

Legacies of Empires

The Bayfront Hilton, San Diego, March 30, 2012

Workshop Report to the International Studies Association

Sandra Halperin, Stefanie Ortmann, and Ronen Palan, conveners

Basic Theme

'Empires and civilizations come and go. It has always been thus and will always be' so the saying goes. But do empires really go? Much has been written about the legacies of empires to their erstwhile colonies, or even on their lingering impact on Mother. But concepts such as the international system or the international society of state gloss over what might be better described as a mosaic of practices, institutions, social structures and other leftovers of empires and civilisations long gone. The British Empire left its imprint in an integrated London based finance centres that encompasses British dependencies such as the Cayman Islands, Bermuda and the old imperial outposts of Singapore and Hong Kong. Many old city states around world were revived or reproduced by the Spanish in the Americas, the Portuguese in India and East Africa, and by the British in other areas of the world are masquerading today as nation-states; the Sahel Imperium of the 12th century is still at the core of today's West Africa's political economy. But what about the Ottomans? The Moguls? The Soviets? Or indeed many other empire or civilization long gone? Have they really disappeared from the face of the earth? Or are they still with us shaping the contemporary world in ways that we fail to recognise. And how will the American Imperium shape the future world? We suspect that empires and civilizations have left their imprints on the contemporary world in ways that we often fail to appreciate.

Workshop notes

The workshop participants met from 9 AM to 5 PM on Saturday 30th of March, 2012 and the Hilton Bayfront Hotel, San Diego, to present papers on the theme of legacies of empires. Each participating was allocated 20 minutes for presentation and 20 minutes for discussion of their paper. An afternoon session was devoted for group discussion to try and tease out general themes about legacies as well as decide on future plans. A representative of Board of Editors of the *Review of International Studies*, Dr. George Lawson, attended the workshop

as observer. Dr. Lawson, express an interest on behalf of RIS to publish the workshop as a special issue of RIS. It was agreed that the post-workshop efforts will be devoted to bring the special issue into completion.

Themes Covered During the Workshop

Capitalist development, state forms, and world order. Sandra Halperin (*World cities, city-states, and horizontal solidarities: the re-surfacing of imperial systemic and institutional logics*) argues that two features of the nineteenth century imperial order are becoming more salient. What today is described as 'global city-regions' (Brenner 2004, see also 1998) and global cities (Sassen 1994, 2007), were constituent elements of past imperial systems; and represent a re-surfacing of those imperial systemic and institutional logics. Second, what is often characterised as a new trans-national capitalist class can also be seen as a reassertion of the horizontal solidarities of nineteenth century imperialism. Imperialism was an essentially collaborative project and forged horizontal solidarities among groups of 'national' elites in different parts of the world. Elites collaborated with Europeans in order to prevail in local struggles, to secure alternative sources of revenue, to maintain or increase their power and wealth. The trans-local sources of power and stability that these solidarities produced continue to transect the boundaries of states and to shape relations and developmental outcomes across, between and within them.

Another legacy of empire explored in this project is today's global financial centres (Ronen Palan, *The British Empire and the re-emergence of global finance*). As the British Empire disintegrated rapidly in the 1950s and 1960s, one of its key institutions, the City of London, was in danger of losing its position as the world's premiere financial centre as well. Palan tells the story of how City individuals and institutions seized upon a few remaining imperial possessions (islands in the British Channel and in the Caribbean) and small colonial outposts (such as Hong Kong and Singapore), and these re-emerged at the centre of an integrated global financial centre specialising in complex financial instruments.

Commentators often refer to US overseas military bases as an 'empire', yet they rarely specify what such imperial dynamics entail, nor do they differentiate among different forms of these allegedly imperial arrangements. Alexander Cooley (*Foreign Bases, Sovereignty and Nation-Building After Empire: The United States in Comparative Perspective*) examines the evolution of US and other post-imperial basing relationships and how they shape nation-building and democratization in the host countries.

International Relations makes certain assumptions about the sovereign territorial and isomorphic configuration of the nation-state and its national armed forces. Tarak Barkawi (*States, Armies and Empires: Armed Forces and Society in World Politics*) locates armed forces amid a world of flows and circulations based upon the political-military dimensions of imperialism and the co-constitution of core and periphery. For most scholarship, the world of flows and its hierarchies are conceived primarily in cultural and political-economic terms. Barkawi adds a political-military dimension, arguing that 'foreign forces'—those recruited from beyond the boundaries of the polity—have played a key role in the making of the modern world, shaping civil-military relations in the West and enabling intervention and expansion outside it. Here, the international relations of armed force are seen as generative of domestic and world orders, but not in the manner suggested by Eurocentric inquiry.

The impact of empire on international organisations and a 'global architecture of governance'. Although the United Nations system fairly rapidly expanded its interests in international development assistance and capacity to provide it, the attention of its overall leadership and Secretariat staff remains focused on international high politics (Craig N. Murphy, *Imperial Legacies in the United Nations Development Program*).

Multiculturalism is often seen as a legacy of empire. However, Herman Schwartz (*Multiculturalism as a legacy of empire*) intends to explain why ethnically heterogeneous populations exist and how the timing of land development and industrialization produce varying degrees of heterogeneity. He argues that the British and American Empires both largely developed through the exploitation of land cleared of its indigenous population, or within special (export processing) zones to which labor migrated. While the exploitation of newly emptied lands allowed capital to operate freely as pure disembodied capital, in what Kees van der Pijl (1984) sees as a homogenous Lockean space, it also created a need for labor to complement that capital. In a classic contradiction, a relatively homogeneous and pure capital pulled ethnically, religiously and racially disparate populations into these empty spaces. The modern politics of multiculturalism thus has a material base in the expansion of empire into newly homogenized space. Both empires thus leave behind heterogeneous populations with varying degrees of conflict and accommodation.

While much has been written about the legacies of empire in the former Soviet space, these are more complex and multi-layered than are generally appreciated. This is partly because of the way that legacies of empire and Soviet legacies intersect; and partly because of questions about the imperial nature of the Soviet state itself. Stefanie Ortmann (*Legacies of empire in the former Soviet space*)

argues that legacies of empire and the Soviet legacy are seen in the trajectories of state building and the international relations of the post-Soviet space. However, at the same time, both the specific nature of the Tsarist empire and the Soviet legacy raise important questions about what is to be understood by legacies of empire, in different ways with regard to Central Asia and with regard to Russia.

The legacies of empire in South Asia have also been much explored. The rich body of literature that comprises post-Colonial studies and the Subaltern Studies project has brought to light many aspects of the imperial enterprise in South Asia that have previously been lost to view or insufficiently understood and appreciated. But there are important areas of neglect. While post-Colonial theorists have rightly emphasized the cultural and psychic processes at work in empire, they have tended to ignore post-independence elites and the foundation of South Asian economies as legacies of empire. Transnational networks and international investment in South Asia before India and Pakistan won independence from Britain, created new business successes, strengthened powerful industrial and trading concerns and fostered new entrepreneurs and manufacturing opportunities. Many of these business interests positioned themselves as nationalists and were well placed to capitalise on opportunities in the new nation states of India and Pakistan after 1947. Yasmin Khan (*The business of war in South Asia: Legacies of the Second World War*) is concerned to trace how profits generated by these networks and investments underpinned the emergence of the leading magnates in the new states of India and Pakistan.

The construction and legacies of American Empire. Ronnie D. Lipschutz (*Legacy of Empire: World War Infinity and the Global State*) argues that the global intensification of surveillance and discipline following 2001 is a logical apotheosis of the gradual militarization of American and global life through the bureaucratization associated with globalization and the pacification of many, if not all, of the individual militaries of states (the residue of state violence is largely internal). The declaration of war on internal terrorist threats has served to bring more and more people into the ambit of capitalism and its electronic networks, thereby permitting closer watch on them. At the same time, the centrifugal ideologization (Malesevic 2010) of the 'sovereign consumer' in a 'dangerous world' has served to limit the potential of collective solidarity and mobilization even as it socializes individuals into "world war infinity." The legacy of US empire is, following Foucault, an increasingly dense system of bureaucratized global governmentality and discipline and the diffusion of militaristic beliefs and practices, which normalize and valorize a 'steel web'.

The post-colonial effects of the Eurasian steppe tradition. Einar Wigen and Iver B. Neumann (*The Legacy of Eurasian nomadic empires*) explore the relative importance of the post-colonial effects of the Eurasian steppe tradition. Until the eighteenth century, there existed a political tradition on the Eurasian steppe which had its origins in the Turko-Mongolic empires, but whose form also came to owe much to Persian bureaucracy. Wigen and Neumann set out the constitutive elements in this tradition, with an emphasis on how it differs from the European tradition; trace the hybridization of the steppe tradition and the European tradition in the cases of Turkey and Russia, and comment on how the steppe tradition is even more in evidence in states like Afghanistan; and discuss the lingering importance of the steppe tradition today, with the main focus, again, on Turkey and Russia.

Discussion of possible shared theoretical framework

- Legacies of Empire project shares a concern with historically-based theoretical framework to locate how imperial structures shape the modern world; one of the key questions that emerged during the workshop was the tension between the persistence of imperial structures and the formal structuring of the world in nation-states
- The inventory of imperial legacies and their role in shaping contemporary regional and global structures and processes demonstrate remarkable and enduring survival of certain institutions and practices throughout time;
- The international sphere is far more heterogeneous than often assumed. For instance, certain practices which are branded as corrupt political systems in the area that was covered by the Moguls, including post-Soviet entities may in fact represent the survival of certain Moguls elements of political rule in that area
- Other practices such as the UN governance structure represent continuation of the Imperial civil services and their themes and organisation of development
- One conclusion was that the US empire's likely l/term effect may be largely cultural: empires tend to encourage multiculturalism.
- In terms of interest for IR: IR ontology is still focussed on system and units as a default position, this structures research agendas and leads to default accounts of prevalence of liberal capitalism – based on modernization theory. We call for greater heterodoxy, greater attention to historical trajectories. We believe that the current dominant ontology of IR is empirically wrong, quite apart from any normative critique. In this sense, we are also differentiating ourselves from debates about "American empire" and the "New Hierarchies" literature, which both perpetuate the a-historical and state-centric ontologies of traditional IR.

Workshop Schedule

In our brief prior to the workshop we asked some participants to write about the legacies of past empires and some to reflect about the possible legacies of future empires. Sessions one and two have dealt with the legacies of past empires, session three with the projected legacies of the American Empire.

9:00 Welcome and Introduction

9:10 Session One, Chair: Ronen Palan

Where Have All The Mongols Gone? Iver B. Neumann (Norwegian Institute of International Affairs) and Einar Wigen (University of Oslo)

Legacies of empire in the former Soviet space, Stefanie Ortmann (University of Sussex)

The business of war in South Asia: Legacies of the Second World War, Yasmin Khan (Royal Holloway, University of London)

10:30 Coffee Break

11:00 Session Two, Chair: Herman Schwartz

States, Armies and Empires: Armed Forces and Society in World Politics, Tarak Barkawi (Cambridge University and the New School for Social Research)

The legacies of the British Empire in Contemporary Footloose Finance, Ronen Palan (University of Birmingham)

Capitalist development, state forms, and world order, Sandra Halperin (Royal Holloway, University of London)

12:30 Lunch Break

14:00 Session Three, Chair: Iver Neumann

Legacies of American Empire: Hybrid Power, World War and World State in the 21st Century, Ronnie D. Lipschutz (University of California, Santa Cruz)

Foreign Bases, Sovereignty and Nation-Building after Empire: The United States in Comparative Perspective, Alexander Cooley (Barnard College)

Multiculturalism as a legacy of empire, Herman Schwartz (University of Virginia)

The impact of empire on international organisations and a 'global architecture of governance', Craig Murphy (University of Massachusetts, Boston)

4:00 Coffee Break

4:30 – 6:00 Session Four, Chair: Ronen Palan

Discussion: Theoretical framework

Discussion