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Editorial Introduction

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Editorial Introduction

Special Forum on 'Anarchism and IR':

Papers from the 'Anarchism and World Politics Colloquium', University of Bristol
17th-18th June, 2010.

*Shannon Brincat*¹

Anarchism has long been an under-represented and mis-represented approach to world politics. This is despite the fact that a number of excellent articles in the mid-70s brought anarchism to IR theory and Peace Studies.² As an inherently critical and normative theory, anarchism's radical insights into social and economic power and its damning condemnation of all authoritarian structures, particularly the state, are of great significance to those of us grappling with the 'political' dimensions of the international sphere. It is not surprising therefore that recently there has been a veritable explosion of academic and social interest in anarchism that constitutes nothing less than a revival of this tradition. It is in the spirit of this revival that we are pleased to present this special forum on 'Anarchism and IR' in *Global Discourse*.

This forum is based on a number of papers that were presented at the 'Anarchism and World Politics' colloquium held at the University of Bristol in June 2010. This colloquium was supported by the Economic and Social Research Council and was largely organised by Alex Prichard whose efforts contributed greatly to the success of the event.³ The papers published here offer a great cross-section of those presented, covering such diverse topics as social movements, terrorism and religion. What these papers reveal is a rich intellectual current that explores the possibilities and forms of social agency that eschew domination. Collectively, they provide clear examples of what diversity in anarchist thought can offer us all.

The first two papers explore the relationship between anarchism and social movements. April Carrière's 'Social Movements and the Bolivian State' counters the logic of hegemony within both liberal and Marxist understandings of state-based social change in the context of Bolivia. She argues that these paradigms obscure non-hegemonic indigenous movements, tactics and practices in Bolivia that seek to escape the dichotomy of reform or revolution and she looks to these movements as the source of Bolivian collective capacity for resistance. Continuing with this focus on social movements, Roy Krøvel in 'Anarchism, the Zapatistas and the Global Solidarity Movement' examines the history of the Zapatistas and their relations with the global

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² In particular, see Thomas G. Weiss, 'The Tradition of Philosophical Anarchism and Future Directions in World Policy'. *Journal of Peace Research* 12 (1975): 1-17; Richard Falk, 'Anarchism and World Order', in *Nomos XIX: Anarchism*, eds. J. Roland Pennock and John Chapman (New York: New York University Press, 1979), 63-87; Fred Parkinson, *The Philosophy of International Relations* (London: Sage, 1977), 146-9.

³ See 'Anarchism and World Politics' colloquium, (University of Bristol, 17-18th June, 2010), Economic and Social Research Council. Grant code: PTA-026-27-2404. All the papers and audio files from the conference are available at the Anarchist Studies Network website. http://www.anarchist-studies-network.org.uk/Past_Events.

solidarity movement. For Krøvel this movement stands out from other earlier solidarity movements in the region because of the absence of trade unions and faith groups that played pivotal roles in other Central American struggles against authoritarian regimes, such as in El Salvador and Guatemala. This meant that the global solidarity movement came to rely on individual activists and small informal organizations forming a loose network that Krøvel finds reflects anarchist principles in the broadest sense of the word.

The next two articles focus on the problems of violence and religion, albeit in fundamentally different contexts. Turning to Christian anarchism, Alexandre Christoyannopoulos offers a unique criticism of the state in 'Jesus Christ Against Westphalian Leviathans'. For Christoyannopoulos, Christian anarchists reject all forms of violence and coercion and maintain an absolute commitment to God. These ideals however, run directly counter to the Westphalian order that is premised on citizen loyalty to the state and the legitimacy of violence in its name. Employing key biblical passages, the paper argues that the authority and violence of the state must be unmasked and denounced as unjustifiable from a Christian perspective. Taking up this theme of political violence, Paul Stott offers a report on the historical links between anarchism and terrorism in the period following 9/11. His paper offers an account of anarchist violence in history and recent developments in the form of Islamo-Anarchism, offering a critique of the main currents in contemporary terrorism studies that he contends are dominated by statist and security industry tendencies.

The final two papers in the forum are more theoretical in nature.⁴ Alex Prichard, in his provocatively titled 'David Held is an Anarchist. Discuss', examines the radical democratic and cosmopolitan project of David Held and his defence of 'global social democracy'. Prichard argues that, while Held is clearly not an avowed anarchist, his vision of cosmopolitan democracy begs comparison with anarchist principles. He argues that, without adequate reflection on anarchist critique, Held may, in the end, reconstitute the authoritarianism that his theory seeks ostensibly to overcome. Adam Goodwin then closes the forum in 'Evolution and Anarchism in International Relations'. This examines Peter Kropotkin's biological ontology and the challenge it represents to mainstream IR theory. Utilising Kropotkin's *Mutual Aid*, Goodwin challenges the orthodoxy of the individual-fitness theory of evolution that has been taken to confirm the Realist approach to world politics. As Mutual Aid Theory maintains that the evolution of organisms is shaped by cooperation, Goodwin argues that an approach concerned with ontological questions over epistemological or methodological concerns can assist with the criticism of orthodox reductionist ontologies in IR.

The eclectic nature of these papers and the various ways in which they respond to key questions and debates in IR attest to the importance of anarchist approaches to world politics. We hope, if nothing else, that this forum helps in furthering the readership of anarchism in IR theory and thereby contributes to the real social struggles against oppression and domination.

In addition to our collection of papers on anarchism, our 2nd edition has a selection of essays and book reviews as well as an audio lecture and cartoon. We have

⁴ The papers by Alex Prichard and Adam Goodwin are pre-publications versions of original papers that will be published in *Millennium: Journal of International Studies*. They are available in audio format at: http://anarchist-studies-network.org.uk/Rethinking_Anarchy%3A_Anarchism_and_International_Relations.

essays by Russell Foster, who defends the concept of Empire as a political order, Andres Perezalonso, who examines the practices of torture employed during George Bush's Administration through critical engagement with Michael Foucault's concept of Biopolitics and George Agamben's idea of sovereignty, Alexander Hoseason, who explores the role of borders as sites and progenitors of conflicts, and Scott Romaniuk, who challenges the dichotomy of theory and practice in IR. Our interactive book review section includes symposia on Martin Coward's *Urbancide*, Cindy Weber's *International Relations Theory: A Critical Introduction* (4th Edition), and Geoff Boucher's *The Charmed Circle of Ideology: A Critique of Laclau & Mouffe, Butler and Zizek*. We would like to thank the following authors and reviewers for the participation in these symposia: Selina Stenberg, Antoine Bousquet, Sara Fregonese, Paul Reynolds, Stuart Sim, Robert Sinnerbrink, Kirsten Haack and Andrew Hammond. Our multi-media submissions come from Joseph DeVoir, who outlines his *Journey into Confusion* with regard to IR theory, and Simon Philpott, who has generously provided a recording of his presentation at Newcastle University of a paper examining the Iraq War and Film. Included in the recording is a question and answer session.

On behalf of the editors of *Global Discourse*, we would like to express our thanks to Martyn Griffin and Lacey Davy for proof-reading and formatting the submissions.

Shannon Brincat