Editorial Introduction: ‘The Future of International Cooperation’
by Alexander Betts and Matthew Eagleton-Pierce

Reflecting our aspirations for the journal, the inaugural edition invites empirical and theoretical consideration on the future of international cooperation. In the aftermath of the divisions created by the invasion of Iraq and the questions raised about the future relevance of the United Nations, mapping the contours of inter-state collaboration and identifying the bases of global governance is crucial to the prospects for peace and security. Whether ‘coalitions of the willing’ or regional structures will supersede global responsibility-sharing, whether religious divides will polarise the West from the Islamic World, or whether the United Nations will adapt through initiatives such as the High-Level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change, are amongst the key questions that make ‘The Future of International Cooperation’ so germane for reflection and debate.

Empirical Context

How precisely states reach agreement on coordinating their behaviour in given issue areas is a question that has long vexed academics, diplomats and policymakers. In areas as diverse as the environment, security or trade, overcoming conflict, unilateralism or inactivity by tacit, negotiated or imposed means has been a central concern of international relations. The post-Second World War period, the 1970s and the post-Cold War era all represent junctures at which change and re-evaluation attracted contemplation and innovation in both theory and governance. Our era arguably represents a point at which there is a need for profound questioning of the basis of inter-state cooperation.

Since the 1990s, in particular, globalisation has brought increased interdependence, time-space compression and interconnectedness, expanding the scope of social, cultural and economic interaction. The opportunities and threats posed by such processes have once again called for response through global governance structures, multilateral approaches or ad hoc bilateral cooperation in order to regulate areas such as migration, capital markets, terrorism, international organised crime or infectious disease. As such processes have become increasingly transnational in nature so too have the responses required to adequately address them. Meanwhile, cultural and technological influences such as the media and the internet have led to a growing awareness of global events, selectively mobilising public opinion

and protest to direct government attention towards issues such as human rights and peacekeeping, previously delimited by Westphalian conceptions of state sovereignty.

The aftermath of 9/11, the consequences of the ‘war on terror’ and the invasion of Iraq, in particular, highlight the renewed need for reflection upon the existing structures of global governance and their inadequacies as well as the concerns of states and other actors in the face of these challenges. Responses based on isolationism, unilateralism, ‘coalitions of the willing,’ abdication of legal or normative responsibilities or aggression will have a profound impact on civilisation if they supplant the multilateral consensus that has emerged through the United Nations. The central empirical question is: what future role can international cooperation assume in light of the perceived cultural, religious, strategic, and political faultlines—whether at transatlantic or global levels?

**Theoretical Context**

Mainstream international relations commonly defines international cooperation as occurring ‘when actors adjust their behaviour to the actual or anticipated preferences of others through a process of policy coordination’. In many ways Keohane’s ‘consensus definition’ reflects the dominance of theoretical approaches to international cooperation by liberal institutionalism. Drawing upon microeconomic theory and, in particular, the notion of Prisoner’s Dilemma (PD), the idea of converging preferences draws on the assumption that states could be conceived as rational unitary actors in which exchange and interaction could bring positive sum gains. Overcoming collective action failure is based on the Olsonian logic of overcoming PD, in which states hold common goals in given issue areas but the non-exclusivity of the benefits from cooperation mean ‘free-riding’ will lead to ‘sub-optimal’ provision. This conception of international cooperation as synonymous with overcoming collective action failure dictated the theoretical diagnosis of the sources of cooperation and their solutions. Cooperation was therefore conceived as the creation of the systemic institutional conditions in which interests could converge. The function of regimes as ‘principles, norms, rules, and decision-making procedures,’ hegemony and leadership, and epistemic communities were developed as a basis for creating stability and contributing to the convergence of expectations between states.

More recent critical writing has moved beyond a systemic level of analysis grounded in the assumptions of game theory to contribute to the literature on norms and to reflect on the ways in which state identities are socially constructed either internationally or domestically. Rather than assuming states to be rational actors, the constructivist literature argues
that the formation of state identity is mutually constitutive of ‘national interest’.\textsuperscript{10} In this context, the preferences of states are viewed less rigidly and are understood to be more cognitive than materialist. In its application to cooperation on human rights issues, the literature explores how many states have come to inculcate an inter-subjective acceptance of legal and normative structures enshrined in the human rights regime.

Approaches drawing on a Habermasian Critical Theory have stressed the role of argument—whether at a state, sub-state or transnational level—in persuading state actors of the merits of cooperative action.\textsuperscript{11} There has been growing acknowledgement that non-state actors such as multinational corporations (MNCs) and transnational non-governmental organisations (NGOs) play a significant role in shaping state behaviour.\textsuperscript{12} The question is whether any of the above theoretical approaches offer significant contributions to understanding contemporary international cooperation? If so, which insights remain most salient; does theory have any heuristic value in explaining or predicting the future prospects for international cooperation?

\textbf{The Papers}

The papers assembled in this edition invite critical reflection on these areas of theory and practice through a selective analysis of key issue-areas in which the cooperation between states is evolving and adapting. Transitional governance is, by definition, an area requiring international cooperation. In the absence of a viable and functioning state in need of external intervention following internal conflict or external aggression, collaboration by external actors may be required if the legacy of protracted insecurity, conflict or injustice is to be overcome and national reconciliation achieved. Given the contemporary cooperative efforts for post-conflict reconstruction in Iraq and Afghanistan in the context of the ‘war on terror’ and the growing significance of such endeavours in post-conflict societies such as Sierra Leone and Liberia, Sir Marrack Goulding’s contribution is of particular relevance. Drawing upon his personal experiences as United Nations Under-Secretary General for Peacekeeping, Sir Marrack discusses the role of the United Nations in post-conflict reconstruction. He draws on a range of past case studies in order to highlight the multi-dimensional complexities of post-conflict reconstruction and draw insights for the conditions required for successful reconstruction.

Zachary Kaufman meanwhile writes about the related topic of transitional justice by reviewing a number of global and national approaches in order to draw foreign policy lessons for the available methods of engaging with post-conflict transitional justice and reconciliation. His analysis of the
range of options offered by national courts and military courts, military commissions, foreign national courts, ad hoc UN tribunals, coalition treaty-based criminal tribunals, or structures adapted to be culturally or religiously specific draws upon cases such as Rwanda, Iraq, Nigeria, and the International Criminal Court (ICC) to inform state approaches to international justice.

Jeff Crisp’s paper evaluates the extent to which a new paradigm is emerging in the global refugee regime. In the context of growing intolerance towards asylum and migration in the North and towards the presence of refugees in protracted situations in the South, he considers the new approaches being adopted unilaterally, bilaterally and multilaterally by states to address the crisis. He reflects upon the new extraterritorial approaches and the motives underlying them to highlight a number of important issues for the future direction of the global refugee and migration regimes.

Kalypso Nicolaïdis’ piece evaluates the future of transatlantic relations in the aftermath of the invasion of Iraq. She argues that cooperation between the EU and the US should be as much about ‘living with our differences’ as about reaching agreement. A cooperative relationship, she argues, need not be dependent upon a common European position. Even within Europe divergences can and should be accommodated. She explores what constructive diversity might imply for the Middle East peace process, the World Trade Organisation (WTO) negotiations and humanitarian intervention.

Meanwhile, in light of these empirical pieces, the interview with Walter Mattli offers insights to the broader questions of how the invasion of Iraq and the emerging doctrine of pre-emption might influence future international cooperation. Mattli assesses the role and limitations of international relations theory in responding to such questions. In line with Stair’s desire to foster cross-disciplinary dialogue, the two discussant papers by James Milner and David Landau critically review the papers by Jeff Crisp and Kalypso Nicolaïdis. Chris Bickerton reviews two books by Robert Cooper and Michael Mann that explore the issues of liberal imperialism and Pax Globalis. Miles Tendi’s review of Francis Fukuyama’s State Building: Governance and World Order in the 21st Century considers the implications of 9/11 for state governance. And finally, Miriam Prys’ review of O’Brien and Clesse’s edited volume, Two Hegemonies contributes a historical dimension to the role of hegemony in global governance.

Notes


