

Report on ASSA- funded workshop: Purposes Beyond Ourselves: Power and Principle in Foreign Policy

13- 14 July 2011 *University of Queensland*; Convenors: Dr Matt McDonald (Queensland), Professor Tim Dunne (Queensland), Professor Robyn Eckersley (ASSA Fellow) (Melbourne)

Tim Dunne, Matt McDonald and Robyn Eckersley

Contemporary debates about foreign policy are replete with questions about what constitutes appropriate ethical behavior for states, particularly developed, liberal democratic states. This applies both to public debate about state action and to academic engagement with diplomacy and international politics more broadly. This 'ethical turn' reflects the institutionalization of an international society in world politics, as well as the development of a range of pressing transnational problems (from climate change to refugees) that compel cooperation and seem to require states to be 'other-regarding' in their foreign policies. What this commitment might mean in practices of statecraft, however, remains far from settled.

With the theory-practice nexus as a backdrop, a workshop on 'Purposes Beyond Ourselves: Power and Principle in Foreign Policy' was held at the University of Queensland on July 13-14 2011. It focused on (liberal) internationalism as a foreign policy orientation characteristic of the 'good state' in world affairs. The workshop aimed at addressing the questions of: the composition of a 'good state', the desirability of internationalism as a foreign policy agenda and practice, the forms of action that a good state might engage in, and the dilemmas of internationalism (linked in particular to the vexed question of military intervention). While located principally in the discipline of political science and more specifically its sub-field of international relations, the workshop also drew on expertise from colleagues in History, Philosophy and Anthropology.

The workshop was structured around sessions featuring the presentation of two papers, comments on these papers by a nominated discussant, and open discussion featuring all participants. All paper-givers provided draft papers in advance, and these were circulated to all participants in advance in electronic and hard copy form.

The first session served as a framing session, focused on the 'good state debate' in international relations in the context of changing conceptions about the role of states in global politics over time. Participants here were asked to address debates about the possibilities for states acting as 'ethical actors' while noting the dangers associated with internationalism as a normative goal for states in the international system. **Peter Lawler** (Manchester) provided the first paper of the workshop, in which he discussed the development of debates about 'good states' and examined contemporary forms of

internationalism in foreign policy. The paper endorsed the notion and importance of the 'good state', and made a case for a form of internationalism tempered by recognition of the importance of national community, the limits of universality and the dangers of endorsing a muscular internationalism that would demand the spread of liberal democracy or market capitalism throughout the globe.

Anthony Burke (UNSW) gave the second paper in this session, and focused his paper on the limits of thinking of the 'autonomous but generous state'. Specifically, this paper noted the dangers of reifying states as the appropriate moral referent object in international politics through the language of the 'good state'. Indeed Burke suggested that our ontological claims in international relations thought needed to shift from states to humanity, with states acting as possible vehicles for realizing legitimate common human aspirations. In his role as discussant, **Ian Hunter** (UQ) noted that many axes of contemporary engagement with the dilemmas and possibilities of internationalism and morality in global politics more broadly had their origins in early modern political thought. In particular, debates in these contexts had precisely engaged with the vexed question of how it might be possible to map a moral universe on to the emerging state system with the apparent limits imposed by borders and the developing imperative of sovereignty. Hunter also raised the question of who constituted a plausible agent for realizing common goods, and the possible role of policy-makers within this schema.

The second session addressed the dynamics and distribution of power in the contemporary international system and its implications for internationalism. The first paper, delivered by **Andrew Phillips** (UQ) examined the challenges for internationalism posed by an increasingly multi-polar world order. In particular, Phillips suggested that competing approaches to terrorism in a post 9/11 world illustrated the difficulties of achieving global consensus on the composition of an appropriately internationalist foreign policy agenda and associated practices. He highlighted the distinction in this case between the 'wars on terror' undertaken by liberal states and those prosecuted by authoritarian states after 9/11, linking this to competing visions of international society.

The second paper, presented by **Ian Clark** (Aberystwyth) and **Christian Reus-Smit** (EUI) engaged with the question of 'special responsibilities' in world politics. Here, the authors argued that special responsibilities are those held by a minority of members within an international society: states or institutions socially recognized as having the capacity and obligation to provide leadership in given areas. Using the example of the UN Security Council, they suggested that the concept of special responsibilities draws our attention to the ways in which some actors come to be positioned as having more significant obligations towards 'other regarding' behavior in their foreign policy, suggesting in the process the need to draw considerations of power into

the way we conceive of internationalism. In his comments as discussant, **Richard Devetak** (UQ), probed the historic relationship between power and law in international politics. Ever since the mid 18th century, international lawyers – and diplomatic practice – recognized the special rights and duties of great powers. The challenge today, he argued, is to ground such exceptional powers in a global order that values universal norms such as democracy and procedural equality.

The third session explored the relationship between internationalism and domestic politics, interrogating the relationship between an internationalist foreign policy and the domestic contexts in which it might be articulated, institutionalized and pursued. **Matt McDonald** (UQ) suggested the need to explore the domestic conditions in which policy makers are enabled or constrained in their pursuit of an internationalist foreign policy agenda. Employing Pierre Bourdieu's theory of practice, McDonald noted here the need to come to terms with the impediments to progressive policy practices (linked to global dynamics, distribution of domestic capital and extant discourses of identity, for example) while recognizing the possibility for actors to accrue and wield symbolic power to enable such approaches to foreign policy to develop and become resonant.

Richard Shapcott (UQ) delivered the second paper in this session, and made the case for the institutionalization of cosmopolitan moral imperatives in state constitutions. Shapcott suggested the need for a return to the focus on republican states that characterized Kant's Perpetual Peace, noting the ways in which theorists needed to recognize the power of existing forms of belonging to the nation state even while attempting to incorporate cosmopolitan moral principles into the constitutions of states themselves. He suggested here that progress in terms of the realization of cosmopolitan goods might be achieved through institutionalizing commitments to global harm reduction within state constitutions. In commenting on the papers, **Ghassan Hage** (Melbourne) touched on the national-global divide and noted the inherent challenges of mediating between the particular and the universal in conceiving of internationalism, suggesting that most individuals sought some degree of recognition as members of both spheres. He also suggested the importance of conceiving of debates over foreign policy as sites of contestation between actors with varying degrees (and forms) of capital or resources at their disposal.

The fourth session engaged with the question of internationalism in contemporary global political practice. Participants here examined the issues of global environmental politics and humanitarian intervention as key sites of internationalism in practice, in the process examining the contexts in which such principles are likely to be articulated and institutionalized. In the first paper, **Katie Linnane** (UQ) discussed Australia's commitment to global action on whaling as a dimension of an internationalist foreign policy. Linnane

suggested here that the discourse associated with Australia's approach to whaling could be understood both as an attempt to project a particular brand of internationalism to a domestic and international audience, and as a form of foreign policy that served to define or constitute Australian national identity.

In the second paper, **Tim Dunne** (UQ) explored the norm of the 'responsibility to protect', linking this norm to the vexed issue of humanitarian intervention. Here, Dunne explored the moral and philosophical basis of intervention, defined in terms of the universality of reason, a commitment to common humanity, a commitment to good citizenship and a dual commitment to individual and collective responsibility. The paper also examined the ways in which this form of internationalist praxis had been misrepresented in critical accounts of intervention, accounts which had the unfortunate potential effect of undermining the normative basis of international society and encouraging inaction in the face of suffering outsiders. In her role as discussant, **Marianne Hanson** (UQ) raised a number of points that connected the two papers. First, why do advocates of an ethical foreign policy prioritise one issue area over another? In relation to Linnane's paper, for example, one dilemma for animal rights activists is why single out whales for protection and not other threatened species? In relation to Dunne's paper, Hanson challenged the distinction between 'defencist' and 'crusading' forms of intervention.

The final session oriented around open discussion and focused on two related concerns. The first of these was the core themes and dilemmas that animated the workshop as a whole, while the second was the more pragmatic question of issues to be addressed in advance of the publication of the edited project (a special issue of the journal *International Politics*). This discussion was led by 'critical friends' of the project, **Colin Wight** (Sydney), **Ian Hall** (ANU) and **Jason Sharman** (Griffith). In their comments and subsequent open discussion, a range of issues were seen as uniting the focus of the papers, including a conception of ethics and foreign policy as not wholly separate or separable; a conception of internationalism as a socially constructed practice that will find different degrees of support and manifest itself in different ways in different contexts; recognition of internationalism itself as a site of struggle and contestation between actors at the national and international level; and a belief in the need to explore the possibility for states acting for 'purposes beyond themselves' even while recognizing the need for reflexivity about the liberal internationalist project and endorsing states as moral actors.

The workshop therefore illuminated some of the key dilemmas and tensions associated with exploring ethical foreign policy generally, and internationalism specifically as a form of liberal commitment to 'purposes beyond ourselves'. It also, however, reaffirmed the imperative for considering states as agents for the global common good, and outlined the contexts in which such commitments were most likely politically, and most

necessary pragmatically. Paper-givers committed themselves to the further development of papers on the basis of feedback received for completion by mid-2012, and publication in a special issue of the journal ***International Politics*** in late 2012/ early 2013 (confirmed at a meeting held between the workshop organizers and the editor of the journal in September 2011). The title of the special issue will be **'The Politics of Liberal Internationalism: Reaching Purposes Beyond Ourselves'**.