Security and Cooperation, International Institutions and Relations

Global Perspectives on Security, Cooperation, International Institutions, and International Relations

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Global Perspectives

Global security and global cooperation take many forms and appear differently from different vantage points on the globe. This is why genuinely *global* perspectives on security, cooperation, and institutions are needed. The same is true for the scholarly study of the subject, broadly associated with the field of international relations, which itself is in pursuit of a globalizing initiative. Our perspectives are invariably informed by our geographically situated vantage points; by our gendered, racial, linguistic, and class perspectives; and by the historical moments from which we first encounter and later observe the development of the world. It is for this reason that it is important to address normative concerns and examine critically and self-reflexively those different vantage points. We need to be empathetic in our appreciation of the views of others and make an explicit effort to understand them before we collectively attempt to transcend them and give meaning to the idea of generating global perspectives.

When it comes to security, both what needs to be secured and the threats from which it must be secured vary across time and place (Hagmann 2019). Security includes classic issues associated with the security of states, as derived from Weberian justifications for state formation: that is, the idea that the state is expected to provide security and order within a polity and protection for that entity from outside threats. At the same time, security also extends to the domains of human security, system or network security, and the security/survival of the planet itself (Der Derian 2020). The state can be a provider of security and/or the source of insecurity for different populations (Abraham 2016). At a conference of the Social Science Research Council's Global Security and Cooperation Committee in 2002, committee members from different parts of the world met at Cambridge University to discuss the state and its role in the provision of security. In an opening plenary session in which members of the committee from different continents described sources of insecurity and the role of the state from their different vantage points, the North American participants highlighted the threat of global terrorism, while those from Latin America stressed the challenges of urban violence. A participant from sub-Saharan Africa suggested that a lack of access to water was a major source of insecurity prompting violence between different groups, while a participant from East Asia suggested that the state itself was the greatest threat to the security of individual and group rights. One participant from the Middle East suggested that the greatest threat to global security came from the United States, a prescient anticipation of the US intervention in Iraq the following year. Sources of insecurity for differ-

ent populations thus can come from inter-state conflict like nuclear conflict (Tannenwald 2007), from the collapse of functioning state institutions (Lambach, Johais, and Bayer 2015), from the commitment of acts of terrorism (Cronin 2009), from lack of access to basic resources like water and clean air, from transnational crime (Andreas and Nadelmann 2007), from cyberthreats to existing global and regional networks (Deibert 2013), from unregulated application of artificial intelligence (Weber 2020), from debris from outer space (Deudney 2020), or from neglect of the ecological health of the planet.

International cooperation is also multidimensional and increasingly emerges at multiple levels. The subject of international cooperation is historically associated with the activities of formal intergovernmental organizations (FIGOs), and most of our rationalist, state-centered theories of international cooperation begin with an assessment of the motivations of states interested in cooperation to solve a variety of different collective action problems (Koremenos, Lipson, and Snidal 2001; Johnson 2014). Regimes theory expanded the domain beyond FIGOs to include rules, norms, and decision-making procedures involving a variety of different actors, but it remained state-centered at its core and evaluated the effectiveness of regimes largely in terms of their ability to influence state behavior (Haggard and Simmons 1987). The analysis of international institutions today extends far beyond the realm of FIGOs (Avant and Westerwinter 2016) and increasingly includes informal arrangements engaging not only state actors and intergovernmental organizations but also actors from business and civil society (Westerwinter, Abbott, and Biersteker, Forthcoming). These informal arrangements can take many institutional forms, ranging from public-private partnerships to multistakeholder initiatives, transgovernmental initiatives, and transnational policy networks or communities (Djelic and Sahlin-Andersson 2008; Stone 2008). Governance deficits at the intergovernmental or state levels can be overcome or addressed at the regional or the local (and increasingly the urban) levels, as we have seen in the case of global environmental regulation and the emergence of networks of municipal authorities taking the initiative on the reduction of carbon emissions. The very idea of multilateralism is undergoing a significant challenge, and recent cuts in the provision of financing for FIGOs has generated a crisis not only in their operations but also in our conceptual understanding of international organizations, such as conventional principal-agent models. While the idea of multilateral approaches to global challenges is not going away, our understandings of multilateralism need to be revised, as we consider

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the changing meaning of the concept and how it is being redefined.

We are living in a time of profound institutional change. Not only are the institutions of governance undergoing a transformation from state-centered international organizations to new, complex institutional forms, but this transformation is being accompanied by significant changes in our understandings of the role of international law (Krisch 2014). At the same time, the geopolitical foundations of the post–World War II order shaped by US hegemony are undergoing profound change. The emergence of China both as an economic and increasingly as a military and strategic power, combined with uncertainty about US policy directions during the past several years, has accelerated this transformation of the bases of world order, raising significant doubts about the continuity of US security guarantees and the consideration of regional arrangements to address fundamental security concerns (Hofmann 2012). The ideational basis of the liberal postwar order is also under challenge, as illiberal and crony capitalist forms of authoritarian governance have emerged to challenge democratic regimes based on the rule of law in states across the globe. The rapid acceleration of technological change has also produced new governance challenges. The capacity for innovation has often exceeded the internal capacities of states to regulate new issue domains, particularly given the fact that many states embarked on privatization campaigns and introduced significant reductions in the role of the state during the latter decades of the twentieth century. As a result, there are not only changes and transformations in the actors and subjects of analysis but also questions about the core concepts and units of our analysis (Roshchin 2013). Our subject has moved beyond the study of states and international systems to incorporate consideration of transnational actors, complex combinations of public and private actors, civilizations, gender, race, and conceptions of world orders (Biersteker 2014).

International relations as a scholarly subject or interdiscipline that attempts to understand and explain these developments has always been (and remains to this day) a contested domain, with successive generations of scholars extending the boundaries of the subject with conceptual, normative, and methodological innovations (Lebedeva 2004). While the contemporary subject has its origins in the late nineteenth century (Knutsen 2015), the subject that was taught in the immediate post–World War II period was largely focused on the security of states, the sources of war, and the military dimensions of power. The subject of international political economy emerged in the 1970s, with successive waves of scholarship expanding the domain of the international or global to include issues of community, gender, identity, and ecology. There have also been waves of methodological, epistemological, and ontological innovation as the dominance of postwar behavioralism gave way to postmodernism, postcolonial analysis, social constructivism, critical theory, and experimental research design. As a journal of the twenty-first century, *Global Perspectives* is open to those pushing the boundaries further, contesting the variety of different parochialisms that emerge in different national, disciplinary, methodological, and institutional settings, and challenging those who engage in efforts to "discipline" the field.

While it is important to remain empathetically open to the existence of multiple vantage points and sensitive to the possibility of the coexistence of multiple truths to describe international relations, it is also important to maintain a commitment to science, in the broadest sense of the term, with attention to value-informed and systematic analysis, open to refutation, change, and reconsideration. We are currently living in a moment in time in which populism, polarization, and deliberate disinformation increasingly challenge the use of scientific evidence. In order to make a constructive contribution to the worlds we inhabit, we need to reinforce our status as experts with reference to the scientific basis of our research and defend science and the scientific enterprise. Privileging science does not mean a return to rigid, narrow, or intolerant conceptions of science based on a mimicking of Newtonian ideals of science. Rather, it means pursuing a more pragmatic notion of science as systematic investigation, based not on an unrealizable ideal of total objectivity but on a deliberate attempt for objective independence drawing on self-reflection and an empathetic effort to comprehend multiple perspectives on a phenomenon (Jackson 2016). We need engagement with, and a return to the ideals of, science. For when science itself is under attack and challenge, the very basis of our scholarly purpose and practical engagement is also under attack. Science is the basis of the scholar's moral authority and the basis of the authority of our expertise. We need science in order to make a legitimate claim for access when we engage in normative practical interventions and participate in contemporary global governance.

From our privileged position in the global academy, we as scholars can apply our knowledge and expertise to address policy practice in places where we can make a critical and constructive difference. Social scientists thus have a social responsibility to engage in practice, whether that practice takes place in the classroom or in the corridors of power. Our research should be motivated by critical inquiry, challenging widely held views, conventional wisdoms, and traditional approaches, and by interrogating them with sophisticated conceptual and methodological analyses (Booth and Vale 2002). Criticism alone is not enough, however. An act of criticism requires more than the publication of a paper, book, report, or article. It is self-indulgent to suggest that the publication or articulation of criticism is sufficient and to leave to others the "lesser" tasks of taking some action in the wake of a brilliant critique. Postcritical theory requires active consideration of *how to act* on the insights of critical inquiry, for, as Marx argued, "philosophers have hitherto only interpreted the world in various ways; the point is to change it." It is normatively important to use critical inquiry for emancipatory purposes (Alker 2010; Crawford 2002).

There are a variety of different ways to engage in practice, and not everyone is equally well suited to engage in all forms. Most ways are found in the realm of the micro, the practices of everyday activity, and virtually all of us are engaged in the practice of pedagogy. Contrary to tropes about the distinction between the scholarly and the "real" worlds, pedagogy is not located outside of policy practice but rather is the practice most of us engage in: what we teach and how we teach it, the dissertations we advise, the feedback we give our students, the signals we articulate about what is cutting-edge and what is pedestrian in research, the people we hire (or don't hire), and the promotions we support (or prevent). These practices construct the academic departments we inhabit, and self-reflective research on the syllabi taught in different parts of the world illuminates the implications of this form of practice.

Practical engagement can also come from public communication in popularly accessible forms such as blogs, or from everyday forms of individual public protest such as signing petitions or participating in demonstrations. The articula-

tion of arguments that some characterize as idealistic, unrealistic, or unthinkable can be a way to promote the development of new or emergent "idealistic" norms (Hathaway and Shapiro 2017). Active participation in transnational policy networks or communities is another kind of practical engagement. Most of us conduct detailed research into what might be perceived as arcane subjects, but this gives us the authority of expertise about those topics and, as a result, an opportunity to engage actively in different transnational policy networks, particularly in emergent and relatively ungoverned issue domains. Civically minded hacktivism of the sort exercised by the University of Toronto's Citizen Lab is another form of engagement in practice (Deibert 2013), and even everyday forms of behavior—including an empathetic effort to understand and appreciate various "others," being respectful of difference, being humble in self-assessment, and being generous in interpreting the works of others—are all consonant with the idea of a "caring critique."

We cannot, and should not, be full-time activists, and even if we do not engage directly in many practices, we can at least engage in creative thinking about how we (or others) might be able to contribute to change. Following William Connolly, "we need to fold creative thinking and action into modes of resistance and pursuit of alternatives…" (Connolly 2017). For as Jonathan Austin (2018) has argued, time is running out, and the challenges we face today are too important for us to retreat into hibernation or silences within the comforts of our seemingly secure university environments.

Global Perspectives encourages submissions that take a global approach to and perspective on issues of security, cooperation, international institutions, and the field of international relations. Deliberate attempts to look at a common problem from multiple vantage points or from underrepresented or critical vantage points are particularly encouraged. Multidisciplinary approaches are encouraged, but not required, as are contributions that go beyond addressing debates in social science alone to think through and spell out some of the policy and practical implications of their analysis.

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