Introduction

The evidence is all around that the world has entered one of the most decisive phases of its history since the first recognisable humans (*Homo erectus*) moved around on two legs. Never before in this span of one and a half million years (with the contested exception of the danger of 'nuclear winter' during the Cold War) have we, *the collective of global human society*, been able to inflict as much decisive damage on each other and on the natural world on which we utterly depend; and never before have we, *individually and in small groups*, been as capable of transporting and visiting as much politically targeted destruction against those whose minds and actions we want to change. These realities alone would be enough to mark out our times as demanding a reconceptualisation of world security; but the threats to our safety are proliferating and growing in destructiveness. They include the multidimensional predicaments of globalisation, inflamed religious and cultural sensibilities, militant nationalism, growing disparities in life chances between the haves and the have-nots, the inexorable rise of the world's population (which will create future challenges that almost everybody today prefers to ignore), and on and on. The sheer *quantity* of issues threatening political turmoil, as Lenin might have said, has a *quality* all of its own. And yet this period of unprecedented historical change goes hand in hand with the persistence of traditionalist attitudes about world politics. The heads of the powers-that-be are stuck in the past, as we speed into an increasingly threatening future. Something must be done: sparks are already flying, and politically combustible material continues to be piled up. Running through this book is the idea that human society globally is living in a *New Twenty Years' Crisis*.[1] It began, symbolically, on 11 September 2001,

[1] The idea of a New Twenty Years' Crisis owes an obvious debt to E. H. Carr's seminal work, *The Twenty Years' Crisis 1919–1939. An Introduction to the Study of International Relations* (London: Macmillan, 1939; 2nd edn, 1946).

and is part of a more general crisis facing the world in the first half of the twenty-first century; I call this *The Great Reckoning*. If a series of key decisions about world security are not made in the first two decades of the century, and are not made sensibly, then by mid-century human society faces the prospect of a concatenation of global turmoil unlike anything in the past.

In the face of such a prospect, the challenge addressed in this book is to reconsider how we – *the global we* – conceive and practise security, and how we – *students of the subject* – theorise security studies.[2] This book seeks to contribute to these goals, recognising that each of us cannot individually do much to change things, but believing that collectively we can do anything.

The Iron Curtain that symbolised world politics during the Cold War not only imprisoned people in the Soviet empire to the east, it also imprisoned the rest of us to varying degrees, politically, strategically, culturally, and psychologically. That particular physical barrier was pulled down in the aftermath of the great events of 11/9 (1989) but its disappearance left plenty of other structures that divide and imprison. Indeed, some of them are much more powerful than the Iron Curtain: so powerful, in fact, that they do not need barbed wire, bricks, and rifles to exert their discipline. Poverty, class, gender, and religion come immediately to mind. Following the terror attacks on the United States on 9/11 (2001) and the conflicts in Afghanistan and Iraq, further twists have been added to the tangled knots of global politics, as different worlds have come into spectacular and not-so-spectacular collision. Trying to make sense of the more complex realities of security these days is one of the two main tasks of the theory of world security to be elaborated in this book; the other is to contribute to reconceptualising world security away from its nationalist and statist orthodoxies – which promote the idea of security *against* others – to an approach that conceives security as an instrumental value concerned to promote security *reciprocally*, as part of the invention of a more inclusive humanity. In other words, a critical theory of security seeks to be both realistic and emancipatory.

The *global we* desperately need a theory of security for our times. We have seen what was practised in the past and know it does not work for much of human society. The price for continuing global

[2] The word 'we' will be used frequently in this book. It will usually be obvious whether I am referring to the global (species) we, or the specific (academic) we who specialise in international politics/security studies. I will only add an adjective to 'we' when I think the referent is not clear.

business-as-usual is unacceptably high, when measured daily in the unnecessary ill-health and poverty of millions, premature deaths, and unspeakable oppression. The framework of the theory to be elaborated derives from a body of ideas I call *critical global theorising*. These ideas, in turn, mostly derive from key themes of the eighteenth-century Enlightenment. The inspirations and themes of the Enlightenment – the object of so much misbegotten criticism over recent decades – have never been needed so urgently as today; and world politics represents the Enlightenment's most significant unfinished business.

The approach to theorising developed through the book is pragmatic, holistic, and personal, following where three great thinkers have led: first, Hannah Arendt's pragmatic approach, which she described as *Perlenfischerei* or pearl-fishing (that is, looking for wisdom not through the study of the history of ideas, genealogies, or categories of thinkers, but through plundering ideas that have survived and seem rich in possibility for one's purposes);[3] second, Mary Midgley's rejection of the 'austerity' of reductive as opposed to holistic thinking (favouring instead 'Many Maps, Many Windows');[4] and finally Nadine Gordimer's recognition that insight comes from experience more than literature ('books are not made out of other books, but out of life', she once wrote) and because of this there will be occasional references below to personal experience.[5] These approaches inform the spirit of the book's theoretical framework, which is based on Philip Allott's typology of 'practical', 'transcendental', and 'pure' theory.[6] The aim is to explore, comprehensively, key themes relating to being, knowing, and doing in relation to world security. The outcome, as will become apparent, is a framework at the very opposite end of the theoretical spectrum from Kenneth Waltz's 'parsimonious' neorealism that hit the discipline of international relations in the late 1970s.[7]

I have tried to make this book accessible. Though some parts discuss complex issues of philosophy and theory, I trust that every reader will

[3] Elisabeth Young-Bruehl, *Hannah Arendt. For Love of the World* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1982), pp. 94–5. This is a superb intellectual biography.
[4] To be particularly recommended is Mary Midgley, *Wisdom, Information and Wonder. What Is Knowledge For?* (London: Routledge, 1989); see also *The Myths We Live By* (London: Routledge, 2003), pp. 26–8, 29–35.
[5] Nadine Gordimer, *Between Hope and History. Notes from our Century* (London: Bloomsbury, 1999), p. 41.
[6] Philip Allott, *The Health of Nations. Society and Law Beyond the State* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), pp. 70–96.
[7] This was the aim of the structural theory elaborated in Kenneth Waltz, *Theory of International Politics* (New York: Random House, 1979).

understand – if not actually agree with – every sentence. The security of human society is worth speaking about in plain language (accepting the need to use the odd technical term here and there). Like the writers of the Enlightenment, and such notable figures in international relations theory as Hedley Bull, I have no time for those who parade their claim to understand important things by using language that even knowledgeable people struggle to understand.

Before outlining the organisation of the book, the phrase *world security* needs explanation. While always recognising the importance of 'the international' (relations between states), the challenge we face in world politics in the decades to come – whether as students or citizens – must be thought of more holistically. In this sense, international politics is but one (though certainly one of the most significant) of the worlds of world politics. The phrase *world politics*, as opposed to *international politics*, was first popularised by Robert Keohane and Joseph Nye in the burgeoning era of interdependence in the early 1970s,[8] but it has extra purchase in today's global age. By using the term *world politics* I am not implying that the *international* is dead. Far from it. Borders are critical, and sometimes a matter of life and death. The frequent-flyer elites of London, New York, Paris, Tokyo, and other world cities can be heard talking about the 'borderless world', the growing 'irrelevance of space' and so on; but every moment of every day, somewhere in the world, people are desperately trying to ensure they live their life on *this* rather than *that* side of a particular boundary. We live in what James Rosenau has called a 'post-international world' only in the sense of needing to recognise that there is more to politics on a global scale than relations between those entities called states.[9]

The concept of *world security* is more encompassing than the notion of international security. It includes a more extensive range of referents, above and below the state level, and a wider range of possible threats and risks: *world security refers to the structures and processes within human society, locally and globally, that work towards the reduction of the threats and risks that determine individual and group lives. The greater the level of security enjoyed, the more individuals and groups (including human society as a whole) can have an existence beyond the instinctual animal struggle merely to survive. The idea of world security is synonymous with the freedom of individuals and*

[8] Robert O. Keohane and Joseph S. Nye (eds.), *Transnational Relations and World Politics* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1972).
[9] This is a major theme of James N. Rosenau, *Turbulence in World Politics* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1990).

groups compatible with the reasonable freedom of others, and universal moral equality compatible with justifiable pragmatic inequalities.

The definition just presented contains strong echoes of Hedley Bull's notion of 'world order'. In his modern classic, *The Anarchical Society*, Bull defined world order as 'those patterns or dispositions of human activity that sustain the elementary or primary goals of social life among mankind as a whole . . . Underlying the questions we raise about order among states there are deeper questions, of more enduring importance, about order in the great society of all mankind.'[10] He went on: 'Order among mankind as a whole is something wider than order among states; something more fundamental and primordial than it; and also, I should argue, something morally prior to it.' What he was getting at here is something close to the idea of world security in this book, but I want to distance myself from Bull in several crucial ways: his emphasis on *order* to sustain essential social life is too negative and implicitly statist (this argument could have been used to legitimise Stalinist Russia); his conception of the causal relationship between order and justice is too conservative ('order first' has been the persuasive cry of military dictators over the years, asking for additional time before implementing human rights – something they had no serious intention of implementing in the first place); his concern only with 'elementary or primary goals' is too unambitious in a world where more is available; and his normative commitment to 'international society' was one I find unconvincing, especially if he really believed in world society having moral primacy (at least as 'unconvincing' as Bull himself found all alternatives to his preferred states system).[11]

Theory of World Security is a long book. A short overview will help readers see where they are being taken:

> **Part I: Context** establishes the empirical and theoretical starting-points of the argument. Chapter 1 offers a sketch of the contemporary global situation, a world that does not work for most of its inhabitants. It introduces the idea that we are in a *New Twenty Years' Crisis*, in which 'morbid symptoms' have been proliferating, demanding urgent and radical decisions to be made if

[10] Hedley Bull, *The Anarchical Society. A Study of Order in World Politics* (London: Macmillan, 1977), p. 20.
[11] Bull, *Anarchical Society*, esp. pp. 20–2, 318–20. Also to be challenged is Bull's rejection of conclusions that can be presented as 'solutions' or 'practical advice' (on the grounds that they represent a 'corrupting element' in the study of world politics); this is a bizarre opinion, and will be discussed more fully in chapter 4.

the Great Reckoning challenging the whole of human society in the first half of the century is to be characterised by tolerable stresses and strains rather than catastrophic turmoil. Chapter 2 identifies the most productive site of ideas from which the theoretical framework of the book (to help us understand and react to the Great Reckoning) will be constructed. Within the tradition of thought I call *critical global theorising* two main areas have been plundered for ideas: *critical social theory* and *radical international theory*.

Part II: Theory describes and explains the elements making up the book's *critical theory of world security*. Chapter 3 defines and discusses three central concepts: *security, emancipation,* and *community*. Chapter 4 focuses explicitly on security, and explains in particular what it means to *deepen* and *broaden* the concept, and then *critique* and *reconstruct* ideas into a coherent theory of world security. Chapter 5 reframes the discussion of the previous two chapters in relation to basic philosophical questions that must be addressed by any theory of world security: *What is real? What can we know? How might we act?* Chapter 6, necessarily the longest in the book, is a systematic account of the themes that together make up the overall framework of the critical theory of world security being advanced. It rests on three pillars: a 'pure' theory (*human sociality*), a 'transcendental' theory (*critical global theorising*), and a 'practical' theory (*emancipatory realism*).

Part III: Dimensions moves from the relatively abstract theoretical section of the book to the more empirical part. Its two chapters show what a critical theory of security does when it engages with some of the major issues in the contemporary world. Chapter 7 is a *critique* of US power, contemporary political violence, human security, and the state of nature. The insecurities produced by global business-as-usual are exposed, and the case for radical change underlined. Chapter 8 moves beyond critique to look at the political values of *emancipatory realism*, whose realisation would bring about world security. The chapter examines major issues involved in humanising power, promoting social justice, and embedding human rights. Both chapters raise questions for critical theory about the relationship between reality and representation. Chapter 7 discusses the contested nature of reality, and chapter 8 the contested representation of reality.

Part IV: Futures pulls together the arguments about the terrible consequences for world security if human society does not attend urgently and radically to the concatenation of threats that are converging on the present era. Chapter 9 describes the contours of the New Twenty Years' Crisis, pointing to six priority areas where decisions must be taken in order to reorient world security, and warning of the consequences of failure. This *decisional crisis* is embedded in simultaneous *epochal* and *structural crises*; together they make up *the Great Reckoning* confronting human society globally in the first half of the twenty-first century. Facing the challenge of a *long hot century* ahead, chapter 10 discusses some of the modalities of cosmopolitan politics, including *non-dualism* in means/ends, the negotiation of tolerant *norms* between people (separated from their metaphysical *beliefs*), and the pursuit of values that will invent and embed a more inclusive humanity, free from regressive and divisive ideas of the past such as 'the human condition' and 'evil'. Only if human society, collectively, learns and practises cosmopolitan norms, animated by the goal of inventing an egalitarian humanity, can we have rational hope of coping in civilised ways with the geopolitical, environmental, and ideological challenges of the Great Reckoning.

Late in her life Hannah Arendt, the engine herself of so many ideas, told a friend that 'we all have only one real thought in our lives, and everything we then do are [*sic*] elaborations or variations of one theme'.[12] I was struck by this when I first read it, and not a little perturbed, for one thought a lifetime does not fit an academic's self-image. If Arendt was right, what has mine been? The answer crystallised almost instantly, which makes me think she was correct. The 'one real thought' is the challenge to human societies of creating the material and social conditions of life whereby people can live in reasonable equality, and so have the possibility of conducting their intimate and collective lives in dignity, freedom, and hope. These are not quite the words my grandfather would have used to express the same thought, but they do represent the vision on which he acted for many years. His life was shaped by growing up in absolute poverty, including forced migration after his father had been sacked and blacklisted in the Yorkshire coalfields for joining the newly formed Labour Party. He, too, then had little choice but to become

[12] Quoted by Young-Bruehl, *Arendt*, p. 327.

a coal miner, before joining the Royal Navy when the Great War broke out. After seeing some of the world, he returned, disappointed, not to 'a home fit for heroes' but to a country lurching towards the General Strike and the Great Depression. These were things I knew long before I discovered international relations theory, as I grew up in a coal-mining village in West Yorkshire in the immediate aftermath of yet another World War. The desirability of a universal human community, committed to egalitarian principles, is the one real thought running through this *Theory of World Security*.

Part I
Context

1 Present imperfect: future tense

> We are as we are because we got that way.
>
> Kenneth Boulding[1]

Si monumentum requiris, circumspice was originally the epitaph for the architect of a great cathedral. After the Second World War the phrase was revived by the historian Alan Bullock as the epitaph for the architect of a world calamity. Bullock was contrasting the tyrannical ambitions of Adolf Hitler with the utter devastation of the fatherland in 1945: 'If you seek a monument, look around.'[2] The same epitaph might be chiselled, though with a sense of paradox rather than irony, on a monument to the powerful ideas (and ideas full of power) that made us (global human society) what we are today.

Together, and in order of appearance historically, patriarchy, proselytising religions, capitalism, sovereign statism/nationalism, race, and consumerist democracy conspired to construct a particular sociology of global human society; a world resulted that does not work for the majority, and in time will not work even for the privileged minority. Other powerful ideas have also played a part in this development, especially scientific and technological development,[3] and, in the primordial search for security between political units, the theory of realism. Together, these world-constructing ideas have created an imperfect present and a future

[1] Quoted by Anatol Rapoport in a Rapoport–Boulding double act at the University of London, 1989. It is not standard practice to give references to epigraphs, but I will do so because, as in this case, I do not think the source can be checked against any written account, and in all other cases I hope readers will go where the epigraphs lead.
[2] These are the last words in Alan Bullock, *Hitler. A Study in Tyranny* (London: Odhams Press, 1960), p. 738; the epitaph was originally an inscription in St Paul's Cathedral, London, and it is attributed to the son of the architect Christopher Wren.
[3] See William McNeill, *The Pursuit of Power* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982), and Geoffrey Blainey, *A Very Short History of the World* (London: Allen Lane, 2004).