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PETER J. KATZENSTEIN, *ENTANGLEMENTS IN WORLD POLITICS: THE POWER OF UNCERTAINTY* (CAMBRIDGE: CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS, 2026).

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International relations has learned to speak fluently about surprise. It has had less success explaining why yesterday's surprises so often appeared, the day before, as manageable risks. A model assigns probabilities, a doctrine sets out choices, a policy names its likely effects. Each makes a crowded political situation easier to grasp. Some of these simplifications work. Others acquire authority just as the conditions that made them plausible begin to disappear. Peter J. Katzenstein's *Entanglements in World Politics* asks what happens when scholars mistake the first achievement for a general property of the world. Its most searching implication goes further. To describe an uncertain future as a risk is also to intervene in that future, often with consequences for people who had little say in the description. Katzenstein starts with a distinction familiar from Frank Knight and John Maynard Keynes. Risk permits calculation over known or knowable possibilities; uncertainty confronts us with probabilities that resist calculation, or with possibilities we have yet to imagine. He calls the former a "small world" and the latter a "large world," borrowing Leonard Savage's terms while refusing to keep their domains apart. The small world does useful work. Actuarial estimates and short-range forecasts deserve their place. The difficulty begins when its limited success licenses a wider faith in predictability. For Katzenstein, risk and uncertainty remain entangled. Contexts vary, processes change, and language sometimes helps make the reality it

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purports to describe. Those three continua, set out most clearly in chapter 2, offer a way of asking how far any particular simplification can travel (pp. 64–65).

"Entanglement" consequently carries more weight than a synonym for interdependence. Katzenstein distinguishes relatively thin relations among identifiable actors from thicker relations in which agency itself becomes distributed (pp. 5–9). He joins this account of relations to a critique of what he calls Newtonian humanism: an inherited confidence in separable objects, stable causes, human mastery, and an observer who stands outside the processes under investigation. Post-Newtonian science and para-humanist thinking give him alternative vocabularies for processes in which observers, instruments, humans, and nonhuman beings participate. This is a large intellectual itinerary, occasionally a dizzying one. Its ambition should be judged accurately. Katzenstein says that he wants to create "a conceptual space for incessant conversations," not a predictive research program (p. 9). The test is whether those conversations enable explanations that an account built from self-contained actors and external shocks would miss. Finance gives the book its strongest answer. Before the crash of 2007–08, mortgage ratings and risk models helped turn heterogeneous loans into apparently comparable securities. The calculations rested on short series drawn from rising house prices and assumptions about correlations that could fail across a whole market (pp. 144–45). Katzenstein does more than point out a bad forecast. Ratings conferred authority, securitization coordinated conduct, and conventions helped sustain the very market whose safety the models claimed to measure. Here the analyst cannot place a model on one side and an untouched economy on the other. A simplified account becomes part of the causal history of its object. Even after the crash, the lesson is subtler than a ban on models. Central bankers use public language to shape expectations, at times steering markets away from paralyzing uncertainty toward more settled patterns of action (pp. 161–67). That capacity makes calculation politically necessary and potentially dangerous.

The missiles of October 1962 put pressure on a different simplification. Katzenstein treats Thomas Schelling with more care than a quick attack on rational deterrence would allow. Schelling's "threat that leaves something to chance" gives uncertainty a strategic role; his account depends in part on imagination, not just formal logic (pp. 181–82). Subsequent readings can turn that opening into an apparently calculable risk of escalation. The historical record resists such tidiness. Fear shaped the judgments of Kennedy and McNamara. Organizational routines and technical devices carried consequences that neither leader could fully direct. Soviet officers near Cuba faced danger whose significance the American side did not control. Katzenstein draws on studies of these relations to ask whether a president who sought to command events could, in fact, do so. Different descriptions of the crisis in Washington, Moscow, and Havana also made different interests and responsibilities visible (pp. 188–204). The point is not that deliberate choice vanished. Kennedy's willingness to gain time mattered precisely because he understood the limits of his command.

Climate politics extends the argument from a crisis lasting days to transformations measured across generations. Geoengineering can isolate particular mechanisms and permit useful experiments. Scale changes the question. Altering a planetary system may create effects that no local trial or cost-benefit estimate could settle in advance (pp. 229–32).

Katzenstein's discussion of the Anthropocene places human action inside ecological processes that action itself has changed; his term "intravention" captures this refusal of an external vantage point (p. 222). This case is less a demonstration of one mechanism called entanglement than a change in what counts as the relevant object of inquiry. Finance concerns reflexive conventions, nuclear politics distributed technical and political action, and climate a coupled biosphere with long temporal horizons. The same word travels across them. The gain is a discipline of looking for relationships an artificially bounded object would hide. The cost is that the concept cannot, by itself, tell us which relationships will prove decisive.

None of these insights requires claiming that earlier scholarship overlooked relationships altogether. Katzenstein draws openly on historical sociology, constructivist work on language, studies of complex systems, and science and technology studies. Their presence raises a harder question than terminological novelty: what does entanglement allow him to do with them? It brings their separate cautions against premature closure into an account of how closure is nevertheless achieved, used, and sometimes undone. A rating, a deterrent posture, and a climate model each select certain relations as stable enough to act upon. Their selections can change the relations. The book is most original when it treats that movement as an object of inquiry, not when it borrows an image of connectedness from physics. This reading also explains why a demand for a single entanglement variable would miss the purpose of the project.

That cost points toward the book's central unfinished question. Its three continua help an investigator notice heterogeneous settings, changing processes, and productive language. They offer no threshold at which a calculation becomes reliable enough to organize policy. Katzenstein knows that the line between risk and uncertainty may become clear only after an event has passed (p. 19). Yet the analyst and the policymaker must decide before then. When central-bank language steadies a market, has it established a more tractable world, or secured temporary agreement on a fragile story? The mortgage market did both for a time. In another domain, a locally promising climate intervention might reduce one exposure while producing others at a scale beyond the trial. More humility is warranted, but humility alone cannot identify which simplification is defensible, how long to trust it, and what signs should prompt revision.

The framework has its clearest purchase where interventions alter the conditions they presume: reflexive markets, escalating crises, and technological projects that cross ecological scales. It has less to add when a bounded practice genuinely preserves stable relations and a limited forecast suffices. Katzenstein accepts such pockets of order. The difficulty is recognizing their boundaries in time for a consequential decision.

This is also a question about power. Katzenstein does not ignore it. His distinction between control power and protean power tracks the improvisations through which actors respond to openings they could not foresee; the effects of those actions may alter the conditions of control (pp. 274–86). His shorter cases consider anti-imperial movements, financial actors, rights campaigns, and migrants. He observes that weak actors can find room for action within uncertainty without implying that improvisation dissolves domination (pp. 287–92). The remaining issue concerns authority over the initial simplification. A bank, a state, and a displaced person can inhabit the same set of relations under very different conditions. Institutions with the power to certify a risk, promulgate a security doctrine, or authorize a technological trial may also determine whose uncertainty counts as an acceptable remainder. A useful theory of entanglement must keep that unequal distribution visible even when every actor is, in some sense, implicated in the same process. Katzenstein has a serious answer to the demand for action. His conclusion favors experimentation over a single decisive intervention, robust policies across several possible futures, attention to stakeholders' tacit knowledge, and readiness to revise a provisional judgment (pp. 339, 343–49). These commitments make more sense than demanding a formula for the incalculable. They also shift the question. If a small world is a situated achievement rather than a natural container, explanation should trace who built it, how its apparent stability was maintained, which observations could unsettle it, and where its uncounted consequences went. Such an inquiry can discriminate among entanglements without claiming to predict every outcome. It can also distinguish a prudent approximation from an institutionally powerful fiction before catastrophe supplies the answer, though never with certainty.

Quantum analogies, historical interpretation, market conventions, and planetary ecology do not all establish the same kind of claim. The book's reach occasionally makes its distinctions work harder than they can bear. Katzenstein's insistence on the coexistence of risk and uncertainty nevertheless changes the terms of an old disciplinary quarrel. A causal account draws boundaries in an open world; people act on those boundaries, sometimes making them briefly real. *Entanglements in World Politics* gives scholars a reason to inspect the construction of calculable spaces as closely as they inspect the events occurring inside them. Its next step lies in the politics of their edges: who may declare the future governable, who can contest that declaration, and who must live with the uncertainty that escapes it.

Conflict of Interests
The author declares no ethical issues or conflicts of interest in this research.
Ethical Standards
The author affirms this research did not involve human subjects.