

Westminster IR Forum Spring-Summer 2010

Thursday Series: Security and the Subject

Thursdays 6pm, Westminster Forum, 5th Floor, 32-38 Wells Street,
London W1T 3UW (nearest tube Oxford Circus)

Wine and nibbles provided.

January 28th

Alex Pritchard (University of Bristol)

Rethinking the State and Anarchy: The Contributions of Classical Anarchism

Abstract: In this paper I intervene in an ongoing debate between Colin Wight and Alex Wendt regarding the agency of the state. My intervention is derived from a reading of the work of the nineteenth-century anarchist Pierre-Joseph Proudhon. The debate to date revolves around whether the state is an agent or a structure and seems to have become stuck as regards to the ontological status of groups. For Wendt the state is a person; for Wight the state is a structure that constrains and enables individuals. Wendt conflates the state with all other groups, and Wight, in an effort to reclaim the individual from Wendt's organicism, posits that it is only individuals and structures that are ontologically significant when discussing state agency – groups are unimportant. Proudhon's solution formed the basis of his anarchism. He argued that states, like all other social groups, are emergent from and irreducible to the historically and culturally distinct groupings of individuals of which they are comprised. Indeed, society is comprised of individuals who are simultaneously members of plural groups, and their interrelations (and those between relatively autonomous groups) are mediated by complex institutions and structures. The normative consequences for a theory of anarchy and world politics are clear: if states are but one, relatively small if disproportionately powerful group among many, we need a quite separate political theory to assert that the state is anything more than just a group. Inter-state anarchy is a form of inter-group relations replicated at all social levels and all inter-group relations take place in anarchy. I will show that anarchism is a source of ethical and political insight here.

February 11th

Ronnie Lipschutz (University of California)

The Biopolitics of Property and Human Rights

Abstract: In this paper, I draw sociological, material and political comparisons between the emergence and consolidation of capitalism in 17th century England, and the globalization of neoliberal capitalism during the late 20th and early 21st century. My arguments are organized around the relationship between material things, juridical definitions of relationships among people and things, the individual and collective subjectivities that result and shape those relationships. In drawing these comparisons, and highlighting some of their common sociological features, I draw attention to the problems we encounter in distinguishing “public” from “private,” on the one hand, and states, markets and civil society, on the other. I also say something about the rise of “new social movements,” especially religious ones, and their role in global politics.

March 4th

Phillip Cunliffe (University of Kent)

The Legions of Peace: UN Peacekeeping Contribution in International Order

Abstract: The study of UN peacebuilding efforts in post-conflict countries has grown dramatically in recent years. However the politics of contributing peacekeeping forces to these UN operations is taken for granted. Where do peacekeepers come from, and what is the politics involved in countries contributing armed forces to the UN? These are some of the questions that this paper sets out to answer. As the global deployment of UN peacekeepers is now second only to that of US military personnel, understanding the dynamics of peacekeeping contribution has become a necessity. This paper sets out to understand UN peacekeeping contribution in the aggregate, and to understand the place of such contributions in the current international order. This paper offers a critique of existing theories of peacekeeping contribution. The implications of these massive new deployments of military personnel are examined.

March 11th

Jonathan Gilmore (Kingston University)

Could it be time for a Practical Cosmopolitanism?

Abstract: The military interventions in Afghanistan and Iraq have posed a range of difficult challenges to Cosmopolitan approaches in international relations. These conflicts have illustrated the ways in which Cosmopolitan ethical discourse has helped to support Neo-Conservative political agendas and a wider

trend of armed intervention by Western states. Emancipation, the promotion of democracy and the protection of human rights have been repeatedly invoked as a justification for high-impact military interventions which have often been seen to directly counteract the ends they claim to serve. The instrumental use of Cosmopolitan discourse in practice has perhaps not reflected what Cosmopolitan scholars may have envisaged in theory. Despite these problems, an ethos of Cosmopolitanism does still have much to offer as a way of understanding, and informing action in an increasingly globalised world, representing an evolution of traditional liberal internationalism. This paper contends that what is required, in light of the Afghanistan and Iraq interventions and the shortcomings of other recent state-building programmes, is not necessarily a rejection of Cosmopolitanism, but a radical rethinking of the ways in which policies guided by these ethical positions are played out in practice. The paper calls for a focus on a more cautious, practical cosmopolitanism based on a more coherent analysis of the actual techniques used in pursuing ostensibly cosmopolitan or human security related projects.

March 18th

Domenico Tosini (University of Trento)

Political Opportunities and the Crisis of Sunni Insurgency in the Iraqi Transition to Democracy

The presentation provide an overview on my research project, whose main objective is to analyze the political process in Iraq since the 2003 Anglo-American occupation, by focusing on the main obstacles affecting the Iraqi transition to democracy, with special reference to the political, ethnic and religious cleavages which triggered off, and which has been reinforced by, the Sunni insurgency since 2003 up to its 2007 crisis, as a prelude to the current process of reconciliation and the return to politics and democratic institutions by the Sunni minority. First, I shall briefly examine the political opportunities and ideological frames underlying the emergence and strengthening of the Sunni insurgency as the major threat to the creation of a pacified and democratic Iraq. Secondly, I will schematically focus on the development of such an insurgency, particularly between 2004 and 2007, with special attention to the strategy of Al-Qaeda in Iraq aimed at provoking a civil war between the Shiites and Sunnis through a systematic campaign of terrorist attacks (including suicide missions) against Shiite civilians and the new Iraqi security forces. Finally, I will take into account the crisis of the insurgency since the 2007, by focusing on the crucial role played by the anti-Al-Qaeda militias, known as Al-Sahawa or Awakening Movement, which has been organized within the Sunni community in previous Al-Qaeda's strongholds.

April 15th

Mustapha Pasha (University of Aberdeen)

Disciplining Foucault in IR

Abstract: “Are there forms of dissent,” Nandy solicits, “that are resistant to normalization?” Some authors paint a desolate picture concerning Foucauldian appropriations within IR. Not only has Foucault been “colonized” (Shani), his corpus is deeply imbricated in “post-liberal” imaginings in IR (Chandler). A painstaking sociology of knowledge and/or political economy analysis would be required to offer the lineaments of an effective answer to Nandy’s provocation, one that goes to the heart of the production (and consumption) of critical knowledge and to recurrent fetters on its emancipatory aims. It would also necessitate a political analysis of our times, but especially of the role of intellectuals functioning under conditions of hyper-commodification, global connectivity, and the demise of meta-narratives. The aim here is considerably more modest and narrow—to suggest an alternate register of an encounter between Foucault and IR principally by challenging the object of critique in extant admonitions of Foucault’s trespassing into IR. These admonitions, I suggest, warp the tenor of Foucauldian provocations either by imposing a priori ontological and methodological discipline on a largely fluid zone of engagement (Dillon and Neal 2008) or by enforcing rigid codes of conduct drawn from political correctness on a nomadic and highly mobile thinker. Unwittingly, attempts to salvage or malign Foucault’s supposedly awkward presence in IR end up advancing the normalizing compulsions of a discipline that essentially remains an appendage to sovereign power, despite tall claims of the arrival of a post-sovereign world.

April 29th

Clive Gabay (Open University)

Where *is* Global Civil Society?

Abstract: For a number of years scholars have sought to both describe and justify global political activism by asserting an ontology of globalisation which dissolves borders and constraints, and dissipates social affinities and homogeneities. Expressions of activism and campaigning which have involved trans-border solidarities have been taken to be ‘global’ in nature. Civil society has therefore, along with political institutions and competitive markets, been globalised. Where though, might we find actually existing examples of a ‘global’ civil society? Indeed, what impact does it have on the way we conduct ourselves politically to imagine and invoke the global as a new, homogenous site or field of political action? Are there ways of analytically retaining what appears to emerge from a global field of relations without in turn reifying that field? This seminar will begin by addressing these questions before turning the issues that arise from them onto the empirical study of global civil society. Presenting an analysis of a very large network of what might be called global civil society (called the Global Call to Action against Poverty (GCAP)) the seminar will investigate the manner in which those informed by a global imaginary seek to construct and legitimate themselves through networks of locally embedded subjects (nonetheless imagined to be free-floating), in the case of this research project in India and

Malawi. At the same time, these locally embedded actors tend to challenge the degree to which such global civil society hubs and networks can be claimed to be present in their day-to-day activities and imaginations. This is not to argue that global relations do not play a part in the construction of these daily activities, but that global civil society per se is either largely absent, or largely irrelevant, for these locally embedded actors.

May 6th

Michele Ledda (Leeds)

Resilience and the Modern Subject: The Relevance of Hannah Arendt's *The Human Condition*

May 13th

Kirsten Sellars (University of Aberdeen)

The Problems of Defining Aggression in International Law