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SECURING THE POSTCOLONIAL

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Introduction

This chapter considers the following question: Should 'security' be a point of departure when thinking about the postcolonial? In considering this question, I will focus on recent debates on cosmopolitanism and security. Cosmopolitan approaches to security have focused on concerns with the security of peoples beyond one's own borders plus the global environment (Linklater, 2005, Burke, 2013). Doing so while avoiding treating the postcolonial in a top-down manner (i.e. by presuming to know the best ways to address security in the global South) has turned out to be a challenge for students of world politics.

In what follows, I will distinguish between three perspectives. First there are those who limit the scope of security to their immediate community understood as the state. This is the *standard realist perspective* on security that is skeptical of cosmopolitan concerns and places the responsibility for insecurities experienced in the global South at the doorstep of the postcolonial. Second, there are the proponents of *cosmopolitan approaches to security* who treat humanity and the global environment as the referent of security, without distinguishing between 'us' and 'them'. Yet, cosmopolitan approaches have been received critically for remaining oblivious to the 'dark side' of cosmopolitanism (Mignolo, 2003; Rao, 2010) and the persistence of inequalities created during the age of colonialism and beyond (that is, the 'colonial present' (Gregory, 2004)). Third, there are the students of *postcolonial studies* who have indeed pointed to cosmopolitanism's 'dark side' but also called for a more expanded approach to cosmopolitanism (Grovogui, 2005; Grovogui, 2011; Jabri, 2012).

While 'security' may not necessarily invoke warm feelings in the mind of the postcolonial, securing peoples and the global environment has nevertheless continued to top postcolonial state agendas (Abraham, 2009, Tickner and Herz, 2012). Accordingly, my concern with 'securing the postcolonial' is less about asking whether 'security' should be a point of departure when thinking about the postcolonial world. Rather, I am concerned with giving the postcolonial center-stage when discussing the ways in which 'security' is given prominence when thinking about the global South. Accordingly, I emphasise that thinking critically about security involves considering the contributions and contestations of the postcolonial. The alternative is presuming existing conceptions of security and statehood that shape existing practices to be 'universal', without considering aforementioned limitations rooted in their 'particularity' (Bilgin, 2016a).

The point here is not to replace one particular with another, but to highlight the particularity that passes as universal and consider ways of broadening their basis (Grovogui, 2005).

Before proceeding, one clarification is in order. If it appears that I refer to 'the postcolonial' and 'the global South' interchangeably, this is not because I collapse one into the other. Rather, it is because I consider postcolonial statehood to cover not only those states that were directly or indirectly colonised, but also in terms of the trials and travails of new or non-members vis-à-vis the international society. Following Stuart Hall, I understand colonialism as '[referencing] something more than direct rule over certain areas of the world by the imperial powers'. Rather, it '[signifies] the whole process of expansion, exploration, conquest, colonisation and imperial hegemonisation which constituted the "outer face", the constitutive outside, of European and then Western capitalist modernity after 1492' (Hall, 1996: 249). As such, I understand postcolonial insecurities as endured by all those in the global South who were written out of that particular narrative.

The first section outlines the standard realist perspective on security pertaining the global South. The two sections that follow counterpose criticisms of the standard realist approach from cosmopolitan and postcolonial perspectives. The concluding section suggests that advancing our thinking about security in the global South requires engaging with the postcolonial critique of the 'dark side' cosmopolitanism while carefully distinguishing it from the communitarianism of (subaltern) realism.

Standard realist approach to security in the global South

During the Cold War, concerns regarding security in the global South were never very far from the agendas of great powers. For the two superpowers, securing the global South took the form of securing the allegiance of the newly independent states vis-à-vis one's Cold War adversary. While both superpowers considered themselves as countering colonialism and contributed to post-Second World War de-colonisation, they were not necessarily viewed as such by the postcolonial (see, for example, Muppidi, 1999; Niva, 1999). For the former colonial powers, in turn, concerns with securing access to primary resources, cheap labor and markets comprised the definition of security in the global South.

In the post-Cold War era, the realist agenda on securing the global South came to focus on concerns with checking the rise of aspiring great powers (such as China and India), and addressing so-called 'state failure' (as in Somalia and Haiti). As such, the standard realist approach to security in the global South is conditioned by a particular notion of statehood shaped by the memories of and theorising about the trajectory of statehood in Western Europe. While such memories and theorising have been shown to be erroneous by historical sociologists (Halperin, 1997; also see Milliken and Krause, 2002), they have nevertheless been allowed to shape the standard realist approach to security and inform policy practices vis-à-vis the global South (Bilgin and Morton, 2002; Bilgin and Morton, 2004).

Throughout the Cold War and beyond, the postcolonial has suffered disproportionately as the great powers have sought to render 'universal' what are essentially 'particular' approaches to security. Approaches such as humanitarian intervention, state-building or security sector reform are informed by 'particular' notions of 'statehood' and 'security', and are designed to consider and address the concerns of those who have taken active part in their conceptualisation. Yet, those who have sought to apply these approaches in myriad places often overlook their 'particularity'. The problem at hand is essentially a mismatch between the dynamics on the ground in the global South and local actors' understanding of those dynamics on the one hand, and, on the other hand, 'particular' assumptions regarding 'statehood' and 'security' shaping those

approaches that are presented as having 'universal' applicability. What is labeled as the 'problem of local ownership' (that global South actors do not seem to embrace those practices introduced by state and non-state actors from the global North) is one instance of such mismatch (Nathan, 2007; Mac Ginty and Richmond, 2013). That said, while 'the problem of local ownership' has been diagnosed as one consequence of such a mismatch, views differ as to what is the best way of addressing its ramifications for security in the global South (compare Brigg and Bleiker, 2011; Bilgin, forthcoming).

Central to our purposes here is the standard realist narrative on how security in the global North has been maintained. At the risk of oversimplification, the standard narrative tells the story of how building 'strong' states in the global North has given way to the building of a security community comprising Western Europe (the European Community/Union) and the North Atlantic (NATO) (Buzan, 1991). Since states in the global South have remained 'weak', this narrative suggests, they have not been successful in addressing the violent consequences of the anarchical condition. Accordingly, the responsibility for insecurities experienced in the global South is placed on the doorstep of the postcolonial. For instance, the absence of 'strong' states and observance of so-called 'failed' states is explained with reference to those states' internal dynamics. While there often is some acknowledgement of colonialism, there is almost no recognition of the persistent dynamics behind such 'failure' or the erroneous notion of statehood as background to the framing of current dynamics as a 'failure' (Bilgin and Morton, 2002; Bilgin and Morton, 2004).

A particularly striking example of this approach is the debate on the so-called 'zone of peace' and 'zone of war', which is staged often without considering the historical or contemporary relationships between the two zones (Goldgeier and McFaul, 1992). At best, these relationships are recognised in their most historical form, by way of noting the ills of colonialism. Yet, it is often acknowledged that the 'colonial present' (Gregory, 2004) has shaped the experiences of the postcolonial in more ways than one. In some instances the 'colonial present' has taken the form of former colonial powers preserving historical relationships, albeit in new forms, as with Britain's entangled ties with the Arabian peninsula, including but not limited to oil imports and arms exports (Vitalis, 2002; Vitalis, 2007).

In some other instances, the 'colonial present' has taken the form of actors in the global North temporalising difference and spatialising time, treating the global South as lagging behind and therefore more suited for the use of violent practices that are no longer considered as suitable for use in the global North (Bilgin, 2016b). Examples include the conduct of the Global War on Terror (GWoT) in the global South, including the US-led coalition's invasion of Iraq in 2003 and the dropping of the so-called 'mother of all bombs' (i.e. the most powerful non-nuclear weapon produced thus far) in Afghanistan in pursuit of Al Qaeda amidst an escalated drone warfare campaign that followed the withdrawal of US troops from Afghanistan; and US and its GWoT allies' close collaboration, throughout the 2000s, with authoritarian states in the global South for the pursuit and interrogation of suspected terrorists (Joffé, 2008; Jabri, 2013).

The point is that the standard realist narrative on security in the global South has rested on 'particular' notions of statehood and security that limit the understanding of postcolonial insecurities. As a result, the narrative on the emergence of 'strong' states and the building of a security community in the global North is told without acknowledging the historical or contemporary relationships with the global South. Even as the historical ills of colonialism are acknowledged, the 'colonial present' is not considered in terms of persistent trends in North–South relations, or in terms of the resilience of factors that conceal how the emergence of a 'zone of peace' in the global North has been tied up with the persistence of a 'zone of war' in the global South (Barkawi and Laffey, 1999).

Cosmopolitan approaches to security

Cosmopolitan approaches to security have been built upon three main bodies of thinking: the contributions of English school theorists on the necessity of norms and (cautious) solidarism in the international arena (Wheeler, 2000); the Aberystwyth school's emancipatory approach to security theorising (Booth, 2007); and post-structuralist sensibilities regarding the (re)production of boundaries and insecurities through practices of security (Bigo, 2008). Contra popular portrayals, the critical difference between standard realist and cosmopolitan approaches is not their preferred instruments (military versus non-military) but the referent of security. Where standard realist approaches privilege one's own community ('us' versus 'them'), cosmopolitan approaches have preferred to cross state borders and treated humanity *and* the global environment as the referent of security (Linklater, 2005). Accordingly, contributors to this body of thinking conceptualised military intervention as an expression of solidarity beyond borders. While most such interventions have taken North-to-South direction, more recently some Southern actors have adopted the same body of cosmopolitan norms in South-to-South interaction as well (such as Brazil in Haiti) (Müller, 2016).

The latest strand in this body of theorising is Anthony Burke's (2013, 2015) 'security cosmopolitanism', which draws from all three aforementioned traditions. The cosmopolitan aspect of Burke's approach crystallises when arguing against the standard realist perspective that prefers to limit the scope of security to one's own community (i.e. the state). Stated in terms of his affinities with post-structuralist approaches to security theorising, Burke has underscored Vivien Jabri's (2007, 2013) emphasis on the limits of liberal cosmopolitanism as security governance. In offering this line of critique, Jabri has highlighted past and present injustices and violence committed in the name of cosmopolitan interventionism. Hence Jabri's (2007) call for pursuing 'cosmopolitan solidarity' and not 'cosmopolitan security'. In distinguishing between the two, Jabri highlighted the top-down character of present-day cosmopolitan interventionism and underscored the need for considering insecurities in the global South as voiced by the postcolonial, and offering help as needed without presuming that 'we' know what others' insecurities are and/or the best ways of addressing them. As such, Jabri called for checking against the global North's top-down military interventionism vis-à-vis the global South that has characterised both the standard realist approach and some of its cosmopolitan critics who, however inadvertently, run the risk of sliding into neo-imperialism.

While Jabri has done away with 'security' and called for 'cosmopolitan solidarity', Burke has retained both cosmopolitanism and security while theorising differently about both. In doing so, he has aligned his thinking with Ken Booth's (2007) emphasis on the politics of security and the need for an emancipatory approach to security that crosses borders (while remaining cautious about humanitarian intervention, see (Booth, 1994)). Yet at the same time, Burke has sought to push Booth's emancipatory approach to security further by underscoring post-structuralist sensibilities regarding 'security as a set of promises and dangers' (Burke, 2013; see also, Bigo, 2008; Abraham, 2009).

Before turning to the postcolonial critique of security, let me discuss, however briefly, a body of thought that has drawn upon the aforementioned critique of cosmopolitanism while pushing for a return to a communitarianism that is characteristic realism, namely, subaltern realism. Maintaining that states in the global South are 'late' arrivals to the international society, Mohammed Ayoob (1997, 1998) asked for them to be given the space and the time to grow up and become 'strong' states and not be targeted for cosmopolitan engagement. Cosmopolitan engagement by the global North with the global South, suggested Ayoob, would arrest their development, disallowing the kind of security community that was generated in the global North. Then,

different from the postcolonial critics of security (see below), Ayoob suggested that insecurities experienced by peoples and other non-state actors as well as the global environment are exigencies of the process of building 'strong' states in the global South. Only through building 'strong' states, he suggested, could security in the global South be ensured.

Space does not permit dwelling upon the ways in which Ayoob's criticism failed to identify the particularity of standard realist approach to statehood and security, thereby failing to broaden their basis from the perspective of the subaltern (Bilgin, 2016a). What is significant for our purposes here is that Ayoob marshaled the critique against cosmopolitan approaches to security to insist on the need for a communitarian approach to security akin to standard realist approaches. This is not an entirely consistent position to take, for the same body of criticism also identifies the limitations of the statist approach to security as assumed by the postcolonial state (see, for example, Krishna, 1999; Biswas, 2001; Rao, 2004; Abraham, 2006) – the very group of states that Ayoob seeks to strengthen vis-à-vis their own peoples.

Furthermore, what Ayoob failed to note was that critiquing cosmopolitanism does not necessarily warrant disallowing all forms of cosmopolitan engagement beyond borders. As seen above, critical IR scholars' contributions to debates on rights resist those attempts to limit the scope of security to those within one's own borders on communitarian grounds. Rather, their critique is conditioned by the historical legacy of cosmopolitanism and those who have hesitated to broaden the scope of security beyond their immediate community even when acting in the name of cosmopolitanism. The point being that the proponents of subaltern realism, while drawing upon postcolonial critique of cosmopolitanism's 'dark side', have used such a critique as a stepping stone for arguing against cosmopolitan engagement *in toto*. In doing so, they favoured the postcolonial state, but not peoples (or the global environment), as the ultimate referent of security (Bilgin, 2016a).

Postcolonial critique

Viewed from the global South, a cosmopolitan approach to security may not necessarily come across as a solution not only because of what 'security' has entailed (as critiqued by Jabri, see above) but also because what 'cosmopolitanism' invokes in the minds of the postcolonial. For, different memories of experiences with cosmopolitanism prevail in the global South versus the global North. The global North favours a cosmopolitan stance for the ability to think and act beyond one's borders, and experiences moments of self-doubt only when criticised on grounds of neo-imperialism. The global South, in turn, carries different memories of past instances of North-to-South cosmopolitan engagement. Yet, the proponents of cosmopolitan approaches often overlook such differences between the North and the South. Even those who are concerned with the problem of so-called 'lack of local ownership' in the global South, explain away what they observe by invoking 'cultural' differences, thereby overlooking the 'colonial present' that has shaped North-to-South interventionism (Bilgin, 2016b).

For instance, where students of English School theorising observe a broadening of the consensus on norms, the postcolonial critics have cautioned against mistaking the postcolonial's entry into the international society for the universalisation of its constitutive norms. As Shogo Suzuki (2005) has argued with reference to the case of imperial Japan, the postcolonial viewed the international society as 'Janus-faced' precisely because of the incongruity between members' treatment of fellow members versus not-yet members such as Japan. Accordingly, the postcolonial's stance vis-à-vis such a 'Janus-faced' international society was characterised by ambivalence. The new entrants often observed but not totally embraced the constitutive norms of the

international society. Their thinking was that the members of the international society themselves were not entirely consistent in enforcing those norms vis-à-vis non-members (Suzuki, 2009). Put differently, in the experience of not-yet members, what the founding members of the international society viewed as constitutive norms were not applied universally but only toward fellow members. And yet, cosmopolitan approaches to security have not always been forthcoming in offering such self-critique.

One such critique can be found in the writings of Beate Jahn (1998: 631) who has noted that thinkers such as Samuel von Pufendorf and Emmerich de Vattel, whose writings Linklater's studies were built upon, 'did not develop universal ideas but rather universal *yardsticks* which were supposed to provide them with a justification *not* to extend equal rights to others'. Accordingly, argues Jahn, Linklater's model excludes others at the moment of inclusion:

> For it is on the basis of the 'inclusion' into humanity defined as European rationality, European political organization, European capitalism or forms of communication and morality that alternative forms of rationality, political organization, modes of production or forms of communication and morality are excluded, not only from the higher echelons of humanity, but also from certain concrete legal and moral rights.
>
> (Jahn, 1998: 636–7)

Put differently, what the critics consider problematic about cosmopolitan approaches' adoption of universals is not only that 'particular' universals are imposed in seeking to improve the human condition in different parts of the world, but that they have been applied arbitrarily and that cosmopolitan scholars have had precious little to say about that (Grovogui, 2006).

The 'arbitrary' application of 'universals' has long constituted a challenge for the notion of 'universals'. Consider Siba Grovogui's critique of Linklater's cosmopolitan outlook. Recognising Linklater's attempt to 'extend rights' beyond state borders, Grovogui has also pointed to the problems involved. Where Linklater saw difficulties in terms of previous failures to think and act beyond borders, Grovogui has insisted that the problem lies elsewhere. The issue is not only one of overcoming past instances of 'exclusion' noted Grovogui, but also diagnosing the 'mechanisms of exclusion' and the ways in which such mechanisms have persisted. Grovogui wrote:

> Such criticisms do not conceive prior misapplication or suspension of international morality (likened metonymically to a liberal constitutional regime) as a mere problem of exclusion. They involve considerations of the very terms of the constitutional order – the implicated political imaginaries, juridical and moral systems, and their base-notions of communities and obligations – as mechanisms of exclusion.
>
> (Grovogui, 2006: 48–9)

While the cosmopolitan case is often made with reference to a choice between applying existing norms universally or having no universals at all, Grovogui argued differently. There is no reason, he wrote, to suppose that what are portrayed as 'universals' are indeed universal or that they are the only possible definition of rights that could be used to render a definition truly universal. To quote Grovogui again:

> Non-Western legal and moral systems do – and have – provided sufficient or equally compelling rationales for the idea of enforceable rights to protect humans, which may be extended to include a responsibility to protect victims and a duty to prosecute violators.

Second, human–rights related obligations and duties can be defended without conced-
ing the universality and conclusiveness of Western ideas and practices of human rights.

(Grovogui, 2011: 45–6)

The postcolonial critics' point being that 'extending rights' beyond state borders as per the cos-
mopolitan agenda need to be coupled with taking stock of the context in which those rights were
defined as 'rights' to the exclusion of other rights. Accordingly, taking a cosmopolitan approach
to security seriously would likely involve taking the critique of cosmopolitanism seriously – not
to give up on thinking and acting beyond borders as per (subaltern) realism (see above) but to

broaden cosmopolitan perspectives…to come up with methods of translation that ren-
der intelligible beliefs, attitudes and values and, therefore, institutions, idioms and polit-
ical languages that, although not organically linked, may converge in their teleology.

(Grovogui, 2005: 112)

From a postcolonial perspective, then, the problem of the co-called 'lack of local ownership'
would not be explained away by invoking 'cultural' differences but by highlighting an inability
to recognise 'the value of parallel or non-Western moral thoughts and ethics and their justifica-
tions, intellectual programs and political agendas' (Grovogui, 2005: 112).

Conclusion

Critiquing the 'dark side' of cosmopolitanism does not warrant security communitarianism.
The latter is preferred by standard realist and subaltern realist approaches to security. Postco-
lonial scholars' contributions to debates on cosmopolitanism resist those attempts to limit the
scope of security to one's own community on 'culturalist' grounds. As such, they are more
closely aligned with the cosmopolitan perspective on security than with the subaltern realist
approach.

Students of subaltern realism indicated awareness of postcolonial insecurities insofar as
they marshaled the postcolonial critics' interrogations of the 'dark side' of cosmopolitanism;
yet they overlooked another side of such insecurities when they unreservedly pushed for stat-
ist approaches to security. Herein lies the significance of taking 'security' as a point of depar-
ture for the postcolonial. For, those critics who claim to speak on behalf of the postcolonial
have insisted on the need for a statist approach to security in the global South. That students
of subaltern realism do so while knowing fully well that state-focused security practices may
or may not produce security for peoples in whose name security is sought is a point that can-
not be overemphasised. Examples include those who live next to military bases and bear the
brunt of the rise of militarism; men and women who are dis/empowered in different ways
during wartime; or the most vulnerable in the society whose insecurities are overlooked while
designing and implementing so-called 'smart sanctions' (Enloe, 1990; Sharoni, 1998; Drury
and Peksen, 2014).

Another such danger is the persistence of neo-imperial interventionism, which has been
justified on cosmopolitan grounds (thereby deviating from the previously self-regarding justi-
fications for military intervention offered by the standard realist approaches), maintaining that
'empire is good for the periphery because it brings good governance to "rogue" or "failed"
states, thereby ensuring greater respect for the human rights of their inhabitants' (Rao, 2004:
146). From this perspective, security is a 'public good supplied by the US empire' and neo-
imperialist interventionism is justified for reasons of security in the global South.

However, as Rahul Rao (2004: 162–3) has noted, public goods are supposed to be 'non-excludable (it is impossible to prevent non-contributors from enjoying the good) and joint (a number of actors are able simultaneously to consume the same produced unit of the good without detracting from each other's enjoyment)'. Yet, cautioned Rao, security does not always fit this definition, as it has (historically or currently) been pursued through acts of neo-imperial interventionism. Furthermore, even when no intervention takes place, as with the experience of building a security community in North America and Western Europe, security still does not emerge as a public good. For, the experience of building security communities in one part of the world has had implications for in/security elsewhere (Barkawi and Laffey, 1999).

The broader point being that, while underscoring the need to address insecurities beyond one's borders, the proponents of cosmopolitan approaches to security have not yet fully considered the contributions and contestations of the postcolonial as regards the limits of thinking and practices shaped by global North's conceptions of 'statehood' and 'security'. In contrast, students of postcolonial studies have expressed their critique of cosmopolitanism not to make a case for communitarism but to call for broadening its bases beyond current thinking and practices. Indeed, postcolonial critique is conditioned by the historical legacy of cosmopolitanism and those who have hesitated to broaden the scope of security beyond their immediate community even when acting in the name of cosmopolitanism. Accordingly, advancing our thinking about security in the global South requires carefully distinguishing the communitarianism of (subaltern) realism from the cosmopolitanism of postcolonial approaches *and* identifying the grounds for learning and solidarity between security cosmopolitanism and the postcolonial critique.

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