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For all the attention globalization has received in recent years, little consensus has emerged concerning how best to understand it. For some, it is the happy product of free and rational choices; for others, it is the unfortunate outcome of impersonal forces beyond our control. It is in turn celebrated for the opportunities it affords and criticized for the inequalities in wealth and power it generates.

David Singh Grewal's remarkable and ambitious book draws on several centuries of political and social thought to show how globalization is best understood in terms of a power inherent in social relations, which he calls network power. Using this framework, he demonstrates how our standards of social coordination both gain in value the more they are used and undermine the viability of alternative forms of cooperation. A wide range of examples are discussed, from the spread of English and the gold standard to the success of Microsoft and the operation of the World Trade Organization, to illustrate how global standards arise and falter. The idea of network power supplies a coherent set of terms and concepts_applicable to individuals, businesses, and countries alike_through which we can describe the processes of globalization as both free and forced. The result is a sophisticated and novel account of how globalization, and politics, work.

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