



Setting up a New Journal

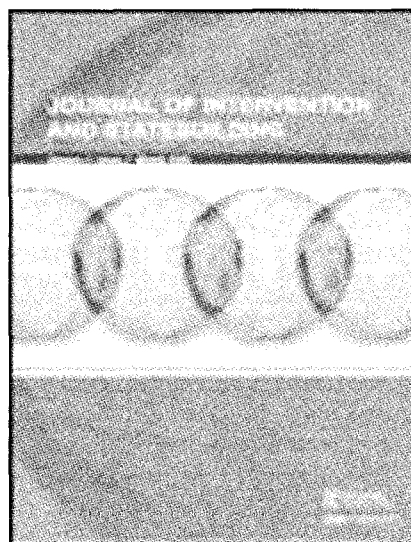
David Chandler

The idea of starting-up a new journal was conceived entirely by chance. I was attending one of the publishers' receptions at the conference of the ECPR Standing Group on International Relations, at The Hague, back in September 2004, and was drawn into discussion with a circle of publishers and ended up spending the evening with them over drinks and dinner. I had a number of book projects on the go and wasn't really thinking about journals.

However, over dinner the subject of journals came up and we discussed where the market might or might not be going and in what issue areas there might be opportunities. I suggested that one area where there was a gap was a journal specifically devoted to an issue close to my heart; that of external interventions with the goal of state-building, conceived in broader political or multi-disciplinary terms rather than with a narrow military or security focus and waxed lyrically (after a few glasses of wine) about the alleged importance of 'failed states' and 'state capacity-building' in policy discussions on development, human rights and security. In the course of the discussion I realised that I was more than willing to try and establish such a journal and probably knew other colleagues who would also be interested. While most of the book publishing people at the dinner were sceptical, one of the commissioning journal publishers was encouraging and could see that I was more than enthusiastic about the idea. We agreed that if, in the cold light of day, I still wanted to go ahead I should contact her for a journal proposal form.

On my return from the conference I sounded out a few colleagues working in the field in Europe and the States (it is essential to have US involvement as that is the largest market). I explained to them how I perceived a need for a specialist journal tightly focused on the analysis of the impact of intervention and state-building, concentrating centrally on the interplay between international

and domestic constituencies and assessing the impact of these policies on both the target states/societies and the international institutions involved. I also emphasised that in my view this would need to bring together experts from across the social science disciplines, in particular specialists and practitioners in international relations, international law, social policy and development policy, with an editorship and international editorial board drawn from the UK, Europe and the US. I stressed that I envisaged the journal to be academically independent, therefore providing a different, more theoretical, and possibly more critical and in-depth analysis, than can be found in institutional, NGO, think-tank and journalist reports - the sources which have so far tended to monopolise perceived wisdom in this area. I also emphasised that the theme of intervention and state-building was set to be a major problematic for the future and this journal had the potential to be a very exciting project providing a range of high level research, bridging the gap between academic theory and policy practice.



I received positive responses and, emboldened, got back in touch with the publishers. The email attaching the journal proposal form came with a sensible cautionary note that I should be aware that it is a tough market for launch journals, especially as at present few libraries can take on a

new journal without cancelling an older one. For this reason, I was advised to pay particular attention to the rationale for the journal as it was crucial to establish a clear need and strong evidence that existing journals were not serving research publication needs already.

At the end of October I returned the proposal form. It was an in-depth fifteen page document outlining: the aims and scope of the journal; the disciplines and sub-disciplines involved; the international editorial structure; the rationale, including the importance of the issue itself and the reasons for the journal's distinctiveness; the audience for the journal; details of how high quality contributions would be attained; provision of a selection of papers published in other journals over the past twelve months that might have potentially been submitted to the journal; details of the proposed editors, co-editors, editorial board and international advisory board; structure and lay-out of the journal; mock contents of the first two issues; potential subscribers; number of publications planned per year etc.

Lessons learned: 1) Few people start with the intention of establishing a journal, those that do tend to be passionate about an issue which they feel is poorly catered for by existing journals; 2) If this is you, share your ideas with the publishers. Often, the easiest way to do this is at academic conferences, where publishers are gathered in one place and will be more than willing to book an appointment to discuss your publishing project; 3) A lot more work goes into a journal proposal than a book proposal, particularly important is the support of other colleagues in the field, especially in the US; 4) You may have a good idea for a journal and a good editorial team, but the publishing world revolves around profits, publishers need to be convinced that your project can meet the bottom line:

institutional subscriptions; 5) Not all publishers calculate the bottom line in the same way, especially with new technological developments in journal production and institutional purchasing, don't necessarily be put off by an initial rejection.

The work of putting the proposal together was done; the next stages of the process were dictated by publisher's decision-making procedures. Stage one, early November, the commissioning editor was very happy with the proposal and took it to the board for an initial decision on whether the idea should be progressed. Stage two, a couple of weeks later the board met and, with a few minor amendments to the proposal, decided to undertake a market review. Stage three, the publishers sent out review questionnaires to people in the field across a wide geographic and disciplinary spread. There was a good rate of returns and the commissioning editor sent me a compilation document with 23 highly detailed anonymous commentaries. I read through the document on the flight out to the ISA convention in Hawaii at the start of March 2005.

The returns were good; out of 23, nearly all were very positive, in fact so positive I was a little taken aback. Some comments included extensive suggestions of potential subscribers and contributors. Only two were negative, one from a person who felt (understandably) that there were already too many journals in the field, the other a fierce rejection stating 'I cannot see the role of such a journal... I cannot imagine anybody wanting to subscribe, and I cannot imagine who would contribute'. As it was anonymous I was not supposed to know who the identity of the acerbic critic... nevertheless, I intend to remind him of his comments if the journal does become successfully established in the field.

Feeling confident, I met up with the commissioning editor, at the conference, to discuss the marketing feedback over a couple of drinks. Despite the overwhelmingly positive nature of the marketing feedback she

doubted whether the proposal would be taken up by her board. The market for start-up journals was a tight one and it was unlikely that without the backing of an academic association, and therefore the guarantee of institutional subscriptions, that the board would want to take a risk with it. She was torn and had put a lot of work into the proposal and offered to pursue the issue further with the board if I wished, but wanted to let me know that she thought the prospects were limited.

However, our meeting was not all bad news. She was very positive about the proposal and suggested that I consider approaching a number of other publishers more open to start-up journals and therefore more willing to take a risk with a strong original proposal backed by a good international editorial team. Furthermore, she suggested that I should take the detailed marketing feedback information to help ease the process.

Later in the conference week I arranged to meet up with Richard Delahunty, the managing editor for politics and international relations at Taylor & Francis (T&F). He was very positive about the proposal and I was impressed with his approach; we arranged for me to send him the initial proposal and the marketing feedback. The proposal went out to reviewers in May and the queries were responded to. During this time T&F also received a number of other proposals for journals in this area and it took the board until October to decide that only one of these could be taken on and to come down in favour of my proposal. The contract was soon sorted out and I began the tasks of firming up the editorial board, contacting potential contributors for the first few issues, and, with the support of the marketing and production teams at T&F, sorting out the designs and marketing material and establishing the management and reviewing mechanisms.

Twelve months on from the rejection of my initial proposal and first discussion with T&F, in March 2006, at the ISA convention in San Diego, the official call for papers and subscription material was publicly

available and could also be found on the new journal's website at <http://www.tandf.co.uk/journals>. The first issue is due out in spring 2007 and we are planning a launch reception at the March 2007 ISA convention in Chicago.

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CALL FOR REVIEWS FOR JOURNAL OF INTERVENTION AND STATE-BUILDING

Books are available for review for the Journal of Intervention and State-Building, launching in Spring 2007:

<http://www.tandf.co.uk/journals/titles/17502977.asp>

In keeping with the rubric of the Journal, we have books on a variety of topics, including post-conflict reconstruction, humanitarian intervention, state-building, state failure, international law, peacekeeping, development, war, counter-insurgency, aid, European Union expansion, democratization, international public health policy and more besides.

If you are interested in writing a review for this journal, please contact the Reviews Editor Philip Cunliffe at philip.cunliffe@kcl.ac.uk, and I will send you a list of the books currently available.

The deadline for inclusion in the first issue of the journal is 28 July 2006, the deadline for the second 24 November 2006.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Best wishes

Philip Cunliffe
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