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For our teachers,
Hayward R. Alker and Friedrich V. Kratochwil
but man, proud man,
Drest in a little brief authority,
Most ignorant of what he's most assur'd,
His glassy essence, like an angry ape
Plays such fantastic tricks before high heaven
As make the angels weep

Shakespeare, Measure for Measure, II, ii, 117
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Preface

This volume arises out of a workshop entitled “Private Authority and International Order” convened at the Thomas J. Watson Institute for International Studies, Brown University, Providence, Rhode Island, 12–13 February 1999. The workshop was organized by Rodney Bruce Hall in consultation with Thomas Biersteker, while Hall was a postdoctoral research fellow in international relations theory at the Watson Institute. The original objective of the workshop was to explore the devolution of state authority, so central to the work of the late Susan Strange, and to do so across issue areas that included, but transcended, the international political economy. At the end of her life, Strange was studying the sources and consequences of the “retreat of the state” and the devolution of authority and sovereign perquisites of public authority to private actors operating in the international political economy. The workshop was organized to explore these phenomena in the realms of international security and international organization, and to generate analytical categories and methodologies to study it.

During the course of the workshop lively debates ensued regarding the nature and consequences of private authority in the international system, as well as the long-term implications of the emergence of private authority for the future of global governance. Workshop participants were persuaded by the fruitfulness of the discussions and agreed that a collection of essays should be assembled to capture the most salient issues that emerged in the discussions. The purpose of this volume is to examine the emergence of private authority in the international system, and the extent to which this phenomenon is significant in international organization and international security, in addition to international political economy.

Subsequent to the workshop, we found topical and analytical gaps in the research design of the project. The editors subsequently commissioned the essay on transnational corporate networks by Stephen Kobrin, and the piece on the operations of contemporary private mercenary armed
forces by Bernadette Muthien and Ian Taylor in an effort to strengthen the research design and comprehensiveness of the resulting volume. The organization of the volume into three subtypes of private authority – “market authority,” “moral authority,” and “illicit authority” – is a result of discussions of the editors who met at the end of May 2000 at Brown University to draft the concluding chapter summarizing the most theoretically significant findings of the volume.

The workshop discussion constituted two very intense, frenetic, and full days of intellectual activity, and we gratefully acknowledge the debts we have acquired to participants, and to other contributors to the discussions whose work is not collected in the present offering.

The following scholars contributed papers to the original workshop, many of which have subsequently been published elsewhere, and thus are not included in this volume. Special thanks in this context go to Peter Andreas formerly of the Center for International Affairs of Harvard University, Ian Robert Douglas formerly of Bristol University, Craig N. Murphy of Wellesley College, Richard Price of the University of Minnesota, and Peter Uvin of Tufts University. We are also grateful to Abbott Gleason, James Ron, Dietrich Rueschemeyer, Nina Tannenwald, and Robert Wade of the Watson Institute at Brown University, for serving as panel discussants during our workshop and for immeasurably enriching our understanding with their participation in the discussions. Douglas Blum of Providence College played a similar role, and we thank him for contributing to the lively workshop discussions. Special thanks go to Craig Murphy who had originally intended to help edit and contribute to this volume, but was forced to withdraw due to the weight of the burdens attending his time-consuming duties as the current president of the International Studies Association. The volume bears, nonetheless, the always beneficial marks of his prescient commentary and advice. We also wish to extend our thanks to the staff of the Watson Institute for the exceptional logistical support and service that makes a workshop run smoothly, especially Leslie Baxter, Susan Costa, Sheila Fournier, Jean Lawlor, Patricia Monahan, and Nancy Soukup.

Both editors would like to extend special thanks for the financial support of the Board of Overseers of the Watson Institute, who financed the workshop, Hall’s research budget, and his postdoctoral fellowship. Hall also acknowledges the financial support of his colleagues in the Department of Political Science at the University of Iowa for providing research assistance in the 1999–2000 academic year during which his contribution to this book took shape. And Hall particularly wishes to extend thanks to his former research assistant, Jonathan Acuff, who cheerfully took on the
tedious but exacting tasks of standardizing the notes of each contribution, and of extracting a master bibliography from the collection, in addition to many related tasks, each of which he performed flawlessly.

RODNEY BRUCE HALL AND THOMAS J. BIERSTEKER