

Kees van der Pijl

The Discipline of Western Supremacy. Modes of Foreign Relations and Political Economy, Volume III

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"This book provides a complete overview of mainstream International Relations as a set of theories which translate Western supremacy into intellectual hegemony" (a quote from the book cover)

The book by Kees van der Pijl (Professor Emeritus at the University of Sussex) titled: *The Discipline of Western Supremacy. Modes of Foreign Relations and Political Economy, Volume III* represents a final chapter (after: *Nomads, Empires, States: Modes of Foreign Relations and Political Economy, Volume I*; *The Foreign Encounter in Myth and Religion: Modes of Foreign Relations and Political Economy, Volume II*) in the author's successful attempt to study foreign relations and political economy of the late 19th, 20th and 21st century. The book is organized into five chapters (*Empire and Nationality in the Pax Britannica, The Crusade for Democracy and World Politics, Cold War Discipline in International Relations, The Pax Americana and National Liberation, and The Crisis of International Discipline*), each covering a distinct period in history, thus providing a historical overview of the development of the international relations (IR) discipline. According to the main thesis of the book, the discipline of international relations is designated as "the discipline of Western supremacy", hence providing the title.

This book offers an in-depth look into the development of the IR discipline, as one that was introduced into political science by the Anglo-Saxon, White, and mostly Protestant elites (economic and political), residing in the United Kingdom and in the United States in the late 19th and in the early 20th century. The author provides numerous examples that verify this thesis. The first regards, the continuous financial and intellectual impulses for the development of the IR discipline that have come out of the large foundations and endowments founded by and subsidized by donations from the US' richest capitalist families in the age of imperialist, monopolist capitalism (Ford, Rockefeller, Carnegie, Mellon etc.). In 1934, the networks

sponsored by Carnegie and Rockefeller foundations accounted for 60 percent of the capital of the 123 largest U.S. foundations (p. 79). So, the discipline was founded with money from these donors, in order to intellectually (“scientifically”) justify the position of the elite in the existing Western societies, and even more importantly – to provide the intellectual framework for liberal internationalism, which supported a system of nation-states based on sovereign equality (a fiction) with open markets, governed by the elites ready and willing to support foreign (Western) investments. For the purposes of the review, only the most important and interesting points and “stations” of this seminal book are presented here.

In the first chapter, following the explanation of the historic intellectual grounds for liberal internationalism (mostly provided by Locke's insisting on liberal values and private property, thereby the ideologues of the Lockean heartland) and of the world order in the second half of the 19th century (the Pax Britannica), the author explains when, how, and most importantly – why the discipline of IR was established (p. 47). He also explains the influence of M. Weber on the IR discipline (“The realism of Anglo-American IR is already in evidence in Weber”, p. 52), which influenced the origins of the idea about the American century, and the roots of realism in international relations. Not omitting the political and economic influence of the elite over social sciences and universities, the author mentions the supervision of universities and the first “witch-hunt” in the U.S. academia in the late 19th century, aimed at social scientists who did not comply with the demands of the elite. It should not be forgotten that this was the period of the first organized workers' movements and uprisings, contained with brutal reprisals from the repressive apparatus that protected the capitalists (the Haymarket massacre in Chicago in 1886 became the most notorious in historic records).

In the second chapter, the author explains how the institutional founding of departments devoted to the international discipline flourished between the two World Wars. The United States' elite for the first time saw the opportunity to internationalize its influence. The author discusses the most important circles of intellectual power (the Milner Group, the Inquiry and the special role of I. Bowman, as well as the subordination of the U.S. science to the state) that were financed with a purpose of developing intellectual support for U.S. and to a much lesser extent for U.K. capital that needed new investment areas and markets. After the Great War, *the Council on Foreign*

Relations (CFR) was founded in the United States, and the *Royal Institute of International Affairs* (RIIA) was founded in the United Kingdom. These two institutions were meant to be a single institution, however, opposition from certain circles prevented this to happen. Nevertheless, this development shows how connected the economic, political, and military elites of the two countries were in the period when the United States “took over” from the United Kingdom as the “world’s hegemon” (especially according to its elite’s self-perception). At the same time, all of the prestigious U.S. universities (the Ivy League) were funded, supported and cooperated with the large foundations that financed projects and programs under one basic condition – that they produce the intellectual base for liberal internationalism, develop an international discipline and support the (fictitious) principle of sovereignty and founding of new nation-states. As history has shown and the current period shows, sovereignty is nothing more than a formality, except for the largest and most powerful, and a couple of contender states. An additional important topic, found in the second chapter is the one about the German (actually Jewish and German) influence on the discipline, which was disproportionately high, especially since the period of Nazi persecution of European Jews. Consequently, Jewish scientists (mostly from Germany and surrounding countries) mostly found refuge in the United States and continued to develop the discipline (mostly of the realist and the neorealist school, with probably the most known names being Morgenthau, Kissinger, and Spykman, among many others) as the intellectual base for the U.S. foreign and defense policy before, during, and after the Second World War. On pages 90 and 91 the author provides two lists of names of the scientists that found refuge in the U.S. before and during the period of Nazi Germany.

Chapter 3 of the book covers the period from the beginning of the Cold War to the *détente* years. The discipline was, understandably, critically influenced by the anti-communist policy of the United States and devoted to various forms of containment policy (G. F. Kennan) or military efforts, more open calls for covert actions and a refusal to accept “the status quo” (P. Nitze, etc.). The Cold War years saw the development of the RAND Corporation (with its doomsday scenarios, and the use of game theory and rational choice theory), the national security state (from 1947 and then even more powerful from 1950 with the NSC-68 document and Gaither Report in 1957), and the second witch-hunt in the public sphere, which included the

social sciences and consequently the IR discipline (McCarthyism). The dual state (with a completely separate national security complex that is actually above the government) and securitization were at its (first) peak, strongly influencing the discipline, and producing some of the most “ethically problematic” (a euphemism) conducts (denunciations, firing of intellectuals from universities) and projects (Project Thor, funding of the projects by the CIA etc.). The discipline de facto became an academic intelligence base for the national security state and remained tightly connected with the national security establishment until the present day. At the same time, it flourished: from fewer than 10 dedicated IR degree programmes in the United States before the (Second World) war, the discipline expanded to 191 such programmes in 1968; most of them, according to Harvard’s McGeorge Bundy “manned, directed, or stimulated by graduates of the OSS” (the US intelligence service whose role was emulated by the CIA) (p. 106). The Cold War years also witnessed the founding and buildup of the new informal highly influential networks of power and decision-making (the Bilderberg Group, the Trilateral Commission).

Chapter 4 is mostly devoted to the discipline’s development from the 1960s to the 1990s, and addresses the problems of decolonization of the Third World, particularly the ways in which the discipline was used to find the means to transfer the Western economic model to the newly (formally) independent countries, concurrently containing the influence of Marxism and the U.S.S.R. in the Third World. The works of W. Rostow and S. Huntington that originated in the mid-1960s, represent the most conservative intellectual grounds for supporting the military elites in the Third World, through establishing and supporting loyal client regimes that would guarantee open markets for Western capital and goods, as well as stop the spread of communist ideas, through “the transfer of Western political culture (G. Almond’s invention) to the Third World countries”. This period, among other developments, also witnessed the development of ethically highly questionable projects that were led by the intellectuals from the IR discipline (Project Camelot, CIA project in Vietnam). On the other hand, the Vietnam War and its influence on the public opinion in the United States caused the first major massive “rebellion” among academics, after revealing that the CIA funded organization, called Operations and Policy Research (OPR), had several hundred social scientists, many of them APSA members, working for it covertly to commission and promote books favorable to US foreign policy.

That resulted in the investigation (from 1968) by a committee under the Yale political scientist and president of APSA, R. Dahl. Its report led to a walkout of critical scholars, mostly young graduates, and the formation of a Caucus for a New Political Science outside APSA (p. 169).

The final chapter studies the contemporary crisis of the international relations discipline. The initial developments in the era of *détente* were promising: The war in Vietnam gravely undermined the moral posture on which Western supremacy is premised (p. 189). Nevertheless, what followed was a neoconservative roll back at universities and in the academia (detected as problems), after the universities were declared as "more leftist than ever". Neoconservative ideologues, deprived of the Cold War contender (the U.S.S.R.) enlarged the new enemy (Islam) into a life and death struggle, dramatized in Huntington's "clash of civilizations", pointed against Islam, but also China and Russia (p. 189). At about the same time, a neoliberal utopia, "the end of history" (in liberal capitalist democracy) by another neoconservative (Fukuyama) became very famous. Neoconservative thinking (Huntington, S. M. Lipset) brackets the economy from the domain of politics, entrusting it to the neoliberal (in the U.S. mostly termed as neoconservative) experts. Therefore, neoliberal economic postulates have to be accepted by any government, and governments should not interfere in the accepted basic economic (neoliberal) principles. The HST theory (with Kindleberger's benign US hegemony) and international political economy (IPE) as a sub-discipline of IR also date from this period. In this chapter, the author discusses other important thinkers and developments, such as non-violent conflicts as a project of mostly US foundations (NED, IRI, Soros' Open Society Institute and others), aimed at changing regimes mostly in the former communist countries and produced "colored" revolutions. The author also awards special attention to the never-ending War on Terror, which was actually devised in 1984 (17 years before the 9/11 events) and the catastrophic, catalytic event of 9/11 was then announced as the turning point that would make this War possible (p. 210-211).

After reading and re-reading this book, a couple of conclusions have come to mind to the author of this review:

First, the discipline of international relations (IR) was not a product of spontaneous scientific development and scientific research at any time

since its inception until the present day. On the contrary, its founding and development were guided from the power centers of the Anglo-Saxon elite in the Atlantic Community. Therefore, the author does not refer to it as “the IR scientific discipline” but merely as “the IR discipline”.

Second, the author does not claim that all of the intellectuals that have developed the discipline and teach IR are not scientists or are under the dominant influence of the elite and the establishment. However, in order to fund projects and to become known, to “develop a name” in the discipline, in almost every period of the discipline’s history, the intellectuals mostly had to become “the intellectuals of statecraft” or “the academic intelligence base”.

Third, as the author of the book himself concludes after elaborating throughout the whole book, and referring particularly to the present day, on the numerous connections (corroborated by a number of examples) between “scholars”, the state structures, the intelligence communities, the military-industrial complexes of dominant states, and the “big businesses” (energy, weapons etc.): a discipline led by scholars of this moral caliber cannot be expected to restore its intellectual integrity. Under conditions of the growing precariousness of academics at all levels, few of the rank and file can afford to take their distance from such leading scholars either. And yet, whilst both politically and economically the pre-eminence of the societies of the Lockean heartland is eroding fast, IR today is still spreading across the globe, along with economics and the rest of the Anglophone disciplinary infrastructure (pp. 234-235).

The conclusion that the reviewer has formed is that this is a book definitely worth reading. It is comprehensive in its conclusions and perspective, as well as detailed and analytic in its content. It is also very different from mainstream literature devoted to IR because of its critical stance to the discipline itself. It should be used at graduate and Ph. D. levels of education.

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