ARTICLES

Onto the Darkling Plain:
Globalization and the American Public Service
in the Twenty-First Century

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ABSTRACT

Although most people in the public administration community—practitioners and scholars alike—recognize that the American public service must prepare for the challenges of a “globalized” future, the general consensus seems to be that these challenges will be manageable, perhaps even interesting and fun. Drawing on the insights of some contemporary theories of international relations, this article suggests that the impact of globalization on the public service may be considerably less congenial than that. At a minimum, globalization will, through its continuing “hollowing out” of the state, induce crises of accountability, competence, and legitimacy in public administration. Two alternative scenarios that flow from these crises, both of them quite bleak, are discussed in some detail: global regime management and neomedieval administration. The article concludes that these adverse impacts of globalization may well be inevitable in the next century. Efforts to salvage even a reduced role for public administration will require considerable ingenuity.

Although globalization has perhaps not yet quite achieved the currency of reinvention, quality, performance, or some of the other mots au courant in contemporary public administration, it is clearly a term on the move. Most major public administration textbooks now draw students’ attention to the growing need to adopt a global perspective, or to understand the global environment, especially the global economy. The 1998 ASPA Conference hosted quite a few papers that dealt with global issues, including works on shipping (Boschken 1998), air transport (Tarry 1998), ethics (Lynch and Lynch 1998), and the environment (Chen

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1998). Although specific paper topics are not available as of this writing, we know that the 1999 ASPA Conference has an entire theme devoted to international links in public administration. Although NASPAA has not yet required it for certification purposes, an increasing number of MPA programs seem to be working globalization into their curricula.1 Public officials also now routinely point to the demands of globalization, especially America’s need to remain globally competitive, to justify any number of policy initiatives, including trade reform, infrastructure improvements, and education reforms.2

The emerging consensus in the discipline about globalization seems to be that American public administration—both academic and on-the-ground practice—has been too parochial.3 To move away from this parochialism and prepare for the global tomorrow, it is said that the discipline and its members must, among other things:

- Learn from other systems, in part by rediscovering comparative administration and embracing the international component of public administration (Khatore and Garcia-Zamor 1994).4
- Abjure traditional management practices rooted in hierarchy, autonomy, representativeness, and other passé byproducts of the industrial era in favor of flat, networked, and responsive global styles (Khatore 1994, 93).
- Recognize interdependence and the fact that no issue will ever again be fully local.5
- Encourage public managers at all levels of government to focus on international economic competitiveness and to remove barriers that inhibit business growth (Tolchin 1994).6
- Embrace diversity, avoid ethnocentricity, learn other languages and cultures, and recognize that Americans are increasingly a minority—in every respect—among the world’s population (Cooper et al. 1998, 16-17).7
- Build bridges to partners abroad, sharing ideas and best practices, especially through information technology.8

Underlying this consensus is an unspoken assumption that construes globalization as what we might term a manageable challenge.9 That is to say, globalization is understood to present administrators (and the citizens they serve) with some profound headaches, including—thanks to highly mobile capital,
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uncontrolled immigration, infectious diseases, pollution, and so forth—overburdened health, education, and social service systems, as well as a serious economic dislocation. At the same time, the presumption is that these headaches are, in fact, manageable. We need merely to move aggressively in the directions outlined above—build bridges, learn from other systems, embrace diversity. This roll-up-our-sleeves attitude is perhaps not surprising from what has, after all, always been a “can-do” profession. In most treatments of globalization by members of the public administration community there is even a hint—and sometimes more than a hint—of real enthusiasm. Globalization can be seen as progressive, always a Good Thing in the field of public administration (Brown 1998). And the rest of the world—strange accents, exotic scents and sounds, unusual architecture—is much more interesting than Main Street. The beginning of full engagement with the globe is thus the end of the boring insularity of American public administration.

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Or perhaps not. Perhaps the challenges of globalization may be rather less manageable than public administration has assumed. Indeed, if global political and economic developments unfold in the manner that some serious students of international relations (IR) have foreseen, the future of public administration itself—and of the broader American state—is in doubt. The purpose of this article is to explore this darker, more ominous vision of globalization and to consider its implications for the American public service. I do so not in the certainty that the vision will come to pass: The only certainty about the future is that it will differ from the present. Instead, I will present this alternative model of globalization because it is at least plausible, and because many in the public administration community appear not to have considered its implications.

Before we begin, however, I want to make it clear that I am not claiming that there is anything like a consensus among IR scholars as to the impact of globalization. In fact, because international relationists look more closely at globalization than do the rest of us, one can find in their writings on this subject subtleties, nuances, and fine points that constitute considerable diversity of opinion. A few of them, indeed, believe that forces of globalization may well culminate in a resurgence of state power, a resurgence that would seem to augur well for public administration (Deudney and Ikenberry 1994). What I do claim is that on the subject of globalization the balance of opinion is far bleaker among students of international relations than it is among specialists in public administration. Although this difference in
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attitude may simply reflect traditional divides of disciplinary temperament—the contemplation of anarchy in IR breeding pessimism, the embrace of order in PA producing optimism—it likely runs deeper than that. We who spend our days hunched in windowless cubicles poring over the day-to-day work of government may simply be oblivious to the gathering storm.

The remainder of the article is divided into four sections. In the first, I sketch the origins of this storm and its likely track from the perspective of IR theory. The basic argument here is that globalization, fueled by international capitalism and the revolution in telecommunications, poses a fundamental—and perhaps unanswerable—challenge to the nation-state. In the second section, I describe three crises—of accountability, governance, and legitimacy—that globalization will force American public administration to confront. In the third section, I outline two alternative storm-damage scenarios, each of which is dependent upon how public administration copes with the crises. In the final section, I offer some concluding observations on how the public administration community might want to prepare itself to cope with these crises and their possible aftermath.

THE GLOBALIZATION CHALLENGE

The globalization literature in international relations starts from three related empirical observations:

- Virtually no economic activity is purely local; investment, production, and consumption decisions around the globe are highly interdependent.

- Revolutions in telecommunications and information sciences have radically altered our appreciation of physical space. For all intents and purposes, the globe has become smaller, physical boundaries unimportant.

- Abetted by these revolutions, human social relationships have mirrored economic relationships. For significant groups of people in the world, communities and interests are transnational.

Taken alone, these observations are hardly startling. What makes them interesting from the perspective of IR theory is that they represent three intertwined dynamics that are at fundamental odds with a world of sovereign nation-states. The state has become, in a word, irrelevant.

Looked at in the long view of history, this is not a particularly surprising or unnatural development, globalization theorists

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point out. The nation-state emerged as the West’s preeminent form of political organization only some three-and-a-half centuries ago because it provided a framework of authority that was consistent with the military, economic, and ideological imperatives of the time. Developments in military technology—effective and mobile firearms, in particular—favored the interests of centralizing monarchs against entrenched feudal powers. The growth of market capitalism demanded a structure of law roughly coincident with larger, national markets and conducive to capital formation, trade, and enforcement of contract. Liberal trends in political thought, reflecting the age’s broader philosophical renaissance, laid the foundations for territorially based sovereignty and ultimately for national identity.

These justifications grew even more powerful as the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries unfolded. The forces released by the Industrial Revolution in the West—rapid urban growth, redefined social roles, and democratization—found ready expression in the institutions of the nation-state. Perhaps most important, the nation-state was able to satisfy two fundamental security concerns. First, it served as a shield against external enemies, providing citizens with a common defense. Second, it ensured domestic tranquility, guaranteeing at least a modicum of law and order at home. By the mid-twentieth century, the nation-state had no effective competitors as an organizational form anywhere in the world. For the leaders of the post-World War II decolonization movements, the creation of a sovereign nation-state was such a sine qua non of human freedom and dignity that the number of countries in the world, measured by UN membership, grew from 51 in 1948 to some 185 today.

All these motives and rationales for the nation-state have essentially evaporated. Who now takes seriously the nation-state as a guarantor of security? Missile technology has made territorial defense against other nations problematic at best.13 The sophistication and ubiquity of terrorists has made territorial defense against bloody-minded individuals almost impossible.14 Despite recent down-ticks in many major crime statistics—fueled by an aging population and booming economy—government’s ability to make citizens feel safe in their homes and on the streets has been declining for years.15 Those who can afford to do so—individuals and corporations alike—now provide for their own security, as the proliferation of gated communities and private security firms attest.

And the nation-state is certainly irrelevant to international business. While government leaders may still feel compelled to

13 In the same week that North Korea successfully test fired a medium range ballistic missile, with a trajectory over Japanese territory that unleashed a torrent of protest, the Clinton administration, in a presumably unrelated story, announced that the costs of continued ABM development were spiraling upwards to such an extent that development may have to be curtailed (New York Times 1998, 1; Washington Post 1998, A4).

14 In the wake of the Nairobi and Dar Es Salaam embassy bombings, U.S. officials repeated what has become a Western mantra: Effective defense against terrorists willing to sacrifice their own lives is impossible. This statement, however empirically true, is unlikely to contribute to a renewal of faith in the utility of the nation-state.

15 The Gallup Survey (1998) reports that the criminal justice system ranks at the bottom of America’s institutional confidence list—alongside Congress and organized labor.
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appear to manage “their” economies, they increasingly seem out of their depth, Chaplinesque figures trying to direct careening traffic that is oblivious to their existence. With over a trillion dollars moving around the globe electronically each day, even the richest nations are subject to the vagaries of international economic forces, forced to share or even to cede their sovereign authority over economic policy to international currency speculators, investors, and bankers. In a parallel development, multinational corporations have been displaced by transnational corporations, entities that have no real national homes, national staff, or national allegiances and that are nearly impervious to national regulation.

What of the surge of violent ethn-nationalism that has wracked the world in recent years? Isn’t the state-seeking behavior of ethnic entrepreneurs from Quebec to Kurdistan evidence of the state’s continuing vitality? For most IR theorists, the answer is “no.” These movements testify not to the state’s continuing strength but to its decline. It has been the growing weakness of central state authorities that has allowed separatism and irredentism to flourish. Bosnian Serbs (and Muslims and Croats), for instance, may think that establishing their own state apparatus—with flag, currency, and seat in the United Nations—will accord them some tangible benefits, but they are demonstrably wrong. Sovereignty is an outdated notion. Those that pursue it are chasing the ghost of another century. That won’t stop the pursuit, of course, at least not in the short term. As globalization increases, the incidence and virulence of ethnic conflict, civil war, and other forms of violence—domestic, international, and transnational—will undoubtedly also increase. But in the absence of what IR theorists term exogenous territorializing pressures, it is likely that in the middle- to long-term much of this violence will be unfocused and free-floating—akin more to the strife in the Congo, Somalia, and Liberia than to that in Palestine or Northern Ireland.

Ironically but not coincidentally, as state capacity has declined, global policy challenges have multiplied cruelly. Trade in illicit drugs has long since reached epidemic proportions. The number of international refugees has soared from around one million in the early 1960s to nearly thirty million today. The average global temperature has increased by nearly a full degree Celsius in the past 120 years. Rainforests are said to be disappearing at the rate of eighty acres per minute, taking with them species and our ability to breathe. Thus arises a vicious cycle: Globalization undermines the structures of governance that are needed to cope with the challenges of globalization.

Having spent considerable time working in Bosnia in the past four-and-a-half years, I can attest that these states are extraordinarily frail, incapable of some of the most basic governmental functions. For more than a few players in the Balkans (and elsewhere in Central and Eastern Europe and the NIS), government has provided a (thin) cover for criminal activities.

These and other depressing statistics may be found in World Watch Institute (1997).

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THE THREE CRISES

If this synopsis of globalization is correct—and most IR theorists would find its broad outlines unexceptionable—what are the implications for public administration? In this section of the article, I argue that the dynamics of globalization will generate three inexorable crises—of accountability, governance, and legitimacy. And as I shall argue in a later section, how these crises are resolved—if indeed they are resolvable—will have a determinative impact on the future of the American public service.

The Crisis of Accountability

Although public administration specialists routinely disparage the politics/administration dichotomy as outdated and simplistic, we cling to its essence—neutrally competent administrators faithfully executing the will of the people as articulated by elected representatives—as the normative centerpiece of our democracy. We assume that there is a fundamental accountability, flawed though it is in practice, between American public administration and an identifiable American polity.

Globalization undermines this assumption. Much of what American administrators will be asked to do in years to come will reflect the interests and desires of a far less tangible—and less accountable—global political community. In effect, American public administrators will be asked to enforce norms that have been set elsewhere—in the World Trade Organization, G-7 (or 8), International Monetary Fund, an environmental or energy summit, or even in a corporate boardroom. Sometimes the actors in this emerging global political community will have interests and desires that are at least arguably congruent with those of Americans, as may be the case, for instance, with the environmental accords that emerged from Rio and Kyoto. At other times, such congruence will be harder to find. In all such cases, however, transnational agenda setting and decision making will raise difficult questions about whose interests are served in the administrative process.

Although such threats to American sovereignty—if indeed that is what they are—may seem at this point rather contrived, that is only because to date the dominant transnational forces in the globe have been reflections of American hegemony. With the decline of that hegemony, it is likely that the American state will feel the same pressures that every other state, albeit to varying degrees, has felt. The governments of Africa, and, to a lesser extent, Latin America, have long been considered weak, porous, and unaccountable. But even Western European states have not
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been immune to this crisis of accountability, where national administrative systems are constitutionally obligated to implement European Union (EU) directives. Euro-skeptic conservatives in Great Britain vehemently oppose expansion of the powers of the EU because they dislike being ordered about, directly or indirectly, by unaccountable Eurocrats in Brussels. Leftists on the Continent are wary of extensions of EU power—especially creation of a single currency—because they think that a tight central monetary policy will raise unemployment and provoke a neo-fascist backlash that national officials will be unable to combat. Right and left are thus united in the fear that transnationalized, globalized forces will effectively depoliticize decisions, rendering administrators unaccountable and citizens powerless—much as American Buchananite conservatives find common cause with American union activists to oppose NAFTA, GATT, and various other manifestations of globalization.

In principle, even in the face of such externalized agenda setting, there are two ways to maintain accountability. First, global decisions can be made subject to review and approval by existing representative political institutions before administrators begin to take action. If Congress approves an international treaty on greenhouse gases, for instance, then the American administrators who implement the provisions of that treaty are acting in furtherance of what has become legitimately derived American public policy. The second way to maintain accountability is to extend representative institutions beyond national borders. The effort to enhance the power of the Strasbourg-based European Parliament is an example of such a strategy in the context of the EU.

Neither of these approaches is likely to stave off the crisis of accountability, however, at least not in the short term. Most of the transnational forces that are fueling the accountability crisis—economic forces especially—do not coincide with any geographic unit short of the globe itself, making organizing representation, at least representation in any traditional sense, a rather tricky business. In fact, the continuing weakness of the European Parliament suggests that even when a well-defined supernational geographic unit is available, it is not easy to develop a transnational political counterweight to transnational economic forces.

Moreover, the processes of globalization are seldom likely to present decisions that are as clearly defined or as subject to a transparent process as a greenhouse gas treaty. Global norms are likely to be imported into domestic administrative contexts in subtler, less obvious ways. How might this happen? First, even when transnational expectations are transmitted formally, in the
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shape of treaties or agreements, they are often so complex as to be beyond the practical reach of representative institutions. This is especially the case with respect to trade agreements—NAFTA and GATT were notorious for having gone unread on Capitol Hill—which, of course, are closest to the real heart of globalization, unfettered international economic activity. Second, the professional norms that shape administrative action are likely increasingly to be transmitted by transnational policy communities. Administrators in the Environmental Protection Agency in America routinely consult with counterparts around the globe; they also read the same journals, participate in the same e-mail listserves, and attend the same professional meetings. This is equally true of officials in the U.S. Treasury, the Public Health Service, and any number of other agencies, including those at state and local levels of government. Third, as will be discussed in more detail, many of the problems that will preoccupy tomorrow’s public administrators will be deposited on the desks directly by the global system. The ability of domestic polities to define and control administrative agendas will be sharply limited as a consequence.

The Crisis of Governance

One of the chief effects of globalization, according to many IR scholars, is the disarticulation of the state. This refers to an unbundling or erosion of the core functions of government—especially “redistribution, structural regulation . . . and the direct delivery of public services”—in the face of global challenges (Cerny 1998). Put more simply, globalization means that government is less able to govern.

In some ways, public administration seems already to have faced up to this problem. Osborne and Gaebler (1992, 1) begin their book with the rhetorical question, Is Government Dead? The answer they—and many observers like them—give is “no,” but it does in this new age need to be reinvented, re-engineered, performance based, entrepreneurial, or results oriented.

This response is not unreasonable, and it may even have short-term salutary consequences. But it misses the basic point and is unlikely to produce lasting results. The problem is not how we should manage, but whether we can manage at all. To pursue Osborne and Gaebler’s oft-cited rowing and steering metaphor, public administration has not only lost its oars but has its hand on a broken tiller as well. Although we may for a few years get a bit of steerage from it still, whether it can withstand the heavy seas of the next century is doubtful.

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18This is one of the implications of the new institutionalism school of sociology. For an example, see Finnemore (1996).
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The basic dilemma is that governments increasingly confront problems that have their roots in other jurisdictions, problems that are genuinely global in origin and scope. Although one could argue that crime, for instance, has never been a particularly tractable problem, it was once at least a fairly localized one. The most serious externalities revolved around the legalities of pursuing bad guys across the county line. Today, local police departments must contend with drug-related crimes that have at least part of their origin in the jungles of Colombia or the highlands of Sinaloa; with street gangs that have branches in Moscow, Hong Kong, or San Salvador; and with fraud rings that are networked from Lagos to London. Public health departments still have to worry about sanitary water supplies and controlling outbreaks of infectious diseases; but the sources of their worry have increasingly shifted from things like the run-off from Farmer Brown’s dairy operation and shutting down the elementary school during a chicken pox epidemic to emergency preparedness against terrorist attacks and the Ebola virus. In many parts of the country, education and social service administrators are overwhelmed by the problems of immigration, legal and illegal, induced by poverty, repression, and civil war in distant lands. Transportation managers are trying to design systems that reflect, at least in part, deforestation in the Amazon basin and a depleted ozone layer. Economic development officials in Kansas and Kentucky seek strategies to counter the fact that people in China and Indonesia will work for a dollar or two a day.

Obviously what all these problems—and many more that might be mentioned—have in common is that their solutions, if they exist at all, are out of the reach of those who must cope with them. Reinventing government is not going to help some city manager shut down international drug trafficking, protect trees in Brazil, or alter the East Asian political economy; he or she simply has no buttons to push, no levers to pull that provide any traction. In fact, the sad truth may be that in the age of globalization problems will inevitably exceed the capacity of administrators to manage. This is not just because the problems of crime, urban decay, poverty, pollution, and so forth are complex and multifaceted—although that is true enough. Instead, it is because cross-border problems require cross-border solutions, which in turn hinge on interjurisdictional administrative coordination that is likely to be always at least one beat behind. Although agencies may be able to cooperate effectively in discrete cases—FBI coordination with Kenyan and Tanzanian police officials in the wake of the 1998 embassy bombings is one recent example—long term strategic cooperation has fewer examples of success.

Perhaps the best counterexample here is the difficulty American and British intelligence agencies experienced coordinating activities against the Soviet bloc during the Cold War. Despite a common enemy, common strategic issues, and a very nearly common culture, the “special relationship” was often strained and tense, characterized by nearly as many games played against the respective “cousins” as against the communists.

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Aggravating this problem, some globalization theorists say, is an impending fiscal crisis for government. James Davidson and William Rees-Mogg (1997) reason that the Internet, off-shore tax havens, and accounting dodges for virtual corporations will make it extraordinarily easy for all but the lowest wage earners to avoid paying most taxes; in fact, they project that tax capacity in OECD nations will fall by 50-70 percent in the next century, despite expected frenzied efforts by the United States and other leading nations to capture fleeing wealth.\textsuperscript{30} Although this particular vision may seem slightly fevered, we have seen enough squabbling in recent years over taxation of activities on the Web to raise some legitimate questions. Should the state indeed become substantially defunded, it is hard to see how administrators will be able to shoulder burdens that will surely require even greater, not fewer, resources.

The Crisis of Legitimacy

Taken together, the dynamics of the crises of accountability and governance produce a third crisis for public administration, that of legitimacy. An administrative service that is unaccountable but competent may cause anxiety, but will probably be accepted by those who are well served; some of the bureaucratic-dominant regimes in East Asia come to mind as examples. An administrative service that is incompetent but accountable may well be tolerated if it has some appeal to custom and tradition; many local agencies in the United States—sheriffs departments, small school districts, county courthouses, and so forth—fit this inefficient-but-quaint-and-cozy definition. An administrative service that is both unaccountable and incompetent has no legitimacy, and, absent a special set of circumstances, is unlikely to be able to sustain itself.\textsuperscript{21}

Delegitimization pressures on public administration are likely to be felt from two directions. First, globalization threatens the idea of res publica. According to the emerging norms of globalization, that which is private—particularly economic activity—is strengthened and sanctified; that which is public—particularly action that threatens private economic activity—is weakened and reviled. In the future, private contracts between sovereign substate entities and individuals—covering everything up to and including collective security—will make current efforts at privatization seem paltry and pathetic (Duffield 1998).\textsuperscript{22} If there is no public, can there be public administration?

An attack on the logic of administration itself is the second direction from which delegitimization pressures on public administration may emanate. Globalization will engender such

\textsuperscript{30}Davidson is chairman of Britain’s National Tax Payers’ Union, Rees-Mogg is former editor of the Times of London.

\textsuperscript{21}One such set of circumstances is common enough in the developing world: Unaccountable and incompetent administrative agencies retain sufficient power, thanks to moribund civil societies from which they are able to extort taxes and helping hands from transnational actors (the IMF, aid agencies, etc.) that provide additional funds, that they are able to stay afloat.

\textsuperscript{22}Especially interesting is Duffield’s (1998, 93-94) discussion of the increased acceptability of private armies such as Executive Outcomes and Gurkha Security Guards.
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philosophical disorder that legal-rationality as a system of thought—the foundation of bureaucracy and of modernity itself, at least in Weber’s terms—is at risk. Traditional, neopatrimonial, and postmodern paradigms will vie with the legal-rational, producing demands for radically different, nonbureaucratic, and perhaps nonadministrative organizational forms. If there is no administration, can there be public administration? It is to these themes that we next turn.

SCENARIOS

How these crises will be resolved is not at all clear. Nor is it possible to know exactly what the implications would be for public administration of any particular pattern of resolution or nonresolution. Two scenarios, flowing from rough-hewn contrary assumptions, seem at least plausible, however. The first, which I term global regime management, assumes that these crises are resolved on reasonably favorable terms, projecting a fairly smooth transition from current understandings of accountability, governance, and legitimacy to a new and rather different normative equilibrium. The second scenario, the darker of the two, assumes that these crises are not resolved at all. Normative turmoil, dissensus, and fragmentation reign, producing what we might call neomedieval administration.  

Global Regime Management

The most favorable views of post-hegemonic global society assume that the core remaining functions of the nation state will be exercised by what are often termed global regimes. A regime is a set of “implicit or explicit principles, norms, rules, and decision-making procedures around which actors’ expectations converge in a given area of international relations” (Krasner 1983, 2). A few examples of the hundreds of current international regimes include the Bretton Woods monetary system (and its spin-offs and amendments), various commodity agreements (coffee, oil, tin, rubber, etc.), regional fisheries agreements, and the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO)-International Air Transport Association (IATA) system of regulating air transportation. Although some regimes stem from agreements negotiated by sovereign nation-states, what is distinctive about international regimes is their essential nonsatenseness. They operate as social institutions—networks of interconnected roles and role expectations—that have authoritative political consequences.

Because this system assumes a relatively smooth transition from the Western state system and its embedded ideals, the

23This term is adapted from Cerny (1998).

24The creation and persistence of regimes absent (American) hegemony has actually been at issue among regime theorists. I take the view here that regime formation and other forms of international cooperation are not dependent on the existence of a hegemon. For an elaboration of this perspective, see Young (1989).
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day-to-day appearance of public administration under global regimes will be similar to what we know today. Administrative edicts will continue to be justified by reference to rational analysis and the rule of law. Indeed, appeals to science as the ultimate authority are likely to be even more persuasive than they are today, owing to the prominence of specialists in regime decision making. Some sense of a transcendent public interest, albeit ill-defined, will remain in place to provide an orienting ethic for administrators. And reasonably clear functional boundaries will be maintained.

These similarities notwithstanding, global regime management will be a rather different enterprise from traditional public administration. To begin with, it will be substantially deterritorialized, with a stripped-down, geographically rooted state body enforcing norms set by a powerful, nongeographically rooted, nonstate head.25 This will be a form of virtual public administration—analogues of which have been present in the private sector for some time—and will constitute a wrenching change for a discipline that has always been substantially defined by its territoriality.26 Public administration is the management of public goods in a geographically fixed place—a city, town, region, state, and so forth. Questions of territory—centralization versus decentralization, field-headquarters relations, interagency coordination in the field—have always been at the heart of professional debates. Because local27 policy discretion under global regimes—over safety standards, resource use, education, public health, for instance—will be minimal, administrative entities that have any territorial identification (i.e., responsibility for overseeing activities within fixed geographical boundaries) will be geared simply toward enforcement.

This in turn suggests that to the extent that national administrative apparatus continue to exist, they will be far smaller than they are today and even less glamorous. The interesting work—research and analysis, norm setting, evaluation, and so on—in any given functional area will be carried on transnationally, within the institutions of the regime. Although national structures may persist for some time either as sources of personnel secondment or as direct participants in regime management, the growth in regime autonomy projected by theorists implies direct transnational recruitment of staff, after the current fashion of the World Bank, as the most stable long-term pattern.

Because global regimes are highly differentiated functionally, it is unlikely that the need will arise for a single, even minimally integrated, public service. Instead, each regime is likely to define its own needs and to manage its own human

25This distinction between head and body is from Rosecrance (1996).

26Rosecrance (1996, 51) uses the term virtual state to describe life of government after globalization. He notes, correctly, that many major transnational corporations have long since become virtual, consisting largely of finance, R and D, and marketing departments, with all real work (i.e., manufacturing) jobbed-out to other entities.

27Indeed, the very meaning of territorially rooted words such as local and regional will be problematic owing to the globalization of issues.
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resources. In this respect, at least, it may prove easier for (former) American public administrators, used to working in quasi-independent fiefdoms, to adapt to global regime management than for counterparts in nations that have stronger integrative traditions.

I modified the word American in the paragraph above with a parenthetical former merely to underscore the obvious: Identity in a world of global regimes will be increasingly denationalized. Appeals to territorially rooted loyalty, patriotism, and distinct cultural traditions—especially for those involved in the head functions of regime management—will be extinguished. In their stead will rise even stronger attachments to nospatially defined professional communities and, presumably, to the transcendent norms—rule of law, human rights, free markets, and so forth—that are said to underlie emergent global society.

Such attachments will be essential to maintain responsiveness in a system that will see the eclipse of traditional methods of administrative accountability. For better or worse, some greater measure of intraorganizational democracy will need to replace what Emmette Redford (1969) once termed “overhead democracy.” This may manifest itself naturally in the open, nonhierarchical styles of communication said to characterize postbureaucratic scientific communities. Democratic regime management may also be encouraged by the growth of substantial numbers of transnational interest groups, which have proved quite capable of enforcing a broad view of stake-holder.

Neomedieval Administration

Global regime management may be an unnerving scenario for those attached to or appreciative of the American public service, if for no reason other than it implies the eventual disappearance of the American public service. It is a downright jolly vision, however, compared to that of its primary competitor, neomedieval administration. If the ascendancy of global regimes threatens the operation of traditional liberal democracy, at least it promises peace, prosperity, and rationality. Neomedievalism offers none of this. It ushers us instead onto the darkling plain.

The neomedieval scenario is built on the premise that no stable authority structures will emerge from the rubble of the nation-state system once it collapses under the weight of globalization. Chaos, disorder, and conflict will reign. Such institutions that persist or develop anew will have neither unchallenged bases of authority nor clearly established boundaries. Regime theorists

24See, for instance, the argument that “democracy is inevitable,” in Bennis and Slater (1968).
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and other institutionalists who believe that international cooperation will emerge from the ether in the post-state future are, for the neomedievalists, blinkered idealists.

Public administration, following the neomedieval vision, will be constrained, challenged, and fragmented. Territorial boundaries will not disappear as regime theorists anticipate, but they will become more fluid. Just as the lords of feudal estates fought with one another (and with rulers higher or lower in the medieval caste hierarchy) for control of contested territories, so too will administrative elites spar, locality against locality, region against locality, region against region, for suzerainty. Although turf warfare is already a prominent feature of modern bureaucratic life, the conflict implied by neomedievalism would be far sharper, approaching a modern form of warlordism. With no courts or overarching authorities to settle disagreements, recourse to violence would not be unexpected, especially if control of important resources—water or arable land, for instance—were at stake. Journalist Robert Kaplan (1998), in a recent book about the American West that eerily echoes his prescient work on the Third World, suggests that this day is not really far off for the United States.29

The ability of public administrators to exercise power in a particular domain will be challenged not just by geographic rivals, but also by epistemic competitors. Legal rationality will no longer be the only authority that justifies action. In a post-modern replay of medieval battles between science and tradition and the sacred and the secular, we can expect ceaseless conflict between fundamentally different weltanschauungen, each with its own orienting values and standards of evidence. Exactly what these will be is hard to predict. Some may be identity based, some regional, some religious or philosophical. One theorist projects that the “adaptive patronial” systems common now in the Southern Hemisphere—in which “qualified state systems . . . no longer seek or even need to establish territorial, bureaucratic or consent basic political authority in the traditional sense”—will move north (Duffield 1998, 76). If so, we may expect the erosion of merit as an operating principle in personnel management, displaced by patron-client links and ties of ethnicity, religion, or extended family.30 The Mexican camarilla—a political clique based on kinship, educational ties, institutional loyalty or, less often, ideology that is integral to administrative advancement—may be the model for our neomedieval future (Camp 1990). There may, perhaps, be space for administrative action along modernist, legal-rational, liberal democratic lines in a neomedieval world—but it is likely to be small and uncertain at best.31

29See also Kaplan (1997).

30A sort of test case of the regime v. neomedieval perspective in personnel administration now seems to be shaping up around the globe. The World Bank and similar organizations have established a fairly clear international human resources regime, based on Western civil service standards, to which they try to hold the states that seek their resources. From Africa to Central Asia to Latin America, nations are explicitly directed by Bank staff to establish by-the-book merit systems. This has, in the view of many observers, produced a new wave of what Fred Riggs once called “formalism”—administrative systems that are formally Western, but really either traditional or patronial or something else altogether. Whether the Bank and its allies or corrupt local politico-administrative elites will win in the long-term is still an open question.

31Cerny (1998, 60) makes an argument to this effect.
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While authority is fractured in the neomedieval scenario, with a shift of power to local and regional fiefdoms, there is still a strong element of the global in this vision. In fact, one of the neologisms that one hears neomedieval IR theorists use is *glocal*, a formulation that is meant to stress the complex interplay of local and global dynamics in the post-state era. Bifurcation of identity is an especially important feature of neomedievalism, at least for the glocal elite: Those at the top of the neomedieval heap are fully plugged in, literally and metaphorically, to a web of global relationships. Race, religion, sex, and ethnicity recede as identifiers, as a new class of cultural mestizos arises, a class comprising high-technology knowledge workers, with worldly, sophisticated tastes in music, food, and architecture. At the same time, this elite has intensely local attachments as well, especially to places that offer appropriate lifestyle opportunities.  

What is lost in this special sense of localism, however, is a sense of community that is identified with *place*; community for the glocal elite becomes a cultural, nonspatial experience. This has enormous implications for public administration, implications not unrelated to our earlier discussion of territory in traditional administrative thought. To an extent even greater than is arguably now the case, administrators in a neomedieval world would work in the service of a narrowly drawn socioeconomic class. Appeals to administrators to act in the interests of the broader community—meaning, in our terms, ourselves as well as those folks who live next door or just across the tracks—would be nearly nonsensical. Concern about social problems is likely to disappear from the administrative agenda, displaced by concerns for security and property rights. The fracturing of authority systems discussed earlier will reinforce this tendency. The “love thy neighbor” ethic that quietly underpins the modern welfare state—even the modern welfare-*reformed* state—is a fragile thing, anchored in philosophical premises unlikely to be widely distributed in neomedieval systems of thought.  

Because globalization is said to widen the gap between haves and have-nots, intensifying socioeconomic and political stratification, this is a problem of no small consequence. Exactly what proportion of people will be wine-sipping web surfers and what proportion will be disenfranchised wretches is impossible to know. If the patterns now characteristic of the Third World are any guide, the news is not good. Substantial populations will be relegated to gray zones, working in parallel illegal economies at best, living as brigands at worst (Cerny 1998, 54-55). Higher walls and stronger gates will be the inevitable—and perhaps even sustainable—response of the elite. Mark Duffield (1998, 87) argues that “[c]ontrary to conventional wisdom the main issue in

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32 Kaplan (1998) is especially evocative on the growth of glocalism (although he does not use the term, referring instead to “post-urban pods”) in the modern American West.

33 For an elaboration of this argument, see Timmer (1989).
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the South is not that of poverty per se. It is the wide governance gap which allows elite survival strategies to be pursued regardless of the social cost. Such survival strategies, transplanted to the North, will ultimately change the mix of people who work in "public" administration, emphasizing to an even greater extent than is the case today law, security, and criminal justice. They will also wholly transform mechanisms of administrative accountability: Administrators will be responsible only to their immediate masters who, in the absence of even a pretense of liberal democracy, will be responsible to no one at all.

CONCLUSION: FLYING WITH THE OWL OF MINERVA

International relations theorists—social scientists in general, for that matter—have such a poor track record predicting the future that it may not be worth worrying about such dire globalization scenarios. Perhaps IR theory, like philosophy, is best viewed as Nach-denken, or afterthought. As Hegel (1949, 12-13) noted in an unusually lucid passage, when it comes "to giving instructions as to what the world ought to be,"

[p]hilosophy . . . always comes on the scene too late. . . . As the thought of the world, it appears only when actuality is already there cut and dried after its process of formation has been completed. . . . The owl of Minerva spreads its wings only with the falling of dusk.

Our very awareness of globalization thus may signal its decline. Recent turmoil in global markets and renewed talk of capital controls lend credence to this view. It may be that international kulturkampf, not global interdependence, is in our collective cards, implying a reinvigorated (if militarized) nation-state, and hence reinvigorated (and militarized) public service. In fact, the only thing we know for sure about the public service in the twenty-first century is that it will be substantially different from the one we have today; American administrative institutions have never stood still for more than a generation, as this symposium on the Civil Service Reform Act makes clear.

But we should not dismiss the warnings of IR theory too blithely. Even the poorest prophets prove accurate occasionally. And in this particular case we have a lot of prophets from a lot of different perspectives saying substantially the same thing: The state is in long-term decline, thanks in part to the forces of globalization. The main point of this article has been that public administration in any recognizable form—and perhaps any acceptable form—is incomprehensible absent the framework of the state.

34It is in this direction that Samuel Huntington's (1996) analysis leads.
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Having identified the dragon, it is traditional at this juncture in a work on public administration to list the steps that we must take in order to slay it: We need to do $x$, $y$, and $z$ to improve budgeting, increase the quality of the workforce, reduce urban poverty, and so forth. This is not a realistic option given this topic. With globalization, we may well just be along for the ride.

But still, to mix poetic metaphors, we do not want to go gentle onto that darkling plain. Is there anything the public administration community can do to prepare itself for globalization? Probably not—at least not if the question is construed as, How can we safeguard American public administration? More productive will be trying to fashion new administrative institutions that can ride out the storm of globalization without sacrificing accountability, competence, and legitimacy. I do not pretend to know what these might look like. I would guess, though, that the difficulty of forging global representative institutions will give added impetus to privatization, which allows accountability to a nebulous public to be redefined as accountability to distinct customers. For those absolutely core public functions, shriveled though they may be, we have excellent models of what not to do in our current leading international organizations, where overstaffing, nationality-based patronage, and underresponsiveness have been far too common. The real challenge will be to wed accountability, the traditional essence of public service, to the best characteristics of transnational business—leaness, seamless diversity, and adaptability—to create a new global public administration.

In attempting to meet this challenge, public administration theorists have a unique role to play. The closest historical analogue, perhaps, is the work public administrationists undertook during the New Deal, when, thanks in no small part to their efforts, the tremendous growth in the size and complexity of the American state was managed with far more ease than would otherwise have been the case. Now, in the face of globalization, our colleagues in the rest of political science have again left aside the mere details of administration. Can public administration rise once more to the occasion?

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