Conclusion: Neo-Medievalism, Civil Wars and the New Diplomacy

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The essays in this collection collectively emphasise the relationship between territory, identity and function in international relations. As was stated in the introduction, Hedley Bull's notion of international society is, ultimately, about authority rather than control; authority becomes a resource which various people and groups of people can use in achieving their aims. This means that the sovereign territorial state is primarily a focus for loyalties, a way of organising politics, and is not simply reducible to its effectiveness in controlling things. If states are simply more constrained, then international society is still operative; if states are having to actually compete with other entities for loyalty and legitimacy, then things are moving in a different direction and there would be a change of world order.

The territorial nation-state is under stress from above and below. Some authors maintain that the territorial nation-state is dying or even already dead. Indeed, the very notion of territory somehow seems anachronistic in the early twenty-first century. Territory is a porous concept given the interconnectedness of international interdependence: a nexus of networks operate across states ignoring sovereignty and national borders. Since the mid-1960s – and increasingly so – there has occurred a blurring of responsibilities and identities between state, nation, international organisation and multinational company.

As the contributors have shown, 'national territoriality' is also being undermined from below by regional particularisms, civil wars, and new social movements. The end of the Cold War and the accompanying disintegration of order, territory, and civil wars have all contributed to undermining existing authority structures. The 'new medieval' diplomacy involves all of the above factors vying for policy space in a series of relational interactions encouraged by complex interdependencies: individual to region; region to state; state to state; state to multinational company (MNC); state to international organisation (IO); state to market; state to NGO; NGO to MNC; IO to market; MNC to market, etc. State to

state interactions are only one of many possibilities in the modern international environment.

Multiple and contested identities have emerged since 1989 to complicate an already complicated global situation. Identities can be local-particularistic, regional, national, and variations on the above. We might also add 'creolised-cosmopolitan' to this list – the internationalisation of societies identity formation structures via the homogenisation of cultures into a global culture. As a reaction against 'creolisation' individuals have reacted to varying degrees against what they perceive as homogenisation.

Nevertheless, in the conscious pursuit of being 'different' the individual often becomes 'creolised'. This is the dilemma of modern identity: the need to be different, but also to be similar in a social-cultural sense. This process has been encouraged by the fallout and reaction to the end of the Cold War. New and older identities have emerged and re-emerged to redefine civil societies in states. In some cases, 'creolisation' has caused civil wars and also redefined host authority structures. What actually matters, however, is the *perception* of those holding a particular identity. As Berzins and Cullen have demonstrated, Al Qaeda emerged precisely as a reaction against the perceived Western 'creolisation' of Arab society.

Yet, as Virchow demonstrates, individual and group loyalties cling to local, regional and national myths in the face of globalisation and 'creolisation'. Such national myths conditioned the German far right's reactions and policies towards the civil wars in the Balkans during the 1990s. Virchow's analysis gives a clear picture of the fundamental categories that the far right in Germany deployed in explaining the development of the war in Kosovo, and their opposition to it. The most central categories employed, by the German far right, are race/racial nationalism, space/territory, and sovereignty/'Großraum'. These categories are seen by the German far right as the most important factors that not only serve as a basis for this case, but also in determining the global order in international relations more generally.

Indeed, as Gow and Bellou, and Simms, have argued, 'ethnic identities', old hatreds and new prejudices have arisen in the east of Europe and the former Soviet Union to challenge 'civic identities' from below. Secessionist movements propagated new-medieval political platforms in the Balkans in particular. The result has been catastrophic in some cases: Bosnia, Kosovo and Chechnya come to mind. Mature and democratic political institutions – and concomitant political cultures – are conspicuously lacking in these recently liberated totalitarian and authoritarian regimes. The problems associated with the transitions in the East are as much social-psychological as they are political or economic in nature.

Gow and Bellou also show how the United States's leadership image, and its legitimacy in relevant affective and political environments, drove relations within the Euro-Atlantic community regarding intervention in the former Yugoslavia, the Gulf conflict of 1990 onwards, the post-9/11 campaign over Afghanistan, and the period of international deliberation and discourse regarding further prospective action over Iraq. In other words, the global superpower is able to condition responses to civil wars and the fragmentation of authority structures when required. We may ask if the world is in fact returning to its neo-medieval past, or is instead being shaped by new global hegemonies.

Simms, on the other hand, has posited a much more controversial explanation for the civil war in Bosnia-Herzegovina. His central thesis is that the war was not simply a three-sided quagmire, but essentially a Serbian war of aggression waged by externally supported proxies. He advances the case that British official sources tried to head off demands for military intervention by suggesting a rough moral equivalence between aggressor and victim. Indeed, this most neo-medieval of civil wars was perpetuated for four years by the lack of Western intervention in the conflict.

The contributions by Olsen and Norrell demonstrate that we live in a world of multi-level and multi-tiered governance structures. Traditional hierarchies of authority and sovereignty in government have been actively challenged by new governance structures. Olsen argues that the situation in large parts of sub-Saharan Africa resembles Hedley Bull's 'neo-medievalism'. The general weakening of the state system in Africa, combined with the increasing 'privatisation' of Africa's external relations, questions if the traditional government-to-government system between Africa and the European Union is still an adequate framework to use when addressing the challenges from 'neo-medievalism'.

According to Norrell, after 20 years of vicious civil warfare the case of Sri Lanka is an example of a kind of inter-communal, 'neo-medieval' civil war within a system of overlapping authorities and criss-crossing loyalties. This is an example of an episode that eliminates the absolute authority of the sovereign state (and especially its monopoly of using violence through police and military forces), and instead heralds an international system where the mutual recognition between states is replaced, or at least challenged, by non-state actors. The civil war has been encouraged by this process.

Berzins and Cullen show that the Al Qaeda terrorist network emerged as a transnational network regime that cuts across national state structures. National state political and economic systems have become increasingly

porous. The rise of non-state violence, state disintegration, the spread of modern technology, and the rise of sub- and supra-state forms of identity – all of these serve to call into question the political authority of states and their continuing monopoly on legitimate violence. In their essay, Berzins and Cullen test the theory of neo-medievalism against the events of 11 September 2001 to arrive at their conclusion that the concept challenges existing state-centric theories of international relations.

The table below outlines the relationship between political institutions, authority, identity, and security in the global order. It does this by comparing the conditions of the new medieval order with the classical European state system and the Cold War state system.

TABLE 1

POLITICAL INSTITUTIONS, IDENTITY AND SECURITY

Eras	Political institutions	Identity	Mode of security
Classical states system	Nation-states	Patriotism	External defence and internal pacification
Cold War	Nation-states Blocs Transnational institutions	Ideology – freedom or socialism	Deterrence Bloc cohesion
The new medieval global order	IOs Nation-states Regionalism Networks	Human rights Multiculturalism Tolerance and diversity *Conversely*: Anti-West ideologies Civil Wars	Extension of rule of law and civil society? Elimination of inter-state war? Humanitarian intervention to prevent civil war?

Source: Mary Kaldor, 'Europe at the Millennium', *Politics* 20/2 (2000) p.60 (with this author's amendments).

In the early years of the new millennium, there is no unified global society but there are exceptional levels of global interdependence from above the state. The reaction against this phenomenon has been a reversion to mythic particularisms from below the state. Civil wars have occurred as a result. Processes from above and below are undermining the nation-state in the global order. Indeed, unpredictable shock waves spill out 'chaotically' from one part of the system as a whole to affect other parts. These days, there are not just 'societies' but massively powerful 'regimes' – which some would term 'hegemonies' – roaming the globe which are arguably altering and reconfiguring collective and self-perceptions and identities of host populations. The EU, McDonald's, and the USA are all

prime examples of such 'regimes'. There is mass mobility of peoples, objects, goods, and services encouraging the interpenetration of societies and identities according to the mantra of Western modernisation. Conversely, there has been a backlash against this process of modernisation internationally from the likes of Al Qaeda and the Taliban.

As stated in the introduction, after 1989 the concept of 'civil war' took on new salience in international relations. Inter-ethnic violence emphasising studies of political community, identity, sovereignty, and political organisation have dominated the study of civil war in the past decade. Processes of social denationalisation of national identity have become more prevalent in everyday politics. This special collection has analysed the proposition that the world has returned to a system of neo-medievalism over a decade after the end of the Cold War. A system of overlapping authorities and criss-crossing loyalties has arguably eliminated the absolute authority claimed and exercised by sovereign states. New actors have emerged. New social processes have also emerged. Not only is this gradually undoing international society, but such a system is radically transforming political life itself, returning it to something analogous to the medieval world: an increasing lack of mutual recognition among entities, an absence of 'anarchy' in the Waltzian neo-realist sense, and a more complex pattern of relationships to consider.