

Contested Visions of Exploration in IR: Theoretical Engagements, Reflections and New Agendas on the Dynamics of Global Order

Authors : Ananya Sharma

Abstract : International Relations is a discipline of paradoxes. The State is the dominant political institution, with mainstream analysis theorizing the State, but theory remains at best a reactionary monolith. Critical Theorists have been pushing the envelope and to that extent, there has been a clear shift in the dominant discourse away from State-centrism to individuals and group-level behaviour. This paradigm shift has been accompanied with more nuanced conceptualizations of other variables at play—power, security, and trust, to name a few. Yet, the ambit of “what is discussed” remains primarily embedded in realist conceptualizations. With this background in mind, this paper will attempt to understand, juxtapose and evaluate how “order” has been conceptualized in International Relations theory. This paper is a tentative attempt to present a “state of the art” and in the process, set the stage for a deeper study to draw attention to what the author feels is a gaping lacuna in IR theory. The paper looks at how different branches of international relations theory envisage world order and the silences embedded therein. Further, by locating order and disorder inhabiting the same reality along a continuum, alternative readings of world orders are drawn from the critical theoretical traditions, in which various articulations of justice impart the key normative pillar to the world order.

Keywords : global justice, international relations theory, legitimacy, world order

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