

The Post-Political and Its Discontents

**Spaces of Depoliticisation,
Spectres of Radical Politics**

edited by Japhy Wilson and
Erik Swyngedouw

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*For Tim, in return for your Little Red Book
For Arno, Nikolaas, and Eva: the world is yours to make*

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EU's 'governmentality of ambiguity' (cf. Best 2005, 2008) and BRICS' 'bricolage' of governmentalities. The governmentality analytic confounds Mouffe's cosmopolitan-multipolar binary by highlighting that the EU's ostensibly cosmopolitan (egalitarian, civilian, constitutional, supranational) approach is shot through with hierarchical, military, extra-constitutional and intergovernmental countercurrents, while BRICS' ostensibly multipolar project also features biopolitical, liberal and neoliberal rationalities of governance. In a second move, the chapter suggests that Rancière's (1995, 1999, 2010) understanding of politics in terms of 'dissensus' and 'subjectivation' provides a more productive avenue than Mouffe's multipolar order to make sense of the political (and post-political) in the BRICS-EU dyad. Despite 'multipolar' ambiguities, the EU's approach to global governance ultimately embodies a 'police' project in Rancière's sense. BRICS, while not absconding from international police, also mobilise a political moment by 'putting . . . two worlds' – cosmopolitanism and multipolarity, the EU and BRICS, governmentality and politics – 'in one and the same world' (Rancière 2010: 69). This confrontation of two worlds in one challenges both the naturalness of liberal international order taken for granted by the EU, and Mouffe's more limited understanding of the political in international relations in terms of the conventional dynamics of balance-of-power or identity politics.

More broadly, my analysis shows that the emergence of a post-Western world is a more complicated matter than often assumed. On the one hand, the Western world of yore (as exemplified by the EU) has always been – and continues to be – more ambiguous and incongruous than liberal-cosmopolitan narratives suggest. On the other hand, the 'rise of the rest' (as exemplified by BRICS) is both less and more transformative than commonly believed. Far from primarily constituting a multipolarising 'power shift', it reassembles multiple powers of extant governmentalities, while simultaneously entailing a potentially more radical (egalitarian) reimagination of international politics. Rather than understanding international politics in terms of ever-present power, institutions or identities alone, Rancière's political theory challenges us to conceive of it in terms of more intermittent egalitarian enactments of simultaneous division and community.

Cosmopolitanism versus multipolarity

Since the end of the Cold War, cosmopolitanism has (re-)emerged as a prominent vision for global community and governance portending new forms of loyalty and identity, citizenship and community, and

10 Neither Cosmopolitanism nor Multipolarity: The Political Beyond Global Governmentality

Hans-Martin Jaeger

Taking Chantal Mouffe's (2005) discussion of cosmopolitanism and multipolarity as a vantage point, this chapter examines contemporary dynamics of the political and post-political in international relations through an investigation of the global governance projects of the European Union (EU) and the recently constituted BRICS group (Brazil, Russia, India, China, South Africa). Emerging against the background of the unipolar or neo-imperial moment of the United States in early twenty-first-century world politics, EU and BRICS global governance programmes might be seen as important alternatives to recent American visions of world order, which seem to point in rather different directions. *Prima facie*, the EU's commitment to a post-sovereign world of multilateral cooperation underpinned by globalisation, human rights and the rule of law appears to contrast with BRICS' call for a multipolar world order based on equal sovereignty. This is reminiscent of the distinction that Mouffe draws between cosmopolitanism and multipolarity. Mouffe criticises cosmopolitan theorists for promoting a post-political vision that simultaneously denies hegemonic and pluralistic dimensions of (world) politics by presuming or promoting an international consensus around liberal democracy, postnational identity, cosmopolitan rights and technocratic global governance. Against this homogenising and depoliticising conception of world politics, Mouffe endorses the agonistic pluralism of a multipolar world order as a preferable alternative. My chapter complicates Mouffe's critique of cosmopolitanism and advocacy of multipolar order by mobilising Foucauldian governmentality analysis and Jacques Rancière's conception of the political ('politics').

In a first move, it deconstructs the opposition between the cosmopolitanism of the EU's approach to external relations and the multipolar global governance project of BRICS by unfolding the

political processes and institutions beyond the sovereign state and commensurate with the globalisation of social and economic life. While generally liberal in orientation, cosmopolitanism has been cast in a variety of different forms. Habermas's discourse-ethical update of Kant's cosmopolitanism envisions inclusive discourses leading to consensus on the juridification of global human rights norms; Beck's more sociological interpretation of cosmopolitanism sees the latter as a consequence of the globalisation of ecological, economic and political risks that call for 'subpolitical' deliberations between experts and activists; and Held and Archibugi's political-institutional variant of cosmopolitanism is especially concerned with the increasing institutionalisation of democratic processes of global governance (Brown and Held 2010).

Mouffe faults all of these variants of cosmopolitanism for an 'anti-political vision', which promises a world beyond conflict, hegemony and sovereignty that displaces inevitable political antagonisms towards a moral register. Following Carl Schmitt, Mouffe sees the root of liberal cosmopolitanism's depoliticisation in its privileging of abstract individualism over collective identities, and its rational faith in the possibility of universal consensus. Moderating Schmitt's views, she advocates the transformation of (the) antagonism (of friends and enemies) into a pluralistic agonism, which provides political channels for (fundamentally) dissenting voices and conflictual representations of the world. Absent the possibility for legitimate agonistic political expression, both domestic and international politics are liable to degenerate into more violent forms of antagonism, such as xenophobic populism or terrorism (Mouffe 2005).

In contemporary international politics, Mouffe (2005: 81–2) sees a 'drastically reduced' space for agonistic expression, especially for challenging 'the hegemony of the neo-liberal model of globalisation', due to the US-led Western dominance in many international organisations. Despite their criticisms of US government policies in the 'war on terror', Mouffe (2005: 83, 90) charges the supporters of cosmopolitan visions with feeding this 'negation of "the political"' by perpetuating the idea that Western democracies, especially in Europe, embody 'the "best regime"' and ... have the "civilising" mission of universalising it'. To Mouffe, the post-political character of the cosmopolitan perspective is particularly apparent in its concept of global governance, which sees politics as the 'resolution of technical problems', thereby denying the constitutive role of power relations for international order (Mouffe 2005: 104–7).

Given the deficiencies of cosmopolitanism, Mouffe advocates 'multipolar world order' as an alternative. The latter would 'acknowledge the deeply pluralistic nature of the world' (Mouffe 2005: 91)

and would require multiple 'centres of decision' with an 'equilibrium' among various powers or regional blocs 'based on the idea of regional poles and cultural identities' (Mouffe 2005: 116–17). The philosophical stake of Mouffe's 'multipolar project' is the recognition of forms of modernity and subjectivity beyond the European historical experience. However, Mouffe still sees a role for a 'political Europe' in a multipolar world. Beyond a mere power-political rivalry with the US (though conducive to equilibrium), 'Europe' should 'assert its identity' by promoting a 'civilisational model' different from American neoliberalism but without any cosmopolitan pretense (Mouffe 2005: 127–9).

Some of Mouffe's claims about cosmopolitan theory bear closer scrutiny. For example, it is debatable whether Habermas sidelines the political and calls for a wholesale moralisation of international politics, as asserted by Mouffe. Habermas (2011: 47) acknowledges that European unification is not a mere laboratory for cosmopolitanism but also allows Europe to regain room for political manoeuvre and self-assertion in counteracting its shrinking geopolitical and economic weight in the world. He also seeks to guard against excessive moralisation of his cosmopolitan project by limiting its reliance on moral outrage to 'egregious human rights violations and manifest acts of [interstate] aggression' without any further presupposition of normative consensus (Habermas 2006: 143; cf. 116–17, 189). While this does not fully insulate Habermas's cosmopolitanism against Mouffe's charges, it indicates a need to interrogate her cosmopolitan-multipolar binary. Indeed, as suggested by Puymbroeck and Oosterlynck (Chapter 4 of this volume), it might also be analytically fruitful to be more specific about different modalities of depoliticisation at play in the various streams of cosmopolitan theory.

As for Mouffe's 'multipolar world order' and Europe's role in it, we might note three problems in turn. First, Mouffe's advocacy of the well-worn balance of power (or 'equilibrium') as an alternative to cosmopolitanism overlooks the fact that, despite all differences and ruptures, both of these visions share a European history that has moved from a juridico-political logic of sovereignty towards more cumulative and economic modes of governance (Foucault 2007, 2008). The equilibrium element of Mouffe's multipolar approach already contains traces of the very depoliticising tendencies (for example, technical, expert forms of governance) which Mouffe laments in cosmopolitanism. Secondly, and related to the first point, Mouffe seems unaware of the – at least semantic – implication of her multipolar approach in more recent (neo-)realist theories of the balance of power in International Relations, which aim at explaining and predicting war and peace based on the polarity of the international

system (Waltz 1979; Mearsheimer 2010). This approach is rooted in an abstract individualism and instrumental rationality (transplanted to the level of the state) no less implicated in Western modernity than liberal cosmopolitanism (Ashley 1986). Thirdly, despite their disagreement, Mouffe (2005: 128) seems to share a certain Euro-nostalgia with cosmopolitan theorists, when she calls on 'Europe' to promote an alternative 'civilisational model' for globalisation. This idea remains beholden to the Eurocentric idea of Europe's exemplary role for the world.

Shifting from theoretical critique to a more situated mode of investigation, we will now destabilise the very opposition between cosmopolitanism and multipolarity by examining how they operate as governmentalities in two different contexts: the EU's external-relations programme and the emerging global governance agenda of BRICS. Just as many cosmopolitan theorists tend to associate the EU with their agenda, Mouffe would presumably see BRICS as a promising development towards a more multipolar world order. While these impressions are not fully mistaken, a governmentality perspective on the EU and BRICS can offer a more sociologically and politically fine-tuned account of cosmopolitanism and multipolar order than Mouffe.

Rather than taking claims about cosmopolitanism and multipolarity as alternative forms of world order at face value, a governmentality perspective draws attention to various rationalities and practices of ordering which make it possible to present these as coherent – post-political or political – programmes of governance in the first place. Although Žižek (2002: 100) overstates the case when arguing that 'the fundamental feature of post-politics is the reduction of politics to "biopolitics"', a Foucauldian governmentality analysis can add (or fill in) a layer of epistemic, discursive and practical substructures potentially blunting antagonism and conflict, and underwriting the structures of consensus and technocracy that mark post-politics. However, this sociologically richer account of post-politics also complicates and confounds Mouffe's very distinction between (post-political) cosmopolitanism and (properly political) multipolar order by exposing pastoral hierarchy (if you will, hegemony) at the heart of the former and rationalities of biopolitical regulation and management of populations within the latter. While this may be seen to defuse the political promise of multipolar order and the post-political perils of cosmopolitanism, it anticipates Rancière's (2010: 207) claim (to which we will return) that the political ('politics') and the post-political ('police') can never be pure but always exist in a world of mixture.

Two limitations of the following analysis should be noted. First,

while Foucauldian governmentality analysis (Foucault 2007, 2008; Dean 2010) is often concerned with 'smaller' techniques and tactics, only the 'larger' rationalities and mentalities of governing will be considered for illustrative purposes here. Secondly, the illustration will be limited to a rather selective though symptomatic set of materials, namely the EU's external governance agenda in the Lisbon Treaty and the BRICS Summit Declarations from 2009 to 2012.

AmbigEUities and BRIColages of global governmentality

The opening article of the provisions on the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) in the EU's Lisbon Treaty appears to exemplify a cosmopolitan agenda:

The Union's action on the international scene shall be guided by the principles which have inspired its own creation, development and enlargement, and which it seeks to advance in the wider world: democracy, the rule of law, the universality and indivisibility of human rights and fundamental freedoms, respect for human dignity, the principles of equality and solidarity, and respect for the principles of the United Nations and international law. (Article 21(1), Consolidated Version of the Treaty on European Union)

From a governmentality perspective, we may note two initial points. First, while the enumerated principles have certainly been important to modern European political thought and practice, it is less clear to what extent they have inspired the 'creation' and 'development' of the EU as such. The political rationalities effectively governing the constitution and evolution of European integration have varied considerably without consistently emphasising principles of democracy, the rule of law, human rights, and so on (see Walters and Haahr 2005). While these principles have been important criteria in the evaluation of candidate countries for EU enlargement, this may evoke imperial governance (Behr 2007). Secondly, aside from its ideological content we can consider the CFSP opening statement as a governmental programme. Foucault understands government as a 'conduct of conduct(s)', a conduct both of oneself and of others (Foucault 2000: 341). In the phrase about the principles said to have inspired the 'creation, development and enlargement' of the EU as well as the advancement of these principles 'in the wider world', we can see both of these senses of government (that of self and that of others) at play.

Mitchell Dean (2010: 19) indicates that government is 'an intensely moral activity' in the sense that it engages with 'how both the "governed" and "governors" regulate themselves', and that it stipulates 'what constitutes good, virtuous, appropriate, responsible conduct'. For the EU, such conduct is defined by, broadly speaking, liberal-cosmopolitan principles. However, the governmentality analytic highlights an ambiguity here. Notwithstanding the liberal content of these principles, Article 21 of the Lisbon Treaty suggests that those already exhibiting them in their own conduct are in a privileged position to 'advance' them in the conduct of others ('in the wider world') as well. This implies more pastoral or pedagogical, or as previously mentioned, imperial forms of regulation of conduct. The ambiguity is that egalitarian principles of governance (democracy, rule of law, and so on) coexist with hierarchical ones in the definition of the EU's role in the world.

So far, our analysis seems to support Mouffe's apprehensions about the post-political tendencies of a 'cosmopolitan Europe'. However, beyond any cosmopolitan 'civilising mission', further ambiguities mark the EU's external relations as mapped by the Lisbon Treaty, ambiguities which destabilise Mouffe's opposition between cosmopolitanism and multipolarity. In contrast to 'contradictions' within an otherwise homogeneous (say, 'cosmopolitan') governmentality, ambiguities may be constructive rather than disruptive elements of governmentality (Best 2005, 2008). Apart from the 'liberal-imperial' ambiguity, at least three further ambiguities make EU external relations governable: (1) an ambiguity between a self-understanding of the EU as a 'civilian' (or 'normative') and a military power; (2) an ambiguity between the 'constitutional' and 'extra-constitutional' character of EU external relations; and (3) a (continuing) ambiguity between the supranationalism and intergovernmentalism of the CFSP.

The upshot of these ambiguities is that a 'cosmopolitan' reading of the EU as a civilian, constitutional and supranational entity would be too one-sided because they contain elements (military power, 'extra-constitutional' procedures, and intergovernmentalism) that demonstrate that the EU is more prepared to participate in a multipolar world order than either cosmopolitan theorists or Mouffe recognise. Owing to the EU's assembly of ambiguities, a 'multipolar' orientation (towards hegemony, conflict and traditional sovereignty) lurks beneath its ostensible cosmopolitanism. However, turning to the multipolar trend presumably signalled by the emergence of BRICS, we will see that Mouffe's multipolar agenda also faces some intrinsic challenges.

The inauguration of a multipolar world order is perhaps the most widely cited rationale or consequence of the emergence of the BRICS

group. Both journalistic coverage and academic treatments have highlighted this aspect of BRICS more than any other (for example Tisdall 2012; Yardley 2012; Roberts 2010a, 2010b; Glosny 2010; Sinha and Dorschner 2010). Of course, the fascination with multipolarity in relation to BRICS is not merely a journalistic or academic chimera. All four BRIC(S) summit declarations have explicitly stated support for a multipolar world order. However, the following analysis demonstrates that multipolar objectives are merely one piece in a more complex puzzle – or 'bricolage' – of global governmentalities at play in the emergence of BRICS.

My analysis highlights two more specific but equally central aspects of governmentality, namely the biopolitical concern with population and the oft-mentioned concern with economy. Both of these concerns reorient politics and sovereignty from their more agonistic dimensions (whether in the internal exercise of popular sovereignty or external competition among sovereignties) towards more regulatory, managerial and ultimately depoliticised forms of conduct. A survey of BRICS' summit declarations shows that traditional concerns of sovereignty (territory, law, and so forth) are indeed supplemented and recast in terms of biopolitical concerns with the wealth, welfare and health of the population (Foucault 2003: 243–4; 2007: 104–8), especially the population of BRICS and the 'developing' world. Foucault (2003: 249) notes that biopolitics is a 'technology of security' which aims at 'achieving an overall equilibrium that protects the security of the whole from internal dangers'. It is in this light that we can read BRICS' (2012: para 1) self-identification as a 'partnership for global stability, security and prosperity'. Specifically, BRICS seek to address 'challenges to global well-being and stability' with reference to 'global recovery', sustainable development (BRICS 2012: para 2), and food and energy security, seen as 'central to addressing economic development, eradicating poverty, and combating hunger and malnutrition in many developing countries' (BRICS 2012: paras 28, 41). One could of course also describe these areas of biopolitical concern in terms of cosmopolitan solidarity.

Two specific ways of inducing biopolitical equilibrium and security include the organisation of 'milieus' (both natural and artificial) and 'circulations' (of people, merchandise, and so on), thereby constituting them as fields of governmental intervention (Foucault 2007: 20–3, 29). Organising circulation involves 'a division between good and bad circulation, and maximising the good circulation by diminishing the bad' (Foucault 2007: 18). Organisational logics of milieus and circulations are clearly operative in BRICS' global governmentality. BRICS are concerned over the 'uncertain environment for global growth' and call for 'an improved international monetary and

financial architecture' (BRICS 2012: paras 5–7). They also pledge their support for addressing the degradation of the natural environment, especially with respect to climate change (BRICS 2012: para 30). A concern with the balance between 'good' and 'bad' circulations is apparent in warnings against 'volatile cross-border capital flows' (BRICS 2012: para 6) and terrorist finance (BRIC 2010: para 23) on the one hand, and calls for 'enhancing the flow of development finance' (BRICS 2012: para 11) and 'trade and investment flows among our countries' (BRICS 2012: para 18) on the other.

Entwined with the problem of population, governmentality also involves the deployment of economic knowledges, especially statistics, and the constitution of 'the economy' as a 'field of intervention' (Foucault 2007: 95). The centrality of economy to BRICS' global governance approach is evident in their pervasive concern with economic growth (BRICS 2012: paras 5, 28, 35; 2011: paras 13, 23; 2010: paras 6–8). And, of course, Goldman Sachs economist Jim O'Neill's designation of 'the BRICS' as 'emerging economies' inspired the birth of BRIC(S) in the first place. 'Economy' then is not only a matter of practice, but even one of identity – indeed, the very *raison d'être* – for BRICS. A Joint Statistical Publication¹ presenting nationally disaggregated data on 'population', 'economically active population' and 'people's living standards', as well as chapters on 'milieus' ('resources and environment', and so on) and 'circulation' (imports and exports, tourism, and so on), is one of the most tangible results of BRICS cooperation to date.

Foucault (2007, 2008) marks a number of moments and passages in the genealogy of economic government from *raison d'État* to neoliberalism. For our purposes, two points are important. First, while once voicing doubt about the liberal belief in self-regulating markets (BRIC 2010: para 13), BRICS generally come strikingly close to invoking a version of the liberal utopia of permanent 'collective enrichment' and 'perpetual peace' which Foucault (2008: 44, 51–8, 61–2) associates with the 'globalisation' of the market in late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century European liberalism. Secondly, BRICS' approach to governance also appears to reflect a particular, ordoliberal version of neoliberalism which requires a vigilant government acting on the legal and institutional 'framework' of the economy (rather than intervening in the economy itself) (Foucault 2008: 120–1, 138–40, 163–4). The assumption of such an enframing (or 'monetary and financial architecture') for the world economy is prominent in BRICS' pronouncements on global governance.

Given BRICS' novelty, much of this analysis remains preliminary. Accounts of BRICS' governmentalities are certainly not exhausted by the forms of biopolitics, liberalism and neoliberalism outlined

by Foucault. Through their support of international initiatives for sustainable development, the Millennium Development Goals and counter-terrorism, BRICS are additionally connected to a 'rhizome' of existing environmentalities, developmentalities and anticipatory rationalities (Luke 1995; Ilcan and Phillips 2010; Aradau and van Munster 2007). Of course, BRICS may interpret, rationalise and implement these in ways that defy their original 'intentions'. Nevertheless, it should be clear that BRICS cannot be reduced to expressing 'multipolar world order', but manifest and are inserted into a much broader 'bricolage' of governmentalities, many of which could be equally at home within a cosmopolitan framework. More generally, the partial ideological convergence between the EU and the BRICS global governance agenda illuminated by a governmentality perspective highlights the significant redirection of the political-economic projects of at least some of the individual members of the BRICS group (especially Russia, India, and China) since the end of the Cold War. It can therefore be seen as symptomatic of the particular post-political condition (the end of political divisions and utopian projects) that Rancière (1995: ch. 1) and others have associated with this historical juncture.²

The (post-)political beyond governmentality and multipolarity

While highlighting ambiguity and complexity beyond cosmopolitanism and multipolarity, a governmentality analysis may not fully capture the political character of governance projects such as those of BRICS or the EU. Indeed, Mouffe might object that governmentality elides the political (conflict, hegemony, and so on) in a way similar to liberal cosmopolitanism (see Mouffe 2005: 107–15). In my view, this objection would miss the basic point of a Foucauldian analysis that power and politics may manifest themselves in more microphysical forms than pervasive hegemony or overt antagonism. Yet, governmentality is not co-extensive with politics. According to Rancière (2010: 93), Foucault's question of the biopolitical 'individualisation of bodies and ... socialisation of populations ... is not the same as that of politics'. We therefore now turn to Rancière's political theory with two overlapping purposes: first (*vis-à-vis* Mouffe), to think the political and post-political in international politics in terms other than multipolarity and cosmopolitanism, namely in terms of 'politics' and 'police' (without however positing these as a new binary); and second (*vis-à-vis* our Foucauldian analysis), to explore the political surplus or deficit of BRICS' and the EU's global governance

projects beyond governmentality. Rancière provides a particularly suitable point of reference here because his analysis of 'ordinary' politics overlaps with Foucault's notion of police, and because he simultaneously shares Mouffe's concern with restoring an agonistic element to politics to (re-)open political space beyond technocratic management and consensus.

However, two differences in Rancière's approach should be noted at the outset. First, Rancière departs from both thinkers in denying power and identity central stage in his political theory (Rancière 1999: 32, 42; 2010: 27). Secondly, compared to the more historicising temper of governmentality analysis, Rancière's political theory engages in considerable abstraction. Despite these differences, it can provide a corrective for Mouffe's problematic conception of the political (multipolarity) and post-political (cosmopolitanism) in the international sphere, and for the partial oblivion of the political in governmentality analysis. Substantively, this section demonstrates that while both the EU and BRICS (in different ways) partake in the reproduction of a post-political international ('police') order, BRICS additionally (albeit intermittently) mobilise political moments with the potential of exceeding this order.

The latter claim necessitates a third caveat. Much as Foucault's concept of governmentality raises questions of scale (relationships between micro- and macro-processes), Rancière might resist the 'application' of his emancipatory conception of politics to states or international coalitions like BRICS, given the underlying post-foundational understanding of politics in his work (see Marchart 2010). However, the point here is not to ascribe some kind of transcendental political agency to BRICS. Rather it is to argue that the political ('politics') is always mobilised *in situ* including, perhaps unexpectedly, in practices overtly more geared to governance than resistance. While this way of engaging Rancière may not be 'leftist' in a traditional sense, it is at least not merely 'speculative' (see Loftus, Chapter 11 of this volume) but rather, as in our case, it is attuned to particular geopolitical practices.

Like Mouffe, Rancière distinguishes genuinely political practices and relationships from the often depoliticised 'official' institutions and practices (falsely) called politics (elections, bureaucratic decision-making, and so on). Rancière (1999: 28) borrows (and broadens) Foucault's notion of 'police' to refer to the latter set of activities, while reserving the term 'politics' for those actions that disrupt police. However, for Rancière, the role of police is both more general and more specific than for Foucault. At a general level, police defines the very 'configuration of the perceptible' or 'the allocation of ways of doing, ways of being, and ways of saying'; at a more specific

level, it determines the 'shares' (places, roles, positions, identities) of different parties in the social order (Rancière 1999: 28–9). To Rancière (2010: 95) then, 'police designates not an institution of power but a distribution of the sensible³ within which it becomes possible to define strategies and techniques of power'.

Both the EU and BRICS reproduce (international) police order in Rancière's sense. Constructivists in International Relations have highlighted that international organisations wield powers of classifying the world, defining categories of actors and action, fixing meanings, and articulating and diffusing norms (Barnett and Finnemore 2004: 29–34). While perhaps overly voluntaristic (as though such powers were original and exclusive to international organisations), this analysis captures important dimensions of how international organisations like the EU (re)produce a particular configuration of the sensible, which is central to Rancière's conception of police. It is revealing that Barnett and Finnemore (2004: 24–5) ascribe much of the 'police' capacity of international organisations to 'the appearance of depoliticisation' they project by relying on bureaucratic mechanisms and technical expertise. Leaving aside questions of the appearance or reality of depoliticisation, this perhaps makes it less plausible to ascribe police capacity to the as yet relatively weakly institutionalised BRICS group. Nevertheless, both the EU and BRICS participate in international police by configuring discursive space and allocating the shares of different parties.

Broadly speaking, the EU seeks to (re)produce a discursive space of international relations with states and organisations sharing its liberal principles and interest in international order, globalisation, multilateral cooperation and 'good global governance' (art. 21, CVTEU). As previously seen, the EU sees itself as a pastor, teacher, or exemplary civil(ising) power with a special mission to benefit the less 'advanced' within this (ambiguously) liberal universe. We also saw that BRICS' bricolage of governmentalities contains a dose of liberalism defining the visible, doable and sayable in ways not entirely dissimilar from the EU. This includes commitments to international law, multilateral cooperation, growth of the global economy, and so on. However, two differences should be noted. First, while both the EU and BRICS invoke the United Nations as a pillar of international (police) order, the EU does so in a largely backward-looking and 'conservative' manner, pointing to the UN Charter as the guideline for maintaining international order (art. 21(2c), CVTEU). Diverging from a mere conservation of the post(Cold-)war world, BRICS perceive a world of 'far-reaching, complex and profound changes' (BRICS 2011: para 7; see also 2012: para 2; 2010: para 1) in which the UN ought to (continue to) play a central role, while also requiring

reform itself (BRICS 2012: para 26–7; 2011: para 8; 2010: para 4; 2009: para 14). Secondly, and related to the global changes, BRICS are also concerned with police in the more specific sense of the (re-) allocation of the shares of different parties; namely, in demanding quota and voting reform in the international financial institutions to ‘enhance the voice and representation of emerging market and developing countries’ (BRICS 2012: paras 8–9). BRICS then seek both preservation and transformation of international order. This is where Rancière’s understanding of the political, or ‘politics’, becomes relevant.

Rancière understands politics as involving particular forms of conflict, which he calls *dissensus* or *disagreement*, as well as the emergence of new political subjects, which he calls *subjectivation*. He further defines politics in terms of three related elements, namely as a *staging of equality* that exposes a wrong (Rancière 1995: 96–7). Let us consider these three elements, their contextualisation within dissensus and subjectivation, and how they may relate to BRICS. First, contrary to thinkers such as Aristotle, Arendt or Habermas who ground politics in speech, Rancière argues that politics has less to do with speech as such than with what counts as speech. Before any communication of interests in the medium of speech, politics is ‘conflict over the existence of a common stage and over the existence and status of those present on it’ (Rancière 1999: 26–7; see also Hallward 2009). Rancière locates this theatrical element of politics within ‘dissensus’, that is, a dispute not simply over interests, opinions or values, but over the very ‘partition of the sensible’: what is (and what is not) sayable (or visible), who can (and who cannot) say it, and what counts (and what does not count) as a political statement or political space. Dissensus simultaneously creates division and community by ‘placing ... two worlds in a single world’ (Rancière 1999: 27).

BRICS’ political theatricality emerges when we look beyond the ‘speech’ of BRICS’ declarations to the very speech situation in which they are placed. A recent paper by Russian diplomat and BRICS coordinator Vadim Lukov can provide some inkings here. Vis-à-vis the Western ‘inclination “not to notice” the establishment of BRICS ‘or to expect its quick demise’, Lukov (2012) proclaims it ‘one of the most significant geopolitical events of the new century’. The title of his paper, ‘A global forum for the new generation: The role of the BRICS and the prospects for the future’, evokes both a shared stage (a global forum) and different worlds (the new and, by implication, an older generation of ‘informal global institutions’ such as the G–7 or the G–77), which are thereby placed in a single world; a world in which BRICS may ‘revive a “bloc approach”’ (creating division),

while simultaneously providing ‘a new model for global relations ... that overrides the old East–West and North–South barriers’ (thereby creating community at the same time).

Secondly and perhaps most importantly, Rancière argues that politics involves a ‘presupposition of equality’ by those who are not supposed to ‘have a part’ in the community and yet identify themselves with it (Rancière 1999: 61–3). Rather than a mathematical proportion (as for the ancients) or a legal-political or economic construct (as for the moderns), the presupposition of equality refers to an assumption that ‘the people’ can ‘verify’ through action (Rancière 1995: 45–8, 85; cf. 1999: 33).⁴ With regard to BRICS, the presupposition of equality is a complex issue. While BRICS claim to validate this presupposition on behalf of the 43 per cent of the world’s ‘people’ they comprise (BRICS 2012: para 3), they simultaneously face daily challenges from (the) people acting under a presupposition of equality.⁵ Moreover, internationally BRICS simultaneously appear as ‘having a part’ (as ‘great powers’) and not having a part (as erstwhile ‘developing countries’) in the ‘international community’. Bearing in mind these qualifications, certain key points in the BRICS summit documents (perhaps along with the very staging of BRICS summits) do suggest a presupposition of equality. Specifically, BRICS call for ‘greater democracy in international relations’ based on ‘equality’ and ‘mutual respect’ and an enhanced ‘voice of emerging and developing countries’ (BRICS 2011: paras 5, 7; 2009: para 12; cf. 2010: para 2).

By contrast, the EU’s pronouncements in support of democracy and equality (in art. 21(1), CTEU) effectively make a ‘presupposition of inequality’ between the EU and ‘the wider world’. When considering EU and BRICS democratic and egalitarian speech in juxtaposition, we are faced with what Rancière (1999: x–xi) calls ‘disagreement’, that is, a speech situation in which the parties ‘both understand and do not understand the same thing by the same words’. Similarly to dissensus, disagreement is a function of breaching assumptions about who is entitled to speak a certain language rather than the content of speech. The Lisbon Treaty may see democracy and equality as attributes of certain institutional arrangements in EU member states, whereas BRICS emphasise democracy and equality among (rather than within) states. However, disagreement arises not from this difference of interpretation, but rather from the fact that BRICS appropriate the words of democracy and equality to ‘verify’ them in practice. Such a postulation of a world of shared meaning constitutes a ‘transgressive’, genuinely political action whose objective is

not to found a counterpower susceptible of governing a future society, but simply to effect a demonstration of *capacity* which is also a demonstration

of *community* ... not secession, but self-affirmation as a joint-sharer in a common world, with the assumption, appearances to the contrary notwithstanding, that one can play the same game as the adversary. (Rancière 1995: 49)

'Politics occurs', says Rancière, when supposedly natural orders of inequality, (such as that implied by art. 21(1), CVTEU), are 'interrupted' by a presupposition of equality (Rancière 1999: 16–17). 'The essence of equality is ... to undo the supposed naturalness of orders and replace it with controversial figures of division' (Rancière 1995: 32–3).

Rancière's generic term for such figures of division, and the third element of politics, is 'wrong' or 'an injustice that needs to be addressed' (Rancière 1995: 97). From BRICS' perspective, 'wrong' could be signified by a largely Western narrative of world history (Zakaria 2009: 34–5), colonial and postcolonial grievances, China's 'century of humiliation' (Kaufman 2010), Russia's post-Cold War humiliation, or (legacies of) apartheid in South Africa. As previously mentioned, a more immediate wrong of concern to BRICS as a group is the inadequate representativeness of international financial institutions. However, while wrong may concern the distribution of positions (such as voting shares in the IMF), its significance derives from its 'constitutive function ... in transforming egalitarian logic into political logic' (Rancière 1999: 35). Rather than an identifiable tort that could be redressed juridically or by enfranchisement, wrong signifies a fundamental irreconcilability of different parties; a 'radical otherness' exemplified in Aristotle's figure of the stranger to a city (Rancière 1995: 97), or in our context, BRICS' (partial) alterity vis-à-vis a putative Eurocentric *cosmopolis*.

The alterity exposed by wrong is not a form of identity politics. Rather than presupposing given identities, wrong constitutes parties to a conflict as political subjects. Politics is a mechanism of subjectivation creating political subjects rather than being created by pre-existing ones. More precisely, subjectivation transforms 'identities defined in the natural order of ... functions and places into instances of experience of a dispute' (Rancière 1999: 36). Subjectivation is a particularly useful lens to understand the political in BRICS. BRICS are alternately identified as 'emerging markets/economies', criticised as 'irresponsible stakeholders' (Patrick 2010), or admonished to become 'responsible stakeholders' in the international system (see Roberts 2010a; Etzioni 2011; Thakur 2012). What these 'natural' and depoliticising identifications and admonitions overlook is that the emergence of BRICS, rather than relying on pre-existing regional, cultural-civilisational, or functional identities

(as in Mouffe's multipolar order), marks an instance of political subjectivation and 'disidentification' (Rancière 1999: 36). BRICS' collaboration problematises 'natural' identities (for instance, by juxtaposing 'developing countries' to 'emerging economies') and corresponding responsibilities as 'stakeholders' in an order not or only partially of their own making. BRICS do not have to exist as a political subject (say, a regional 'pole' with a 'civilisational' identity) to engage in politics. Rather, the extent to which BRICS effectively engage in politics (which may be quite rare) shapes their political subjectivity.

BRICS' subjectivation, rather than an *ex nihilo* creation, reworks what it may mean for 'emerging economies' to be 'responsible stakeholders'. While Western calls to responsible stakeholderhood sound like parental admonitions to a teenager, BRICS may politicise these notions. As David Scott illustrates in an analysis of official Chinese interpretations of responsibility, being a 'responsible stakeholder' can be mobilised in various ways: as a form of 'discourse power' accompanying a 'peaceful rise'; as being 'reasonable'; as implying stakeholder rights; as a contrast with US 'irresponsibility'; or most importantly here, 'to suggest a crucial equality of status with the US' (Scott 2010: 74–83). Conversely, BRICS may invoke 'common but differentiated responsibilities' of 'developed' and 'developing' countries in international environmental policy to (re)claim the latter status and its exemptions (BRICS 2012: paras 29, 31; 2011: para 22; 2010: para 22; 2009: para 9). BRICS thus mark a gap between the 'natural' identities assigned to them ('responsible stakeholders', 'emerging economies') and a more contentious experience (for example, as postcolonial or 'underdeveloped' countries) behind these identities. In contrast to identity politics in the name of multipolarity, this disidentification may be the hallmark of BRICS' political subjectivation.

A political understanding of BRICS has to be kept in perspective. BRICS' implication with multiple governmentalities and international police may more often attenuate rather than incite their dissensual potentials. However, while Rancière sharply distinguishes politics and police in principle, in practice they are entangled whenever egalitarian logic confronts police logic (Rancière 1999: 31–3; see also Chambers 2011). In our context, this entanglement is perhaps most apparent in BRICS' call for voting reform in international financial institutions. Given their mutual entanglement, 'police' and 'politics' cut across the binary of cosmopolitanism and multipolarity. 'Police' may be cosmopolitan or non-cosmopolitan, and the political is more contingent, incalculable and intermittent than images of multipolarity and equilibrium suggest.

Conclusion

Using the EU and BRICS global governance projects as an illustration, this chapter has attempted to build a bridge between discussions of the political and post-political in Mouffe's and Rancière's political theories and Foucauldian governmentality analysis. In one direction, the traffic across this bridge supplements accounts of post-politics with the governmental and biopolitical rationalities and infrastructures that make possible the domestication of hierarchy and antagonism in the first place. In the other direction, it restores to governmentality analysis agonistic 'themes of conflict, contestation, dissonance and struggle' which sometimes seem to elude it (Walters 2012: 148). However, rather than deriving this agonism from a Schmittian antagonism between friends and enemies (like Mouffe), my analysis has followed Rancière in locating it in certain forms of social practice (or, if you will, quasi-Foucauldian counter-conducts) at least partially disruptive of governmentality. Recognising the 'world of mixture' (Rancière's 2010: 207) of governmentality and politics in the EU-BRICS dyad allows for thinking the political and post-political in international relations beyond Mouffe's binary of cosmopolitanism and multipolarity. While cosmopolitanism is more ambiguous and insidiously political than Mouffe recognises, her focus on multipolar equilibrium as a somewhat 'left-Huntingtonian' clash of civilisational identities misses out on several at least equally important dimensions of the political not bound up with power and identity; specifically, the theatricality, presupposed equality, and concern with (in)justice foregrounded by Rancière.

However, rather than as a(n unlikely) new orthodoxy, Rancière's political theory should serve as a provocation to thinking about the meaning of global democracy. For Rancière '[d]emocracy is not a regime or a social way of life. It is the institution of politics itself' (Rancière 1999: 101; cf. 2010: 31–2). To the extent that BRICS at least partially and momentarily activate a political moment in global governance, they could be – no doubt counterintuitively for many – a symptom of a certain kind of global democracy; a form of global democracy that does not find expression in representative institutions or deliberative procedures but intermittently disrupts these in the name of equality or wrong as well as a claim to shared (international) community. Global democracy may be more sporadic than we usually imagine, cropping up in unexpected places such as BRICS, not necessarily 'representing' the disenfranchised, but simply registering that their voice should count as political speech. While BRICS themselves ought to be challenged democratically 'from below', their partial disruption of post-political consensus in

international relations should in itself be considered as a democratic challenge to global (police) order.

Notes

1. Available at <http://www.bricsindia.in/publication.html> (accessed 20 April 2012).
2. Thanks to the editors for suggesting this point.
3. That is, the naturalised and acceptable (Swyngedouw 2011: 375), and perhaps the sensual (*jouissance*) (Wilson, Chapter 5 of this volume).
4. For Rancière the people, the demos, is a desubstantialised notion. What the demos means sociologically emerges in the practical validation of equality. See Rancière (1999: 83, 99–100; 2010: 33).
5. Witness indigenous peoples' resistance in Brazil, 'Pussy Riot(s)' in Russia, Dalit mobilisation in India, environmental dissent in China, or independent unions in South Africa, to name only some conspicuous examples.

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II Against a Speculative Leftism

Alex Loftus

One may term 'Byzantinism' or 'scholasticism' the regressive tendency to treat so-called theoretical questions as if they had a value in themselves, independently of any specific practice . . . It can further be deduced that every truth, even if it is universal, and even if it can be expressed by an abstract formula of a mathematical kind (for the sake of the theoreticians), owes its effectiveness to its being expressed in the language appropriate to specific concrete situations. If it cannot be expressed in such specific terms, it is a byzantine and scholastic abstraction, good only for phrasemongers to toy with. (Gramsci Q 9, § 63; 1971: 200–1)

Periods of revolutionary insurrection prompt periods of reflection on the nature of politics. What may only be tentative signs of the abilities of subaltern groups to reshape social relations provoke treatises on the successes and the frustrations of such interventions, treatises which often turn on a reconceptualisation of the political. In the wake of Occupy's dramatic emergence and equally sudden disappearance, the attempt to delineate the bounds of the truly political event has yet again acquired a new urgency. In this chapter, I argue that how we engage with actually existing movements such as Occupy – and how we understand 'politics' in relation to them – matters enormously. It matters not only for the nature of our work as scholars but also for the power relations shaping knowledge production. The form of our engagement with social movements, moreover, will be shaped by where we see the conditions of possibility for future change. My focus in this chapter is largely confined to the political conceptions of Antonio Gramsci – which were developed in the wake of the Factory Councils and the reversal of a revolutionary moment as Italy descended into fascism – and their posthumous reception in post-Althusserian scholarship, which has influenced more recent readings of the political and post-political (Laclau and