

## **Report on Political Economy of Security Workshop**

ISA Conference, New Orleans, February 17, 2015

Prior to the workshop, participants were asked to reflect on a series of questions about the political economy of security (PEoS) from the perspective of their research agendas. Questions on the epistemology, theoretical puzzles, policy as well as the opportunities and challenges of PEoS research agenda in the context of changing economic, strategic and military environment guided participants in their preparation for plenary discussions. Panel discussion leaders were also asked to prepare a short talk about their research areas and key challenges they face in preparation for the workshop.

At the beginning of the workshop, conveners introduced PEoS as a growing field in international relations studies and offered a brief overview of the intellectual and practical purposes of the workshop. This was followed by a keynote address by Edward Mansfield on the evolution of the field over the past decades. These presentations acknowledged the fruitfulness of PEoS approach to security, especially in the context of significant economic crises and resulting austerity measures as well as the concomitant growth in the critical mass of researchers and research on the intersection between political economy and security. All this makes the efforts to carve out a self-conscious community and subfield on PEoS timely and important.

Next, participants formed small groups to conduct focused discussions of key issues, such as the scope of the field, key challenges, and future research directions. These discussions were very productive, although they revealed key disagreements, principally over the scope of the field as it relates to both “political economy” and “security,” what function should PEoS serve in the academic community (a bastion, a beacon or a bridge), how PEoS relates to the policy world, to what degree it is U.S.-, or West-centric and whether it should be, or whether PEoS field should be defined in empirical or conceptual terms, ground-up or top-down. These issues were addressed in much greater detail in the first plenary session on the theoretical underpinnings and boundaries of the field.

Some viewed institutional and bureaucratic control of defense policy as properly within the rubric of “political economy,” whereas others did not. Some viewed “new security” issues, such as environmental security, the spread of disease, etc., as within the bounds of “security,” whereas most others wished to retain a more traditional definition relating to the armed forces and matters of war and peace. These disagreements prompted a lively discussion. While there was no clear consensus on how to resolve these debates, for the purposes of the workshop the group reconciled on the idea that the added value of PEoS could rest in “unblack-boxing” those issues that either IPE or security studies leave detrimentally black-boxed; in other words, PEoS could focus on the currently omitted variables. The group also decided to adopt a “big tent” approach, allowing researchers to self-select into the PEoS field around emerging “centers of gravity” in their research agendas while defining terms such as political economy and security as they deem appropriate.

After lunch participants heard “reports” on several distinct research areas in the field of PEoS: 1) the economics of war finance; 2) economic austerity and military power; 3) the defense-industrial base; and 4) the political economy of peace. Each report addressed the state of

research in that subfield, key challenges facing researchers in that area, and understudied topics that would be fruitful avenues of future research. A common set of problems emerged, particularly that researchers in this area perceive themselves as falling through the cracks of the discipline as the International Political Economy field tends to marginalize security issues, and the Security Studies field tends to dismiss those who use a political economy framework.

The final plenary session addressed practical issues relating to the field and the research community. Participants discussed strategies to capitalize on this workshop to build an ongoing network of researchers on PEOs. Initiatives discussed included the development of an invisible college, institutionalized workshops and speaker series, graduate training initiatives, exploring the option of a dedicated book series or journal, and the creation of research funding opportunities. There was widespread disagreement over which of these initiatives should be prioritized, which led to the overall conclusion to continue this discussion with the workshop participants and our institutional partners over the coming months. Overall, this was an incredibly useful workshop and set of discussions.

### Post-Workshop Follow-up

We have three initiatives planned to build upon the momentum generated by the workshop:

- 1) Journal Symposium: The three conveners (Cappella Zielinski, Schilde, and Ripsman) intend to edit a symposium on the political economy of security, with short contributions from workshop participants. We intend to submit that for consideration to the *International Studies Review*.
- 2) ISA 2016 Panel: The conveners will propose a panel on the Political Economy of Security, based on our workshop discussions, for the 2016 ISA conference in Atlanta.
- 3) Follow-up workshop: We intend to hold a follow-up workshop during the 2015-16 academic year at Boston University to maintain the momentum of the workshop and make progress on the practical agenda discussed in the final plenary session of the workshop.

## Budget Report

The budget was used for room rental, lodging, transcription of the conference, internet connection, and lunches. We were approved for \$8,721.00 and we spent \$6,516.31. We came in under budget (by \$2,204.69) as some participants did not need to be reimbursed for lodging or did not make the workshop due to bad weather and we did not use the Audio-Visual request in our budget.

Room Rental	\$200.00
Coffee Breaks	\$442.00
Lodging	\$4227.11
Extension Cords	\$41.20
Lunches	\$806.00
Internet	\$200.00
Transcription	\$600.00
Total:	\$6,516.31