

Introduction: global crises and the crisis of global leadership

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The subject of this book is global *crises* and the crisis of global leadership. Its title refers to crises, in the plural, because – despite the incessant and important focus on the financial and economic crisis that has preoccupied much of the world over the past three years – in the current global conjuncture the world faces a diversity of intersecting, but nonetheless ontologically distinct, crises. These are located not only within political economy but also in ethics, law, society, culture and ecology – and they all call into question the prevailing models of global development and governance. Nevertheless, although these intersecting crises are distinct, most of the authors in this collection connect them with some of the contradictions associated with the current neoliberal phase of global capitalism. Taken together, these crises may be said to combine in what I call a *global organic crisis*.

The term ‘global leadership’ is initially used in this volume in the *singular*, since there is an identifiable, neoliberal nexus of ideas, institutions and interests that dominates global political and civil society – one that is associated with the most powerful states and corporations. This nexus involves a form of leadership and expertise intended to sustain and enlarge capitalist market society and its associated principles of governance; in particular, it claims to provide effective mechanisms of stabilization and the ability to master crises – a claim of competence that is challenged in this book. Moreover, although neoliberal crisis management is preoccupied with economic stabilization, it has generally made minimal effort to address the fundamental crises of livelihood and social reproduction (the way in which production is connected to the wider social conditions within which it operates) that afflict a majority of the world’s population, such as the global health, food, energy and ecological crises. Moreover, in responding to crises, neoliberal political leaders have frequently sought to make ‘unholy’ alliances with

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authoritarian and dictatorial forces, particularly in much of the Third World; in both North and South they have also sought to maintain a condition of depoliticization and political apathy. The goal has been to channel and incorporate forms of resistance and contain fundamental political contestation as to the nature and purposes of rule. Whether this strategy can continue is an open question.

Indeed, in several parts of the world, this neoliberal governing formula of authoritarianism and/or controlled electoral democracy/depoliticization is coming under increasing, popular, grassroots pressure. It is not just in Latin America that this is happening, where, in Venezuela and Bolivia, ‘twenty-first-century’ socialism has produced a substantial shift towards a new political order, consolidating progressive, more democratic constitutional forms as well as new regional economic and security alliances outside US control. In early 2011 a wave of Arab revolt, originating in Tunisia, spread throughout the Middle East. It encompassed not only the epicentre of Arab civilization, in Egypt, but also moved quickly to Algeria, Morocco, Libya, Yemen and Bahrain. It was met initially with repression in some contexts, particularly brutal in Libya, provoking civil war and panic in the oil markets. In Tunisia and Egypt, peaceful protests – with protesters, apparently, behaving en masse as a form of revolutionary collective leadership – quickly forced the resignation of their long-standing military dictators. Demands were made for a new political order, with more democracy, redistribution and meaningful rights. The protests were motivated by a variety of grievances but originated in outrage concerning the way that authoritarian and dictatorial leaders had, particularly since the early 1990s, orchestrated policies directed by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) of neoliberal restructuring, including privatization, to plunder the state and the economy for themselves and for their business allies – while the majority suffered poverty, mass unemployment, and soaring food prices as well as repression and a denial of basic rights and dignity. This state of affairs was widely perceived as being orchestrated by the strategic interests of the United States and Israel with Arab leaders as its subordinates, despite widespread popular opposition to Israeli policies, particularly in Palestine. The regional uprisings drew on a broad swathe of spontaneous and organized *secular* forces in ways that put to rest the Orientalist myth that inheres in the ‘clash of civilizations’ hypothesis – specifically, that Muslim masses can be mobilized only through religion (see Chapter 8, by Mustapha Pasha). The uprisings also refute ‘the claim of American-sponsored dictators that they are the great bulwark against a rising tide of “Islamofascism” (a word of American coinage) that is sweeping the Arab lands. What are in fact sweeping across the Arab world today are

the good old values of the French Revolution’ (Ahmad 2011).¹ What these revolutionary changes share is their secular, democratic form and a repudiation of years of imperialism and neoliberal restructuring. In the Arab world they herald, particularly given the novel ways in which they combine spontaneous and organized forces in a mass collective leadership, ‘the autumn of the patriarchs’ (Ahmad 2011). These forms seem to be consistent with an emergent ‘postmodern prince’ (see Chapter 13).

By contrast, neoliberal leadership operates from the ‘top down’ to underpin ‘market civilization’ and its governing discourse of ‘disciplinary neoliberalism’ (Gill 1995a). Such leadership – which operates systematically to favour affluent strata of the population – seeks to stabilize dominant power structures and strategies of rule, albeit with some marginal modifications under crisis conditions in ways that do not fundamentally challenge the dominant modes of accumulation and power. This formula is what we can expect to guide the powerful Egyptian army in the aftermath of President Mubarak’s resignation, taking its political guidance from the United States and Israel. Whether this moment signals not only the probable end of patriarchal leadership but, more acutely, the end of disciplinary neoliberalism in the Arab world is a more open question. Neoliberalism can go with authoritarian, technocratic or, indeed, limited electoral forms of leadership and indirect democracy. Strategic cooperation between Israel, Egypt and the United States guarantees Israeli domination of the region; Egypt offers the Pentagon a crucial military platform and privileged access to the Suez Canal, and so the United States will seek to maintain its strategic assets in Egypt. The United States may ‘allow a controlled democratizing process ... and hope that the elections held under this umbrella will be won mainly by the liberal, IMF-oriented elite’ – the very outcome, Aijaz Ahmad (2011) notes, that many of the protesters have hoped for. Progressive forces seeking an authentic revolution may therefore come to be co-opted and constrained in a ‘passive revolution’, to use Antonio Gramsci’s phrase (Hoare and Nowell-Smith 1971).

This global situation helps form some of the backdrop to the considerations of this volume. Indeed, one of the key features of disciplinary neoliberalism since its emergence in the 1970s is how, until now, its crises of accumulation (e.g. debt and financial crises) have also provided opportunities for dominant forces to extend and deepen neoliberalism

¹ Aijaz Ahmad (2011) cites a report by the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace of February 2010 that there were over 3,000 protests by Egyptian workers between 2004 and 2010 – a level of organized collective action that dwarfs the 2011 political protests ‘in both scale and consequence’.

as a geopolitical project, as I noted in the early 1990s (Gill 1990; see also Panitch, Albo and Chibber 2011). In the present conjuncture, dominant forces in the global North have taken advantage of the crisis of accumulation to deepen and extend disciplinary neoliberalism – a strategy facilitated by the general absence of significant, organized forces of opposition. As has been noted, this is less obviously the case in the global South, where the global crisis of accumulation coincides with a crisis of authoritarian rule, perhaps opening up new possibilities for progressive forces to press for new forms of governance.

A crisis of neoliberalism?

In this context, a number of influential commentators have been arguing recently that the global crisis of accumulation is also a fundamental crisis of neoliberalism. This argument is also widespread in the popular and academic literature. Communist philosopher Slavoj Žižek (2009), for example, argues that neoliberalism actually ‘died twice’: as a ‘political doctrine’ after 9/11 (the attacks on the United States on 11 September 2001 that resulted in the destruction of the World Trade Center and part of the Pentagon), and as a ‘utopian economic project’ after the financial meltdown of 2007. Indeed, variants of the Žižek hypothesis concerning the ‘end’ of neoliberalism have become the conventional wisdom across various disciplines and theoretical standpoints; for example, Nobel Prizewinners in economics Joseph Stiglitz (2010) and Paul Krugman (2009a) see the economic crisis as provoking the end of neoliberalism and market fundamentalism. Nevertheless, the majority of the works produced on the recent global crisis of accumulation, including those by Stiglitz and Krugman, ultimately seek to stabilize and reproduce the principal aspects of the existing capitalist order, albeit with improved financial and prudential regulation and some redistribution (for macro-economic as well as political reasons).

Krugman, Stiglitz and Žižek all, in their different ways (I believe), tend to misread our present global situation. They also beg the question: what is neoliberalism and how do we define it? Moreover, how do we know when it has ended? Indeed, most economists treat neoliberalism as if it is simply an economic doctrine and set of policy formulas; Žižek seems to treat it as a form of ideology underpinned by relations of violence, and separates its ‘political’ and ‘economic’ dimensions, whereas the two are, in reality, combined.

By contrast, the contributors to this volume see neoliberalism as more complex: not only as a set of doctrines and ideologies but also, and simultaneously, as a set of social forces deeply connected to and

inscribed in the restructuring of global political and civil society – and, indeed, connected to the reconstitution of the self in ways that frame what is deemed politically and economically possible. Put differently, disciplinary neoliberalism fosters and consolidates a possessively individualist, marketized ‘common sense’ that militates against solidarity and social justice; however, it is a normative project, one that is contested yet still dominant (rather than hegemonic). Moreover, it is worth remembering that not only has disciplinary neoliberalism as a set of institutions and policy frameworks been advanced through the imposition of policy frameworks in the context of crises of accumulation but also, in the terminology used by the World Bank, it has been ‘locked in’ by the proliferation of new liberal constitutions or major constitutional revisions since the 1980s (involving perhaps eighty nations in all), as well as by the many liberalizing trade and investment agreements such as the World Trade Organization (WTO) and North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) and, not least, by a key feature of the past three decades: the adoption of constitutionally guaranteed arrangements for macroeconomic policies such as the creation of independent central banks and balanced budget laws. I call the sum of these arrangements the *new constitutionalism*. They are intended to shape economic reforms and policies in a neoliberal direction, and to make alternative development models to market civilization, such as communism or even forms of state capitalism, much more difficult to bring about. New constitutional frameworks and laws are very difficult – though not impossible – to change (Gill 1992, 1998a, 1998b).

Nevertheless, the prestige of the neoliberal globalizing elites and political leaders has been called significantly into question as a result of the financial meltdown and its negative economic and social repercussions. What seems to be missing from many of the prevailing policy debates – reflecting the narrowly materialist and possessive individualism that pervades neoliberal political consciousness – are a large number of the crucial issues that were marginalized from consideration during the financial meltdown, such as transformations in health, energy supplies, the challenges of climate change, and issues of livelihood (associated, for example, with the provisioning of freshwater and the apparently inexorable rise in global food prices). In sum, at issue is how basic conditions of existence are increasingly mediated by the world capitalist market system and under neoliberal governance arrangements.

This volume is alive to such concerns. It also takes seriously the possibilities for the emergence of alternative forms of global leadership. Nonetheless, at the time of writing it remains the case that, despite the fact that the crisis of accumulation has been deep and relatively

extensive, it has not provoked a corresponding crisis of legitimacy for neoliberal governance in the global North, where its impact has arguably been greatest. Nor, indeed, has it in much of the global South, although Latin America provides a number of important progressive exceptions to this generalization. Furthermore, evidence from the most recent conclave of the world's plutocrats and political and corporate leaders in Davos, at the 2011 annual meeting of the World Economic Forum, suggests that, although the leaders of the globalizing élites assume they have weathered the political storms caused by the economic and financial meltdown, they remain concerned about questions of 'global security', by which they mean the security of capital and their worldwide investments, particularly in light of the 2011 uprisings in Egypt and elsewhere in the Arab world. This indicates that the global situation may be in flux.

This book therefore interrogates these moments of crisis and leadership. It explores some of the national and global ideologies, practices and associated forms of power, authority and legitimacy and how they connect to different conceptions and forms of leadership, including that of experts (epistemic communities), politicians, plutocrats, supreme courts and other justices, and, not least, the organic intellectuals of both ruling elements and subaltern forces as they struggle to define concepts that can justify and direct the exercise of authority and the actual or potential direction of national and global society. Specifically at issue is how these forms of leadership may – or may not – perceive, understand or respond to a range of crises (economic, social and ecological) that pose deep threats to aspects of life and livelihood on the planet – that is, to the combined challenge of an emerging *global organic crisis* (Gill 1995a, 2003a, 2008, 2010).

Nonetheless, some might query whether there really is, actually or potentially, a 'global' organic crisis, since many parts of the world, such as India and China, have continued to grow and develop; indeed, Craig Murphy has noted that many parts of the global South have had a 'good crisis', insofar as many of the reforms that they implemented in response to the Asian financial and economic crisis of 1997–8 have made their financial structures and patterns of economic development more internally robust and better insulated from external financial shocks originating in New York, London or Tokyo (Murphy 2010). Murphy's point is well made. It is of course important to emphasize the geographical and social unevenness of both the experience and impacts of financial and economic crises across the global social and geopolitical hierarchy.

However, this is only part of the story. It is also important to reflect critically on the nature and quality of existing development patterns,

particularly those that serve to generalize the dominant model of market civilization – a development model that is wasteful, energy-intensive, consumerist, ecologically myopic and premised on catering mainly to the affluent. Moreover, the development of China and India is far from the happy story some seem to paint – a point that the Chinese leadership seems to have recently acknowledged by prioritizing redistribution and social welfare in its next five-year plan, not least to deal with growing social and ecological contradictions and widespread political unrest. For example, every day in China there are enormous numbers of localized protests concerning living conditions and corruption. Illustrating the displacement of livelihoods and the crisis of social reproduction that characterizes the present phase of primitive accumulation in China, the government estimates that 58 million ‘left-behind children’ (almost 20 per cent of all children in China and about a half of the children living in the countryside) now live with their grandparents or in foster centres, because their parents have left to earn income in the factories and cities (Hille 2011):

Mao sent millions of parents into labour camps and their children to the countryside; he forced families to abandon the stoves in their homes and to use communal kitchens and dorms. Even so, Mao failed, ultimately, to destroy the family as the basic cell of Chinese society. Today, what the dictator was unable to accomplish with force is being realized instead by the lure of money.

Meanwhile, in India, we see mass suicides of farmers as a debt crisis envelops their lives; elsewhere in the country perhaps as many as 800 million poor people have been hardly touched by the changes. Most live in the shadow of ‘shining India’. The global situation is therefore replete with deep contradictions. On the one hand, few would deny that material conditions are improving for many Chinese and Indians, and that this should continue to be the case. On the other hand, if the market civilization model of capitalist development not only continues in the wealthier countries but also becomes more generalized in India, China and other large developing countries such as Brazil (notwithstanding President Lula’s redistributive policies), and also assuming that the US rulers sustain their policies and military capabilities along similar lines to now in order to defend and extend that model, I hypothesize that the global organic crisis will intensify. Its effects will be felt in ways that will be uneven geographically, unequal politically and socially and materially hierarchical. Put differently, the organic crisis may also be globalizing across regions and societies at varying speeds, and it will probably be differentiated in its effects on life chances and basic conditions of existence, generating diverse political effects within and across jurisdictions and throughout the social and political spectrum. Politically, and perhaps paradoxically, at this moment the

global organic crisis has *not* been manifested as a crisis of legitimacy in the global North (although less so in many parts of the global South). However, the question is: will this situation persist – and, indeed, can the current neoliberal frameworks of global leadership retain legitimacy and credibility while developing a constructive and meaningful set of policies to address it? If not, what are the prospects for alternative concepts of global leadership and frameworks of rule?

Questions and issues addressed

This issue – which centres on the relations between rulers and ruled and on the purposes of political power – helps to frame many of the contributions in this book, since it points the way for a rethinking of some of the questions of crisis, leadership, democracy, justice and sustainability in the emerging world order.

In this context, the objective of this volume is twofold: to be both analytical and normative. These objectives – the ‘is’ and the ‘ought’ of politics – are interconnected. Indeed, Gramsci (Hoare and Nowell-Smith 1971: 144) once observed in ‘The modern prince’ that, in the field of political science, what is most ‘primordial’ and ‘real’ in political life is often ignored, notably the basic question of what constitutes the relations between leaders and led, and how this distinction is socially and politically constructed and reproduced – indeed, whether the purpose of leadership is either to maintain or, ultimately, to abolish this very distinction in order to create new forms of global social and political relations.

To give focus to this volume, contributors were asked to address a common set of issues, listed below. Each of these issues relates to one or other of two central and interrelated questions. (1) Leadership of what, for whom and with what purpose? (2) Crises of what, for whom and with what repercussions?

Contributors were asked, therefore, to focus on some of the following issues.

- (1) What do global crises tell us about the nature of political representation and the legitimacy and efficacy of national, regional and global institutions in situations of crisis?
- (2) What is the relation between consent and coercion, and between force and persuasion, in the theory and practice of global leadership?
- (3) How is local and global consent or acquiescence to neoliberal governance developed and sustained in situations of crisis? What is the role in this regard of the institutions of global governance (such as the G8 and G20), the media or leadership by experts?

- (4) How do modes of governance premised upon the primacy of the world market relate to local and global provisions for human rights, welfare, health, livelihood, human security and human development, in North and South?
- (5) What do current patterns of global development imply for the carrying capacity of the planet?
- (6) What is the relation between global crises and the processes of what Karl Marx called original accumulation and dispossession? How do these relate to basic issues of livelihood, health, sustainability and the integrity of the biosphere?
- (7) How are crises and patterns of global leadership mediated by ideology, religion, myth and patterns of identity? How, for example, does Orientalism mediate the relations between the leadership, politics and ethics of Islamic communities and those of the ‘West’?
- (8) Why, despite the depth and scale of contemporary crises, particularly those associated with finance and capital accumulation since 2007, is the prevailing response still, at the time of writing, defined by the dominant neoliberal narratives, institutions, actors and expert communities? Why has this deep crisis of global capitalism not provoked a deep crisis of legitimacy, a crisis in dominant forms of rule or a turning point in global leadership? How far can we expect this to continue to be the case?
- (9) What, therefore, are other forms of global leadership – reactionary or progressive – that can be imagined and anticipated as we look towards the foreseeable future?

Lineages and concepts

The considerations that motivate this book can be read as a new research agenda on the perennial and often imperial theme of leadership in world affairs and, specifically, how that leadership has addressed – and may address – global crises. Of course, in ancient civilizations, much of this related to the strategies of kings and rulers, in the form of guidance from philosophers and diplomatic advisers.²

² ‘During the end of the fourth century and the beginning of the fifth century BC in China, Confucius and Mencius wrote essays on the proper behaviour of leaders. Aristotle, in his *Politics*, describes the characteristics of the kings and kingship in ancient Greece (fourth century BC). In eleventh-century Iran, Unsuru’l-Ma’ali wrote *Qabus-Nameh* and Nezam Mulk Tussi wrote *Siyassat Nameh*, advising kings on effective governance.’ Julian Germann, ‘Global leadership’, unpublished aide-mémoire prepared for the Helsinki Symposium, May 2010.

A number of works began to shift the focus of these considerations away from the inter-dynastic power struggles of their times and focused, respectively, on the material and historical conditions of leadership, and on ways to rethink the relationship between leaders and led in and across different social formations. Ibn Khaldun of Tunis provided observations and guidance on the material conditions of the rise and fall of civilizations and questions of political rule in the Maghreb in the fourteenth century (Abd al-Rahman ibn and Issawi 1950; Pasha 1997). In Renaissance Italy, Niccolò Machiavelli drew on the exemplars of history and myth as a guide to virtuous and effective leadership, embodied in the form of the ideal *condottiere* (Machiavelli 1975 [1513]).³ *The Prince* was intended not only to help guide the most powerful dynastic houses of Italy in their statecraft but also to show the way forward to the possibilities for Italian unification – under conditions of imperial domination whereby the affairs of the peninsula were subordinated externally by the integral power of Spain and France. However, *The Prince* was a critical work, also intended to provide instruction on the ethics and practice of political leadership to the common people in the piazza. As Gramsci (Hoare and Nowell-Smith 1971: 126) put it, ‘In the conclusion, Machiavelli merges with the people, becomes the people,’ noting that the epilogue of *The Prince* is a political manifesto providing both criteria for virtuous forms of rule and an instruction manual, explaining to those ‘not in the know’ exactly how rulers actually rule. In turn, Gramsci provided his own meditation on ethical and moral leadership, and the role and organization of national and global political parties, which he saw as a necessary precursor to the winning of governmental power – the communist party was the ‘modern prince’. From this reading, then, political leadership involves the relations between leaders and led, and leaders provide not only political organization and judgement but also ethical and moral qualities that are concerned with the nature and future direction of society.

However, despite this lineage, the concept and basis of *global* leadership and its relationship to crises continues to be inadequately understood and poorly theorized in the social sciences. There are, of course, some very notable exceptions, such as the work of the late Franz Neumann (1942), E. H. Carr (1946) and Giovanni Arrighi (1982). Nonetheless, much of the modern literature has not advanced further than the ‘great man’ approach, despite the fact that the best of that

³ See the Glossary for an explanation of terms such as ‘condottiere’.