” as Smith points out) that US hegemony in the unfolding era would require nominal checks on US sovereignty (p. 78).

In the significantly different context of the 1940’s, the same formula, or least a variation of it, played out again. With the infrastructure of Europe and East Asia in ruins and national liberation movements breaking out across the colonial world, the US was endowed with the resources and the legitimacy to configure a global order that simultaneously addressed the needs of billions for gains in social welfare, answered the demands of its own oligopolies for export growth and foreign investment opportunities, and, most critically, was genuinely planetary in scale. The tale of how Truman’s Cold Warriors sidelined this prospect by elevating anti-communist “containment” to the first principle of US global policy (p. 114) has been told by many in far more exacting detail than Smith. What

Smith adds is a keen excavation of the ties (however indirect) between the post-war planning machinations of FDR’s brain trust and the eventual ossification of world geopolitics along anti-Soviet (and anti-People’s Republic of China) fault lines (p. 116). For example, high-ranking staffers and officials at the Council on Foreign Relations and the State Department intimately involved with the design of post-war international institutions tried (and failed) to game decision-making procedures and membership in the United Nations Security Council so that no voting bloc would interfere with the paramount goal of making the world safe for US transnational capital expansion (pp. 98–101). Such hidden transgressions against the conceit that the US was assuming world leadership on behalf of a global popular front lost all subtlety when the likes of Dean Acheson took the mantle of policy-making; to reinforce the point, Smith cleverly relays the pathetic spectacle of Joe McCarthy hounding Harry Dexter White for his alleged red sympathies, even though several years prior at Bretton Woods FDR’s Treasury Secretary had successfully rebuffed Lord Keynes’ vision of an actively redistributionist global financial system (p. 96).

In Chapters Five (“The Whole Loaf? Globalization”) through Seven (“The Endgame of Globalization: After Iraq”), Smith dives into the contemporary impasse confronting US imperialism, bravely embedding the neo-conservatives’ disastrous West Asian misadventures in a longer-term initiative by US ruling groups to ensure that the post-1970’s restructuring of the world political economy (*a.k.a.* “globalization”) bolsters US dominance instead of enfeebling it. He opines that the “post-Fordist” organizational decentralization and geographical dispersion of capitalist production, not the rampant increase in speculative arbitrage of every known variety, is globalization’s badge of identity (pp. 135–136). The challenge and the opportunity thus motivating US empire-keepers from Paul Volcker forward is to steer ever-larger chunks of surplus value extracted abroad into the coffers of lower Manhattan and Washington DC (pp. 136–141), culminating in Bush the Younger’s muscular thrust into Mesopotamia, the epicenter of the one earthly region where the tide of post-1991 events seemed to be turning against the orderly rendering of tribute to the US metropolis (pp. 181–182, pp. 185–191). In delineating this excursion of US elites, from the schemes of the Treasury Department-IMF complex to bleed dry Third World debtors (p. 144) to Paul Bremer’s liquidation at gunpoint of Iraqi assets (pp. 178–179), Smith serves up some memorable nuggets that reinforce his overarching argument. For one, he articulates how the US’ self-appointment as the bearer of universal justice is corroded by its manifold violations of due process norms afforded prisoners of war; as Smith nicely puts it, the “liminal legal geography” (p. 167) of Guantanamo Bay exposes this hypocrisy through its “vacuum of legal rights, flooded with maximal power yet zero global responsibility, always

of America yet utterly beyond its jurisdiction" (p. 167). For another, he demonstrates how the Bush Administration's blood-soaked assault on the shabby remains of Arab nationalist regimes and reputed hotbeds of radical Islam is not the only case of its pursuing ends also favored by the Clinton Administration by more brazen, and hence more hegemony-damaging, means (pp. 191–193). There is more than a passing resemblance between Robert Rubin's bailing out of Wall Street hot money operators in Mexico and Southeast Asia and Bush's push toward discriminatory bilateral trade deals (p. 14, p. 194); both double standard-ridden maneuvers elicited telltale complaints about the US nakedly abusing its "hyperpower" (p. 200).

Perhaps the most nagging shortcoming of Smith's book is his refusal to offer a consistent interpretation of the globalization of the last three decades. To what degree should it be regarded as an enterprise managed by the US for the sake of prolonging its primacy? To what extent should it be considered a much less purposive phenomenon that the US is desperately attempting to control, lest it generate outcomes inauspicious to the sustenance of its informal empire—such as the surfacing of unruly nativist-protectionist movements within its borders, or the strengthening of its ostensible "peer competitors" (China obviously comes to mind) beyond them? To be sure, Smith recognizes the debate (p. 145, pp. 194–195, p. 200) and acknowledges some of its brand-name interlocutors (p. 51), but he does not assume a firm stance on the issue. Had he done so, he might have reached an instructive conclusion on whether US centrality in the global political economy is today beyond rescue—unlike during Wilson's or FDR's time. Smith's analyses are also too often impaired by an unfortunate tendency to substitute rhetorical acrobatics for the painstaking assemblage of evidence. For example, to substantiate that the dominant foreign policy orientation of the Democratic Party in the Twentieth Century has been that of free trade imperialism, Smith draws a line of descent from Nineteenth Century European classical liberalism to US social liberalism (p. 38); in so doing he leans much too heavily on semantic tropes to lay bare the actual similarity of the two seemingly disparate projects, rather than carefully documenting the material connections between them. Less seriously, his narrative is occasionally marred by sloppiness, even by downright factual errors. For example, it should surprise *JWSR*'s readers to discover Bangladesh (!) classified as one of Asia's second-generation "tiger" economies (p. 132).

However, these little mistakes and the evasive wordplay fade to zero when set against the potent insightfulness of Smith's novel premise, that the narcissistic nationalism constitutive of US internationalism cannot help but predispose US imperial strategy to self-defeating predatory impulses. That this premise could be further enriched through properly applying the method of "encom-

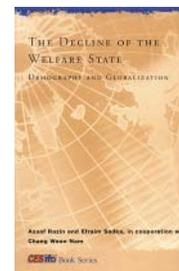
passing comparison" only attests to the breakthrough raw material Smith has furnished. And as election year 2008 approaches, the emergent "liberal hawks" certain to discredit the Cheneys and Rumsfelds of the right with charges of incompetence, at the very least a copy of *The Endgame of Globalization* by one's bedside will provide cold comfort in the form of a sober lesson about false dichotomies.

John Gulick  
Research Associate  
Institute for Research on World-Systems  
University of California, Riverside  
[john\\_gulick@hotmail.com](mailto:john_gulick@hotmail.com)

Assaf Razin and Efraim Sadka. 2005. *The Decline of the Welfare State: Demography and Globalization*. Cambridge: The MIT Press. 112 pages, ISBN 0-262-1844-0.  
<http://mitpress.mit.edu/catalog/item/default.asp?type=2&tid=10517>

Assaf Razin and Efraim Sadka in their book, *The Decline of the Welfare State*, utilize a political economy framework to analyze the modern welfare state, which they assert is in decline due to aging, migration, and globalization. Aging is of considerable importance because old age dependency is expected to rise, putting a strain on the welfare state as pension systems will have to pay out an increasingly larger sum of money. For those systems that are unfunded, this could mean a dramatic increase in taxes—something presumably unpopular among the working population. Migration is an issue due to the influx of low skilled workers into these welfare states, whom generally receive benefits in excess of their contributions, resulting in additional strains on the welfare state. Globalization poses a somewhat different challenge to the welfare state, creating a tax problem whereby tax competition among countries threatens to lower the corporate tax rate, thus reducing funding for the welfare state. By drawing on previous collaborations, their own previous work, and economic analysis, the authors are able to not only shine a light on the problems facing the welfare state, but take the issue one step further by reaching conclusions that they term unexpected, and which could change the trajectory of the response to this issue.

Aging and low skilled migration have similar effects on the welfare state, and the authors link much of this to voting patterns among these groups as well as the population at large. Since it is the workers who are financing much of



the welfare state, they conclude that these workers will vote against an increase in taxes and transfers as they presumably do not want to be burdened with maintaining the welfare state. In terms of the low skilled workers, the authors seems to make one faulty assumption in that "each worker chooses whether to acquire an education and become a skilled worker or to remain unskilled (p. 11)." Not every person has the privilege of choosing whether to acquire an education and often times do not have as much control over the skills that they must perform in order to earn a living. While they are able to create a formula that supports their argument, which they claim as empirical evidence, they do seem to be neglecting other factors, which might better reflect the reality of the life situations of many low-skilled and migrant workers. Often migrants have little choice in the work they do and are driven by survival as they are unable to find work in their homeland such that they can support themselves and their families. Upon arrival in a new country, these migrants tend to work in positions that many of the natives of that country find undesirable. Additionally, the authors discuss how a more intensive welfare state is more attractive to low skilled migrants, yet they again seem to minimize if not ignore various social factors that may account for low skilled migration, such as a dearth of jobs, support, housing, or food in their home country, as well as family obligations that are unable to be met. The authors acknowledge that low skilled migrants may be attracted to the welfare state, yet the focus is on the equilibrium that grows out of the attraction of high versus low skilled workers in relation to the current level of the welfare state, as opposed to acknowledging some of the factors mentioned above. This is not to say that their conclusions are inaccurate, just that their analysis may not reflect all of the elements of this situation.

In terms of the migrants' effect on the welfare state, one aspect of their analysis is that as more low skilled workers are naturalized, they will gain more political power which can then be asserted through voting and which will result in an increase in the welfare state. While they do reach the opposite conclusion in their analysis, it seems as though the path taken to that conclusion again does not accurately reflect the reality of the migrants' experience, or the reception they receive upon arrival into these new countries and how that reception affects their feelings about that country as well as how that influences their participation in various aspects of civil society. It may be that focusing on assimilation rather than naturalization would provide a richer analysis.

Aging can have a similar effect on the welfare state as migration, and can lessen rather than increase the welfare state due to a tilt in the political power balance. This generally occurs because of the design of many pension systems where people currently in the work force are responsible for the transfer to those beneficiaries. As those beneficiaries become a larger part of the popula-

tion, the pressure on those who are employed increases, and may lead them to shift to the antitax coalition. While the authors are able to effectively work through formulas that support their conclusions, there is a gap in the analysis that excludes many of the political forces that are being engaged as well as the influence of capital on the population. The move from a national pension system to one of individual retirement accounts is discussed in the context of population decline, which would necessarily mean fewer people contributing to the national pension, thus putting that system in crisis due to more people taking from the system than contributing. One solution is to privatize pensions by setting up personal retirement accounts, with the rationale being that they can offer better rates of return than current pay-as-you-go systems. Though the authors acknowledge the flaws of such a prospect, they do not properly acknowledge the stakeholders involved in promoting such a system, and the predictable effects of that intervention. The stakeholders stand to profit tremendously by a private investment system, while the those in their second period of life could lose much of their money due to the unreliability of the rate-of-return.

Globalization threatens the welfare state due to capital taxation as a result of international capital mobility. Companies are able to take their business to other countries with a lower tax rate than their home country, allowing them to essentially evade tax payment. The welfare state consequently loses out on that money, due to the government's inability to recover that money from the tax havens. Tax competition results from the foreign tax authorities being uncooperative with the home tax authority, leaving them unable to obtain any taxes from those companies. Without any enforcement of international taxes, the welfare state has virtually no recourse and slides into further decline. Furthermore, there is no incentive for the foreign tax authorities to cooperate with the home tax authority because they benefit from having that capital in their country. Globalization enables more and more companies to move to these tax havens, the consequence of which is that an increasing amount of money leaves the home country further weakening the welfare state. This is an important aspect of their analysis because it highlights the problems with the current tax system. It brings forth the underlying question of why any company would choose to stay in their home country when there is an available tax haven, as well as what are the responsibilities of companies as well as governments in ensuring the welfare state.

The authors engage in a sophisticated analysis of the welfare state and acknowledge the three factors of aging, migration, and globalization as contributing to the decline of the welfare state. They work through formulas that support their thesis, yet their use of "stripped-down models" in order to avoid "irrelevant complications" may actually serve to prevent a richer, fuller analysis

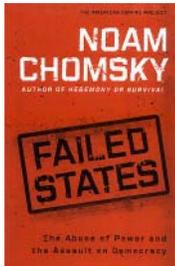
that takes into account the various other factors at play in the decline of the welfare state. This book is an important contribution to the problems facing the welfare state, and their conclusions should be used in conjunction with other analyses to further the discourse on this issue.

Nicole Wolfe  
 Department of Social and Behavioral Sciences  
 University of California, San Francisco  
[nicole.wolfe@ucsf.edu](mailto:nicole.wolfe@ucsf.edu)  
 © 2006 Nicole Wolfe

Noam Chomsky. 2006. *Failed States: The Abuse of Power and the Assault on Democracy*. New York: Metropolitan Books. 311 pages, ISBN 0-8050-8284-0 paper, ISBN 0-8050-7912-2 cloth. <http://www.holtzbrinckpublishers.com/>

The plural in the title of *Failed States* notwithstanding, Chomsky is really only concerned with one 'failed state', the us. The book is primarily an indictment of us foreign policy, and the class of intellectuals and journalists who uncritically support it. Additionally, one chapter is devoted to examining the quality of the us' democratic institutions, and these are found wanting. Neither theme will come as a surprise to those familiar with Chomsky's work. They have been developed in many other books by him, and *Failed States* does not break much new ground theoretically. It does provide the novice with a solid introduction to Chomsky's thought, and, for readers already aware of this, a sense of how he interprets recent events (it also reproduces his familiar stylistic tics—his tendency to quote heavily, his pretense that the arguments he is making are self-evident to anyone interested in the truth, and his insistence on dangling phrases at the ends of sentences). Chomsky's analysis is clearly superior to much writing on the American left—he has little interest in such bugaboos as 9-11 conspiracy theories, hysteria about electronic voting, or dwelling on personalities in the Bush administration. On this level, he helps direct attention to the core structural issues the left should focus on. On the other hand, Chomsky has not developed his analysis in directions that sympathetic critics from the left might hope for, nor is there much for scholars of world systems analysis to get excited about.

Examining the relationship the us has with the rest of the world, and the justifications made for that relationship, Chomsky highlights what he calls 'the single standard', what "Adam Smith called the 'vile maxim of the masters of



mankind: ...All for ourselves, and nothing for other people.'" Thus terrorism is only examined when the victims are us citizens, or those the us is sympathetic to (Israelis, Europeans). Terrorism sponsored by the us or its allies is not considered terrorism, and is mostly unreported in the us media. When international law might constrain the us, it is considered irrelevant. On the other hand, international law is wielded as a weapon when adversaries of the us can be criticized; thus Syria's occupation of Lebanon takes on a very different significance than Israel's occupation of the same country. Democracy is 'promoted', but only in situations where the results of elections will conform to us wishes. Elections that do not so conform are obstructed, or, if that is unsuccessful, scrubbed from the historical record (as was the case in Nicaragua in the 1980s, and more recently, Palestine). The liberal extreme welcomed in the mainstream media in no way challenges these principles, expressing concern only that misapplication may result in a reduction in us power. Crucially, Chomsky emphasizes the continuities of us policies, downplaying any exceptionalism of the Bush administration (except in the perhaps unwise frankness of its officials to state exactly what principles the us is actually following). Thus he constantly reaches back to the Central American interventions of the eighties, policies towards Israel and Palestine in the seventies, etc. Perhaps most potent is his highlighting of the bombing of Serbia under Clinton as providing a precedent for 'illegal [in violation of international law] but legitimate' wars. Here he is scathing on the way European liberals encouraged the us to take upon itself when to attack other nations, thus setting a precedent for Bush and Iraq.

Regarding American democratic institutions, Chomsky argues that the power of corporations has marginalized public opinion. The rise of corporate power he dates to various court decisions in the 19th century that identified corporations as 'persons', although a pathological sort of person, legally required to be solely concerned with self-interest. He examines public opinion polls and finds that the public, unlike the pundits and politicians, is sympathetic to the UN constraining us power and is uninterested in preemptive war as defined by the Bush administration. Furthermore the public supports the expansion of health care, and more spending on social causes in comparison to the military. How can the disparity between policies pursued by governments and public opinion be explained? He briefly notes the absence of a labor/socialist party in the us, and the continuing salience of conservative versions of religion, but mostly Chomsky argues that the relentless use of public relations/advertising tactics by the powerful has left the public befuddled and disempowered. In this chapter, more than on those about foreign policy, Chomsky entertains the possibility that the Bush administration, unusual for its single-minded focus on the short term interests of a portion of the ruling class, may have pushed the us to the brink of fascism.

The concluding chapter wraps things up on a surprisingly optimistic note. Internationally, Chomsky highlights growing resistance to US power, with the rise of the left in Latin America (and efforts at continental unification) and with the emergence of a China-Russia alliance uninterested in going along with the US on Iran, among other things. Although he has little specific to be optimistic about in the US case, he does emphasize that much progress has been made, but that progress also produces periodic backlashes. Here again, his sober thinking contrasts well with much that gets said by those on the left in the US.

The problem with *Failed States* is not in the broad outline of its analysis, much of which is likely to be uncontroversial among readers of the *Journal of World Systems Research*. Instead, the fault lies in Chomsky's failure to animate his analysis with any sense of historical dynamics or agency. His insistence on identifying the continuities of American policy and basically leaving it at that ignores the work of numerous recent historians of US imperialism who have identified ruptures, disputes, and contradictions in its practice. To take one example, Chomsky continues to insist that Vietnam was largely a success for the US, demonstrating to similar national liberation forces worldwide that too high a price would be paid for opposing the US. This makes little sense when examining global history in the seventies; Angolans, Nicaraguans, Grenadans, and, less successfully, Philipinos, Salvadorans and others were inspired to further press their claims by the Vietnamese triumph. But it also obscures the immense contradictions defeat generated in the US polity, as congressional hearings were aired about CIA crimes, and the US clearly was unsure of its direction for several years. Chomsky, who holds closely to a 'power issues from the barrel of a gun' approach to imperialism, has virtually nothing to say about the waxing and waning of US economic strength worldwide. Nor is his analysis in any way informed by feminist, anti-racist, or post-colonialist perspectives. He is so intent on proving his point that the US establishment, including its liberal wing, is united behind the unilateral exertion of US force (a point he has made in many other books) that all these concerns are indefinitely deferred.

Similarly, his view of domestic politics in the US does not explicate the kinds of questions needed to reconstruct political strategy on the left. Notwithstanding his grim take on US democracy, Chomsky celebrates the role of the social movements of the sixties and their continuing salience. Yet it would be of some value to understand why it has been the right, rather than the left, that has been able to increasingly dominate the federal government in the decades since. Noting the cynical deployment of public relations/advertising strategies explains nothing much; if they are so effective, why doesn't the left turn to them as well? To understand the weakness of the left, one would have to say something about the class, cultural, and racial divisions of US society, and the way the right has

been successful in exploiting those. One would also have to look more closely at the strategies pursued by bases of right wing strength, such as the churches and think tanks, and compare it to strategies adopted on the left. He implores readers to do more than just attend a few demonstrations and periodically vote, but he says nothing about what that 'more' might be. One wishes at times that Chomsky, who puts a great deal of stock in uttering truth, could encounter that other linguist-turned-left-public-intellectual, George Lakoff, who has urged the left to develop emotionally charged narratives comparable to those on the right.

The weakness of Chomsky's analysis comes not so much in the elements of US foreign policy and domestic politics he focuses on, but on what he leaves out. By leaving out multiple determinants, contradictions, and human agency, he makes these structures seem more solid, and at the same time more vulnerable to an explosive blast of truth, than they perhaps are. If urging him to look more closely at these factors seems like unfairly telling him to write a different book, one may well ask why he has insisted on continuing to write the same book over and over.

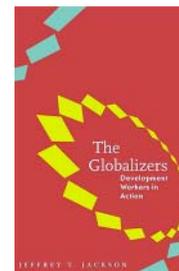
Steven Sherman

[threehegemons@hotmail.com](mailto:threehegemons@hotmail.com)

<http://leftyeonbooks.blogspot.com/>

Jeffrey T. Jackson. 2005. *The Globalizers: Development Workers in Action*. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press. 363 pages, ISBN 0-8018-8123-4 Cloth.  
[http://www.press.jhu.edu/books/title\\_pages/3406.html](http://www.press.jhu.edu/books/title_pages/3406.html)

In June 2006 the BBC's World Business Review focused on issues surrounding the WTO's upcoming Doha Round meeting. WBR host Rodney Smith noted, "The World Bank reckons if it's successful, the Doha Round could boost global wealth by almost \$300 billion...But Doha has also been vilified as a trap for poor countries. Other parties of the Treaty could open doors to powerful Western companies that could either damage or destroy local industry."



Smith asked, "What would happen if Doha failed? The poor countries would still get aid from the rich world. But aid hasn't defeated world poverty." The main question posed was, "should alternative forms of development replace rich country aid?" Skeptics, such as South African Economist Themba Sono believed rich country aid furthers the developing world's dependency on rich countries, while optimists like Steve Wilson from the Inter-American Development Bank

(IDB) countered that rich country aid is the only viable solution. What remains missing from the WBR discussion are questions regarding why rich countries continue to disseminate billions of dollars in aid when the results are so paltry. And, who are the people that disseminate aid, and how do they decide how to do it? Few scholars have chosen to critically examine the people and institutions that actually disseminate aid. This is exactly what Jeffrey Jackson has set out to do.

In *The Globalizers*, Jackson's exposes the international development institutions and their practitioners, which are the primary actors that pave the way for global capitalism. Utilizing ethnographic fieldwork, personal experience, and archival data gathered in Honduras from 1995–6, and in a follow-up investigation in 2000, Jackson lays bare the significant role that aid institutions play in building nations to fit the global capitalist agenda. By providing aid and establishing influential ties within host country institutions, the globalizers—the development practitioners—“ensure macroeconomic stability, foreign investment, and export-oriented economic growth...[and] they provide social order and stability through coercive and consensual mechanisms of social order” (138).

Jackson provides evidence that globalization studies have overlooked a set of key actors in their analyses of global capitalism. Jackson goes as far as to say, “I consider the members of the international development profession to be the most significant globalizers in the world today” (p. 3). This appears a bold statement. But when the evidence is presented, which includes dealings from the IDB, the World Bank, the US Agencies of International Development (USAID) and many others, the reader is left with the understanding that aid has many understudied consequences. Although multinational corporations—the primary focus in globalization literatures—are indeed influential, the globalizers may be more so.

Chapter 1, “The Institutions,” provides a detailed description of the history, design, and influence of international development in Honduras. In Honduras, aid is dominated multilaterally from the IDB and bilaterally from the USAID. NGOs also provide aid, yet they are often funded by groups like USAID. Jackson reveals an interview with a USAID employee that is reflective of his other in-depth interviews; the USAID and large lending institutions have extensive political and economic influence. Jackson claims that the very location of aid institutions in Honduras vis-à-vis their domestic counterparts indicates their discrepant resources and power. For anyone who has worked in Honduras, Jackson's causal link between power and building location (Honduran government buildings located near *parque central*, and the multilaterals in the ‘poverty-free’ *Colonia Palmira*) is only partly convincing, yet his main thesis remains important:

USAID, in conjunction with other aid groups, decide what development policies will look like for the Honduran government.

Who are the globalizers exactly? Chapters 2 through 4 put a face on these disseminators of aid and global capitalism. We see how the Western-based globalizer is culturally constructed by both their domestic experiences and their transnational experiences. This aspect of global migration is relatively absent in the globalization literature. Here, the wealthy countries produce professional experts who are exported to developing countries for their technical expertise: “Donor countries use their comparative advantage in professional and technical expertise to advance their own agendas in the developing world” (p. 66). Western globalizers are trained in neoliberal development practices and thus learn to promote the internationalization of networks, culture, etc. They are well-rewarded financially and politically with high salaries and access to powerful agents in the donor country. Jackson provides ethnographic data that reveals how Western globalizers view themselves and their mission as development practitioners. Western globalizers, it seems, feel caught in a dilemma; they want to “do good,” to help these countries in need, yet they do not really believe that they, as development agents, are really getting anywhere. The interviews reveal that globalizers admit that their work will not “develop” countries like Honduras, but they can't imagine Honduras working on its own problems autonomously. Some, like interviewee Elaine, claim the problem is that Hondurans are fatalistic, and thus blame Hondurans for their economic problems.

Honduran globalizers are in an entirely different predicament. For one, they are paid much less. Most Western globalizers in mid-range positions earn about \$4,000 per month. Even a lowly Peace Corps Volunteer receives about \$250, more than a Honduran teacher or nurse, the highest paid folks in rural villages. More likely counterparts of Western globalizers are employees of the Honduran Ministry of Water and Sanitation (SANAA), or The Honduran Forest Service (COHDEFOR, an acronym Jackson misspells), who earn around \$300. Additionally, they can not easily find work abroad like the Western globalizers. Finally, there is the glass ceiling effect that inhibits Hondurans from advancing to any agenda-setting position. Like Western globalizers, Honduran globalizers express devotion to progressive social issues. But unlike their Western counterparts, they are concerned with issues in their own country exclusively. Some Honduran globalizers commented that they believed that the host nations should have some ability to accept or reject a project, and hold accountable the implementers of development, but at present they do not have this power.

This final point regarding accountability finds itself at center stage in the second half of the book. Both the Western and Honduran globalizers recognize that there is a lack of accountability for projects dictated by the globalizers.

With billions of dollars on the line and long-range socioeconomic consequences of such aid, this is a significant point.

Whereas the first half of the book is good, the second half contains excellent insights. How the two halves are connected is less clear than Jackson might assume. Interviews with a few practitioners in Tegucigalpa reveal less about the dependency of Honduran aid and development institutions on the Western world than does the judicious work that went into compiling the second half of this book.

Chapter 5, "Global Governance," deserves a wide readership. It takes us out of interviews in Tegucigalpa and into a theoretical exploration that undergirds the dealings of international development institutions. Jackson provides a theoretical contribution to the development literature that deserves scrutiny. Drawing on William Robinson (and thus Marxism), Weber, and Foucault, Jackson describes power in global governance. Briefly, economic globalization has caused the class divisions and social groups in national states to expand beyond their historic boundaries. The "global economy" breaks down barriers and links "national circuits into a global circuit of accumulation" (p. 135). Yet, contrary to Robinson, Jackson maintains that it is the globalizers who put the political organization in place that global economic institutions then use to maintain and expand the global capitalist system (p. 135). Robinson's analysis reveals the broader global structure in which the globalizers function, but the globalizers play a primary role in setting up the infrastructure and ideology necessary to reorganize national states to global capitalist objectives. Through *intervention* (intervening in local politics), *surveillance* (monitoring and assessing aid projects), *agenda setting* (creating blueprints to run the country), and *garnering consent* (using time and money to influence decisions on projects), the globalizers establish the infrastructure for neoliberal economic activity. The IMF, World Bank, and G7 are forums that the national state is reorganized to serve. Jackson adds to the list of transnational political arrangements globalizers like USAID, IDB, and other development agencies.

Chapters 6 and 7 outline how globalizers instilled their power in Honduras by building *El Cajón*, the 8<sup>th</sup> largest dam in the world. Designed by the IDB and World Bank, *El Cajón* exhibits how the globalizers initiated a costly project, provided Western companies with very lucrative contracts, and gifted global institutions with profitable lending deals. But it never functioned as it should. The dam design proved flawed, almost leading to a national disaster in the 1990s. Yet the globalizers were not held accountable. Rather, they received new loans and contracts in order to fix their faulty dam. Perhaps Jackson's most exciting chapter, Chapter 7 is a detailed account of the near-disaster of *El Cajón*, the imminence of which only the globalizers were aware, along with the secre-

tive government higher-ups (p. 184). The globalizers were put in charge of finding a solution to repair *El Cajón* and deal with the electricity shortages. The key point of this recap of the energy crisis is that no one was held accountable for the incredible failures, poor oversight, and secrecy of the globalizers at the expense of the Honduran population. Whereas foreign globalizers (engineers) earned notoriety via articles and conferences for building *El Cajón* and 'solving' its problems, Honduran globalizers were put in serious financial straits and scorned by the Honduran public.

Chapters 8 and 9 appear slightly de-linked from the rest of the book. The main point here is that transnational corporations do not build *maquiladoras*, globalizers do. Here again, the globalizers are not held accountable for the mishaps of their developments. Jackson provides a good history of the US's "trade not aid" programs in Latin America, by creating free trade zones through development loans. These are not Jackson's best chapters. Some of the information is a little off the book's trajectory, discussing details behind potential lending projects in Jamaica and the Philippines, the globalizer's hand in writing legislation for changing laws in Guatemala, etc. But the point is clear—the US provides aid in order to help US companies get jobs/contracts overseas and expand US influence. In the Honduras case, they were able to do so by collaborating with Honduran industrialists and government without involving the Honduran citizenry. The consequence was the minimization of labor rights, the illegal employment of children, and riots. The globalizers were not held accountable until NGOs (who often play the role of globalizer) exposed the child labor violations in Honduras, forcing companies like Liz Claiborne to cancel their contracts with subcontractors working the export-processing zones (EPZs) in Honduras. Here the NGOs played the role of globalizer, the consequence of which is not fully developed theoretically or empirically by Jackson. These chapters do bring to light the fact that the decision-making process of what happens in Honduras is often decided by non-Hondurans. In this case, the US Congress, under the pressure of NGOs and the media, issued a set of hearings on how they would set the standards for EPZs in Honduras. The solution? The USAID would provide *more aid* to help Honduras address its child labor problems, and the globalizers would work with retailers on how to monitor labor in Honduras.

Chapter 10 recaps Hurricane Mitch, the most damaging hurricane to hit Honduras in 200 years, revealing once again the influential role that the globalizers play in organizing development in Honduras. Here, the role was one of strategic organizing of disaster relief. Post-Mitch, the World Bank was the most prepared to coordinate relief efforts in Honduras, and it did so. But disaster relief might not be the best example of Jackson's claim that development work is not about aid, but about power. Having lived in Honduras before, during, and

after Hurricane Mitch, I suspect that many globalizers were more interested in feeding and saving people than anything else, and that they made a difference. This is where Jackson may wish to provide a less crude dichotomy between “aid” and “power”. How aid was distributed indeed reflects the power dynamics that Jackson describes. Yet, without the coordination of international lending agencies, more aid would have been lost due to corruption and poor planning (which was still rampant). What Jackson needs to ask is, did the aid get to those who most needed it? In southern Honduras, the most damaged part of Honduras (which Jackson does not investigate), much of that aid did not reach those most in need (Gareau 2004). But it would have been even worse without international coordination (Cf. Morris and Wodon 2003).

At the end of the book we are still left with the quandary explored on the WBR: “Should alternative forms of development replace rich country aid?” Even if globalizers are held accountable, are there better alternatives to globalizer-administered aid? What *are* the alternatives for such large-scale lending, and how do we implement them? These are crucial, unanswered questions.

Brian J. Gareau  
Department of Sociology  
University of California- Santa Cruz  
[bgareau@ucsc.edu](mailto:bgareau@ucsc.edu)  
© 2006 Brian J. Gareau

#### REFERENCES

- Gareau, Brian J. 2004. “Use and Exchange Value in Development Projects in Southern Honduras.” *Capitalism, Nature, Socialism* 15:95–110.
- Morris, Saul and Quentin Wodon. 2003. “The Allocation of Natural Disaster Relief Funds: Hurricane Mitch in Honduras.” *World Development* 31:1279–1289.
- Robinson, William I. 2001. “Social Theory and Globalization: The Rise of a Transnational State.” *Theory and Society* 30:157–200.