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The Contribution of Laclau's Discourse Theory to International Relations and International Political Economy: Introduction to the Symposium

Frank A. Stengel and Dirk Nabers

Research Group on International Political Sociology, Kiel University, Kiel, Germany

Frank A. Stengel, Kiel University, Research Group on International Political Sociology, Wilhelm-Seelig-Platz 2, 24118 Kiel, Germany, stengel@ips.uni-kiel.de

Frank A. Stengel is a Research Fellow in the Research Group on International Political Sociology, Kiel University, Kiel, Germany. His research focuses on International Political Sociology, discourse theory, Critical Security Studies, and German and US foreign policy. His work has been published in, among others, *Global Discourse*, *Journal of International Relations and Development* and *International Peacekeeping*. He is the co-editor of *Populism and World Politics: Exploring Inter- and Transnational Dimensions* (Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan, 2019). His doctoral dissertation "Discursive Change and Foreign Policy: A Discourse Analysis of Germany's Changing Stance on the International Use of Force" received the 2018 EISA Best Dissertation Award. He tweets at @frankstengel.

Dirk Nabers has been a full professor of International Political Sociology at Kiel University since 2010. Previously, he worked as a senior research fellow and head of the doctoral program at the GIGA German Institute of Global and Area Studies, Hamburg, from 2000 to 2010. He also served as a guest professor at Otago University,

NZ and at International Christian University, Tokyo. Before, he held positions as an assistant professor at Trier University, Germany, and at Miami University, European Center. He received his PhD in IR from Muenster University, Germany.

The Contribution of Laclau's Discourse Theory to International Relations and International Political Economy: Introduction to the Symposium

This symposium explores the value of Poststructuralist (or Political) Discourse Theory (PDT) for the analysis of world politics. PDT was originally developed by the late Argentine political theorist Ernesto Laclau and has entered the margins of International Relations (IR) in recent years, mainly by bringing in poststructuralist concepts that had previously been ignored by the more critical strands of theorizing. Against this background, the introduction (1) discusses the disconnect between PDT and research on world politics, primarily in IR, as well as PDT's potential contribution, (2) provides an overview of PDT's central theoretical tenets, in particular with respect to its social ontology and its theoretical concept of change and (3) introduces the contributions to the symposium.

Keywords: discourse; poststructuralism; social theory; International Relations; IPE; world politics; change; hegemony; practice; identity

Introduction

This symposium examines the contribution of (post-Marxist) poststructuralist (or political) discourse theory (PDT) to the study of world politics, and in particular to International Relations (IR) and International Political Economy (IPE). PDT is first and foremost associated with the works of the late Argentinian philosopher and political theorist Ernesto Laclau, whose seminal work *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy*, co-authored with Chantal Mouffe, laid the foundations for what would become a vibrant transdisciplinary field of

research.[1] Although the foundations of PDT were laid by Laclau and Mouffe together, both theorists subsequently developed their arguments in different directions. While Laclau continued his work on further developing the analytical framework of PDT, incorporating insights from continental philosophy, rhetoric and psychoanalysis, Mouffe has pushed further the normative questions posed by PDT, asking how a radical democratic polity can become possible.[2] The contributions to this symposium draw primarily on Laclau's analytical contributions.

The motivation behind this symposium is our somewhat curious observation that although poststructuralist approaches have become a staple within critical IR and IPE,[3] Laclau's reception has been rather limited. So far,

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[1] Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe, *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy: Towards a Radical Democratic Politics*, 2nd ed. (London: Verso, 2001).

[2] For a short overview, see André Sonnichsen, Allan Dreyer Hansen, and Carsten Jensen, "Introduction: Thematic Section on Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe," *Distinktion: Journal of Social Theory* 15, no. 3 (2014): 251-54; Mark Anthony Wenman, "Laclau or Mouffe? Splitting the Difference," *Philosophy & Social Criticism* 29, no. 5 (2003): 581-606.

[3] For an overview, see Andreas Bieler and Adam David Morton, "The Deficits of Discourse in IPE: Turning Base Metal into Gold?," *International Studies Quarterly* 52, no. 1 (2008): 103-28; Penny Griffin, "Poststructuralism in/and IPE," in *Critical International Political Economy: Dialogue, Debate and Dissensus*, eds. Stuart Shields, Ian Bruff and Huw Macartney (London: Palgrave Macmillan UK, 2011), 43-58; Maja Zehfuss, "Critical Theory,

only a handful of book-length studies and a slightly larger number of articles and chapters have been published in the past couple of years.[4] To be sure, this is not to say that Laclau has been a complete stranger to IR/IPE scholars either. In fact, leading proponents of IR poststructuralism have drawn on Laclau and

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Poststructuralism, and Postcolonialism," in *Handbook of International Relations*, eds. Walter Carlsnaes, Thomas Risse and Beth A. Simmons (London: Sage, 2013), 145-70.

[4] See Dominika Biegoń, *Hegemonies of Legitimation: Discourse Dynamics in the European Commission* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016); Roxanne Lynn Doty, *Imperial Encounters: The Politics of Representation in North-South Relations* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1996); Jakub Eberle, *Discourse and Affect in Foreign Policy: Germany and the Iraq War* (London & New York: Routledge, forthcoming 2019); Eva Herschinger, *Constructing Global Enemies: Hegemony and Identity in International Discourses on Terrorism and Drug Prohibition* (London & New York: Routledge, 2011); Dirk Nabers, *A Poststructuralist Discourse Theory of Global Politics* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015); Judith Renner, *Discourse, Normative Change and the Quest for Reconciliation in Global Politics* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2013); Delf Rothe, *Securitizing Global Warming: A Climate of Complexity* (London & New York: Routledge, 2015); Ty Solomon, *The Politics of Subjectivity in American Foreign Policy Discourses* (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 2014); Stefanie Wodrig, *Regional Intervention Politics in Africa: Crisis, Hegemony, and the Transformation of Subjectivity* (London & New York: Routledge, 2017); Thorsten Wojczewski, India's Foreign Policy Discourse and Its Conceptions of World Order: The Quest for Power and Identity (London & New York: Routledge, 2018); Joscha Wullweber, *Hegemonie, Diskurs und Politische Ökonomie* (Baden-Baden: Nomos, 2010).

Mouffe to elucidate the ontological status of discourse.[5] Also, scholars have used individual theoretical concepts from discourse theory in their work, such as the conception of discourse,[6] nodal points,[7] the empty signifier,[8] the notion of decision,[9] the relationship between particularism and universalism[10] or the

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[5] David Campbell, *Writing Security: United States Foreign Policy and the Politics of Identity*, rev. ed. (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1998); Jenny Edkins, *Poststructuralism & International Relations: Bringing the Political Back In* (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner, 1999); Lene Hansen, *Security as Practice: Discourse Analysis and the Bosnian War* (London & New York: Routledge, 2006).

[6] Campbell, *Writing Security*; Wrenn Yennie Lindgren and Petter Y. Lindgren, "Identity Politics and the East China Sea: China as Japan's 'Other'," *Asian Politics & Policy* 9, no. 3 (2017): 378-401; Julie Wilhelmsen, "How Does War Become a Legitimate Undertaking? Re-Engaging the Post-Structuralist Foundation of Securitization Theory," *Cooperation and Conflict* 52, no. 2 (2017): 166-83.

[7] Thomas Diez, "Speaking 'Europe': The Politics of Integration Discourse," *Journal of European Public Policy* 6, no. 4 (1999): 598-613.

[8] Thorsten Bonacker and André Brodocz, "Im Namen der Menschenrechte. Zur symbolischen Integration der internationalen Gemeinschaft durch Normen," *Zeitschrift für Internationale Beziehungen* 8, no. 2 (2001): 179-208; Claus Offe, "Governance: An 'Empty Signifier'?," *Constellations* 16, no. 4 (2009): 550-62.

[9] Leek, M., and V. Morozov. "Identity Beyond Othering: Crisis and the Politics of Decision in the EU's Involvement in Libya." *International Theory* 10, no. 1 (2018): 122-52.

[10] Stefan Borg, "The Politics of Universal Rights Claiming: Secular and Sacred Rights Claiming in Post-Revolutionary Tunisia," *Review of International Studies* 43, no. 3 (2017): 453-74; Barry Buzan and Ole Wæver, "Macrosecuritisation and Security Constellations:

logics of difference and equivalence.[11] However, the overwhelming majority of studies follows some form of conceptual cherry picking rather than tapping into the full potential of discourse theory.

The relative neglect of Laclau and Mouffe cannot be explained (at least not anymore) by a general aversion to poststructuralism in the field. Indeed, over the past two decades IR has developed into a quite hospitable environment for so-called poststructuralist thought more generally. In fact, studies that draw on thinkers such as Foucault, Derrida, Butler, Deleuze, Agamben, Levinas and others have proliferated in IR. The relative absence of Laclau is even more puzzling for three reasons in particular. First, both Laclau and Mouffe have gained significant prominence not just in political theory but in the social sciences and humanities more generally. Indeed, Laclau has become "a standard reference in the field of post-Marxism",[12] with some calling his work the "most developed"[13] or "most intellectually powerful"[14] example of

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Reconsidering Scale in Securitisation Theory," *Review of International Studies* 35, no. 2 (2009): 253-76.

[11] Hansen, *Security as Practice*.

[12] Jüridism Lipping, "The Hedgehog from the Pampas: Ernesto Laclau and the Impossibility of Society," *European Political Science* 15, no. 2 (2016): 271-76, 271f.

[13] Richard Howson, *The Sociology of Postmarxism* (New York & London: Routledge, 2017), 2.

[14] Göran Therborn, *From Marxism to Post-Marxism?* (New York: Verso, 2008), 141.

post-Marxist theory. Similarly, his work with Mouffe has been described as "amongst the most significant theoretical work in recent decades".[15]

Second, Laclau has developed a comprehensive ontological framework that conceptualizes the social *in toto* as discursive (we will get back to that in detail below) and that seeks its equal in terms of coherence and theoretical rigor.[16] If taken seriously, the proposal to analyse the social as discursive challenges a broad range of conventional conceptions, including the notion of an extra-discursive reality and, by extension, between discursive and social practices, the distinction between the ideational and the material as well as established notions such as sovereignty, identity, inclusion and exclusion, threat, Othering and antagonism. As such, PDT is highly relevant for a number of current (meta-) theoretical discussions and approaches in IR, including not just "poststructuralism"[17] but also practice theory,[18] Actor-Network Theory and

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[15] Sonnichsen, Hansen, and Jensen, "Introduction," 251.

[16] Mark Devenney, "Ernesto Laclau," *Contemporary Political Theory* 15, no. 3 (2016): 304f.

[17] We are aware that "poststructuralism" is far from being a theoretical monolith, drawing on at times mutually exclusive traditions in social theory. See Johannes Angermüller, *Why There Is No Poststructuralism in France: The Making of an Intellectual Generation* (London: Bloomsbury, 2015); Nabers, *A Poststructuralist Discourse Theory of Global Politics*. We simply use it here as a shorthand for the sake of simplicity.

[18] Christian Bueger and Frank Gadinger, eds., *International Practice Theory: New Perspectives* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014); "The Play of International Practice,"

the new materialism.[19] In a field of research at least once preoccupied with questions of "grand theory",[20] one would expect such a broad theoretical design not to go (virtually) unnoticed.

Third, not only does Laclau offer a social ontology, but he develops a general theory of social (*i.e.*, discursive) change. Based on the central concepts of discourse, hegemony, difference, equivalence, antagonism and articulation, the framework is intended not merely to describe social change but to explain

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International Studies Quarterly 59, no. 3 (2015): 449-60; David M. McCourt, "Practice Theory and Relationalism as the New Constructivism," *International Studies Quarterly* 60 (2016): 475-85.

[19] E.g., Jacqueline Best and William Walters, "'Actor-Network Theory' and International Relationality: Lost (and Found) in Translation," *International Political Sociology* 7, no. 3 (2013): 332-34; Christian Bueger, "Actor-Network Theory, Methodology, and International Organization," *International Political Sociology* 7, no. 3 (2013): 338-42; Daniel H. Nexon and Vincent Pouliot, "'Things of Networks': Situating ANT in International Relations," *International Political Sociology* 7, no. 3 (2013): 342-45; Tom Lundborg and Nick Vaughan-Williams, "New Materialisms, Discourse Analysis, and International Relations: A Radical Intertextual Approach," *Review of International Studies* 41, no. 1 (2015): 3-25; William E. Connolly, "The 'New Materialism' and the Fragility of Things," *Millennium: Journal of International Studies* 41, no. 3 (2013): 399-412.

[20] Daniel J. Levine and Alexander D. Barder, "The Closing of the American Mind: 'American School' International Relations and the State of Grand Theory," *European Journal of International Relations* 20, no. 4 (2014): 863-88; Andreas Behnke, "Grand Theory in the Age of Its Impossibility," *Cooperation and Conflict* 36, no. 1 (2001): 121-34.

how particular discursive positions (elements in Laclau's terminology) manage to become meaningful (moments in Laclau's terms) or even widely accepted as (factually) 'true' or (morally) 'right' (thus hegemonic). We will get back to the framework in detail below, but what should be noted in this context is that due to its broad scope (basically providing an explanation of social change in all its forms), PDT has at least in theory an exceptionally wide-ranging field of application in IR, IPE and other social science disciplines concerned with world politics, broadly understood.[21] In principle, PDT should be of interest to scholars concerned with phenomena as diverse as:

21 E.g., global studies, see Jan Nederveen Pieterse, "What Is Global Studies?," *Globalizations* 10, no. 4 (2013): 499-514; Mark Juergensmeyer, "What Is Global Studies?," *Globalizations* 10, no. 6: 765-69.

- identity, culture and other discursive articulations[22] as well as their transformation;[23]
- foreign policy change;[24]

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[22] Peter L. Callero, "The Sociology of the Self," *Annual Review of Sociology* 29, no. 1 (2003): 115-33; Stefano Guzzini, "Foreign Policy Identity Crises and Uses of 'the West'," in *Uses of 'the West': Security and the Politics of Order*, ed. Benjamin Herborth and Gunther Hellmann (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016); Peter J. Katzenstein, "Same War – Different Views: Germany, Japan and Counterterrorism," *International Organization* 57, no. 4 (2003): 731-60; G. Kendall, I. Woodward, and Z. Skrbis, *The Sociology of Cosmopolitanism: Globalization, Identity, Culture and Government* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009); In IR, such articulations are often referred to as "ideational" factors. See e.g., May Darwich, "Ideational and Material Forces in Threat Perception: The Divergent Cases of Syria and Saudi Arabia During the Iran–Iraq War (1980–1988)," *Journal of Global Security Studies* 1, no. 2 (2016): 142-56. From a PDT view, however, both the dualism between a knowing subject and an external object, and the monism of reducing the real to thought need to be ruled out. See Patrick Thaddeus Jackson, *The Conduct of Inquiry in International Relations: Philosophy of Science and Its Implications for the Study of World Politics* (London & New York: Routledge, 2010) as well as the critique in Dirk Nabers, "Towards International Relations Beyond the Mind," *Journal of International Political Theory* online first (2018), doi: 10.1177/1755088218812910.

[23] Ted Hopf, *Social Construction of International Politics: Identities & Foreign Policies, Moscow, 1955 and 1999* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2002); Bahar Rumelili and Jennifer Todd, "Paradoxes of Identity Change: Integrating Macro, Meso, and Micro Research on Identity in Conflict Processes," *Politics* 38, no. 1 (2018): 3-18.

[24] Jakob Gustavsson, "How Should We Study Foreign Policy Change?," *Cooperation and Conflict* 34, no. 1 (1999): 73-95; Charles F. Hermann, "Changing Course: When

Governments Choose to Redirect Foreign Policy," *International Studies Quarterly* 34, no. 1 (1990): 3-21; Walter Carlsnaes, "On Analysing the Dynamics of Foreign Policy Change: A Critique and Reconceptualization," *Cooperation and Conflict* 28, no. 1 (1993): 5-30; David A. Welch, *Painful Choices: A Theory of Foreign Policy Change* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2005); Jelena Subotić, "Narrative, Ontological Security, and Foreign Policy Change," *Foreign Policy Analysis* 12, no. 4 (2016): 610-27.

- norm dynamics,[25] including norm emergence,[26] diffusion,[27] contestation, negotiation, erosion, death, and robustness,[28] the ambiguity of norms[29] as well as the rise and fall of dominant narratives and widely accepted ideas;[30]

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[25] Charlotte Epstein et al., "Forum: Interrogating the Use of Norms in International Relations: Postcolonial Perspectives," *International Theory* 6, no. 2 (2014): 293-93; Martha Finnemore and Kathryn Sikkink, "International Norm Dynamics and Political Change," *International Organization* 52, no. 4 (1998): 887-917; "Taking Stock: The Constructivist Research Program in International Relations and Comparative Politics," *Annual Review of Political Science* 4, no. 1 (2001): 391-416.

[26] Maren Wagner, *Social Emergence in International Relations* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016).

[27]Fabrizio Gilardi, "Transnational Diffusion: Norms, Ideas, and Policies," in *Handbook of International Relations*, ed. Walter Carlsnaes, Thomas Risse, and Beth A. Simmons (London et al.: Sage, 2013); Lisbeth Zimmermann, "Same Same or Different? Norm Diffusion between Resistance, Compliance, and Localization in Post-Conflict States," *International Studies Perspectives* 17, no. 1 (2016): 98-115

[28] Jeffrey S. Lantis, "Theories of International Norm Contestation: Structure and Outcomes," in *The Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Politics,* ed. William R. Thompson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), doi: 10.1093/acrefore/9780190228637.013.590; Antje Wiener, *A Theory of Contestation* (Berlin & Heidelberg: Springer, 2014); Katharina P. Coleman, "Locating Norm Diplomacy: Venue Change in International Norm Negotiations," *European Journal of International Relations* 19, no. 1 (2013): 163-86; Elvira Rosert and Sonja Schirmbeck, "Zur Erosion internationaler Normen," *Zeitschrift für Internationale Beziehungen* 14, no. 2 (2007): 253-87; Diana Panke and Ulrich Petersohn, "Why International Norms Disappear Sometimes," *European Journal of International Relations* 18, no. 4 (2011): 719-42; "Norm Challenges and Norm Death: The Inexplicable?,"

- nationalism, cosmopolitanism and related issues;[31]

Cooperation and Conflict 51, no. 1 (2015): 3-19; Nicole Deitelhoff and Lisbeth Zimmermann, "Things We Lost in the Fire: How Different Types of Contestation Affect the Robustness of International Norms," *International Studies Review* Online First (2018), doi: 10.1093/isr/viy080; Zimmermann and Deitelhoff, "Norms under Challenge: Unpacking the Dynamics of Norm Robustness," *Journal of Global Security Studies* 4, no. 1 (2019): 2-17.

[29] Stephan Engelkamp and Katharina Glaab, "Writing Norms: Constructivist Norm Research and the Politics of Ambiguity," *Alternatives: Global, Local, Political* 40, no. 3-4 (2015): 201-18.

[30] Bieler and Morton, "The Deficits of Discourse in IPE"; Ronald R. Krebs, "How Dominant Narratives Rise and Fall: Military Conflict, Politics, and the Cold War Consensus," *International Organization* 69, no. 4 (2015): 809-45.

[31] Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, revised ed. (London: Verso, 2016); Siniša Malešević, "Is Nationalism Intrinsically Violent?," *Nationalism and Ethnic Politics* 19, no. 1 (2013): 12-37; Ulrich Beck, "The Cosmopolitan Perspective: Sociology of the Second Age of Modernity," *British Journal of Sociology* 51, no. 1 (2000): 79-105; Richard Shapcott, *Justice, Community and Dialogue in International Relations* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001); Corey Ranford-Robinson, "Cosmopolitanism and Liberal Universalism in International Relations Theory: Moralising Politics or Politicising Ethics?," *Millennium: Journal of International Studies* 42, no. 1 (2013): 247-59; Irene Skovgaard-Smith and Flemming Poulfelt, "Imagining 'Non-Nationality': Cosmopolitanism as a Source of Identity and Belonging," *Human Relations* 71, no. 2 (2018): 129-54.

- processes of securitization, threat construction, inflation, exaggeration[32] and dissolution/desecuritization (think: end of the Cold War);[33]

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[32] Barry Buzan, Ole Wæver, and Jaap de Wilde, *Security: A New Framework for Analysis* (London: Lynne Rienner, 1998); Ole Wæver, "Securitization and Desecuritization," in *On Security*, ed. Ronnie D. Lipschutz (New Nork: Columbia University Press, 1995); Jarrod Hayes, "Identity, Authority, and the British War in Iraq," *Foreign Policy Analysis* 12, no. 3 (2016): 334-53; Chaim Kaufmann, "Threat Inflation and the Failure of the Marketplace of Ideas: The Selling of the Iraq War," *International Security* 29, no. 1 (2004): 5-48; John Mueller, and Mark G. Stewart, "Terrorism and Bathtubs: Comparing and Assessing the Risks," *Terrorism and Political Violence* Online First (2018), doi: 10.1080/09546553.2018.1530662; A. Trevor Thrall, "A Bear in the Woods? Threat Framing and the Marketplace of Values," *Security Studies* 16, no. 3 (2007): 452-88; Stengel, this issue.

[33] Philippe Bourbeau and Juha A. Vuori, "Security, Resilience and Desecuritization: Multidirectional Moves and Dynamics," *Critical Studies on Security* 3, no. 3 (2015): 253-68; Lene Hansen, "Reconstructing Desecuritisation: The Normative-Political in the Copenhagen School and Directions for How to Apply It," *Review of International Studies* 38, no. 3 (2012): 525-46; Iver B. Neumann, "After Securitisation: Diplomats as De-Securitisers," *Baltic Journal of Political Science*, no. 1 (2012): 7-21; Hubert Zimmermann, "Exporting Security: Success and Failure in the Securitization and Desecuritization of Foreign Military Interventions," *Journal of Intervention and Statebuilding* 11, no. 2 (2017): 225-44.

- international organization[34] and international/global/regional order(s)[35]

[34] Michael Barnett and Martha Finnemore, *Rules for the World: International Organizations in Global Politics* (Ithaca & London: Cornell University Press, 2004); Robert O. Keohane, "The Demand for International Regimes," *International Organization* 16, no. 2 (1982): 325-55; James G. March and Johan P. Olsen, "The Institutional Dynamics of International Political Orders," *International Organization* 52, no. 4 (1998): 943-69; Lisa L. Martin and Beth A. Simmons, "International Organizations and Institutions," in *Handbook of International Relations*, ed. Walter Carlsnaes, Thomas Risse, and Beth A. Simmons (London et al.: Sage, 2013); Diana Panke and Ingo Henneberg, "International Organizations and Foreign Policy," in *The Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Politics,* ed. William R. Thompson, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), doi: 10.1093/acrefore/9780190228637.013.443.

[35] Barry Buzan and George Lawson, *The Global Transformation: History, Modernity and the Making of International Relations* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015); Andrew Hurrell, *On Global Order: Power, Values, and the Constitution of International Society* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007); Mark Rupert, *Ideologies of Globalization: Contending Visions of a New World Order* (London: Routledge, 2012); Wilhelm, this issue.

- globalization/denationalization,[36] global governance[37] and associated questions of democracy,[38] authority, and legitimacy;[39]

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[36] David Held and Anthony McGrew, eds., *Globalization Theory: Approaches and Controversies* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2007); Matthew Watson and Colin Hay, "The Discourse of Globalisation and the Logic of No Alternative: Rendering the Contingent Necessary in the Political Economy of New Labour," *Policy & Politics* 31, no. 3 (2003): 289-305.

[37] Michael Barnett and Raymond Duvall, eds., *Power in Global Governance* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005); Rainer Baumann and Klaus Dingwerth, "Global Governance Vs Empire: Why World Order Moves Towards Heterarchy and Hierarchy," *Journal of International Relations and Development* 18, no. 1 (2014): 104-28; Klaus Dingwerth and Philipp Pattberg, "Actors, Arenas and Issues in Global Governance," in *Global Governance*, ed. Jim Whitman (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009); Wolfgang H. Reinicke, *Global Public Policy: Governing without Government?* (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press, 1998); R.A.W. Rhodes, "Understanding Governance: Ten Years On," *Organization Studies* 28, no. 8 (2007): 1243-64; James N. Rosenau and Ernst-Otto Czempiel, eds., *Governance without Government: Order and Change in World Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992); Michael Zürn, *A Theory of Global Governance: Authority, Legitimacy, and Contestation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018).

[38] Robert O. Keohane, Stephen Macedo, and Andrew Moravcsik, "Democracy-Enhancing Multilateralism," *International Organization* 63, no. 1 (2009): 1-31.

[39] Michael Zürn, Martin Binder, and Matthias Ecker-Ehrhardt, "International Authority and Its Politicization," *International Theory* 4, no. 1 (2012): 69-106; Christian Reus-Smit, "International Crises of Legitimacy," *International Politics* 44, no. 2-3 (2007): 157-74; Zürn, *A Theory of Global Governance*; more general Margaret Levi, Audrey Sacks, and Tom

- (international) leadership[40], hegemony[41] and hierarchy;[42]
- conflict and cooperation, including rivalries[43] and friendship;[44]

Tyler, "Conceptualizing Legitimacy, Measuring Legitimating Beliefs," *American Behavioral Scientist* 53, no. 3 (2009): 354-75.

[40] Dirk Nabers, "Power, Leadership, and Hegemony in International Politics: The Case of East Asia," *Review of International Studies* 36, no. 4 (2010): 931-49; Stefan A. Schirm, "Leaders in Need of Followers: Emerging Powers in Global Governance," *European Journal of International Relations* 16, no. 2 (2010): 197-221; John Kane, "US Leadership and International Order: The Future of American Foreign Policy," *Australian Journal of International Affairs* 63, no. 4 (2009): 571 - 92; Michael Schiffer and David Shorr, eds., *Powers and Principles: International Leadership in a Shrinking World* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2009).

[41] Daniel H. Nexon and Iver B. Neumann, "Hegemonic-Order Theory: A Field-Theoretic Account," *European Journal of International Relations* 24, no. 3 (2017): 662-86; Owen Worth, *Rethinking Hegemony* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015).

[42] David A Lake, *Hierarchy in International Relations* (Cornell University Press, 2009); Janice Bially Mattern and Ayşe Zarakol, "Hierarchies in World Politics," *International Organization* 70, no. 3 (2016): 623-54.

[43] William R. Thompson, "Identifying Rivals and Rivalries in World Politics," *International Studies Quarterly* 45, no. 4 (2001): 557-86.

[44] Felix Berenskoetter and Bastian Giegerich, "From NATO to ESDP: A Social Constructivist Analysis of German Strategic Adjustment after the End of the Cold War," *Security Studies* 19, no. 3 (2010): 407 - 52; Simon Koschut and Andrea Oelsner, eds., *Friendship and International Relations* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014).

- the emergence, persistence, transformation and of economic philosophies, orders or systems like capitalism[45] and neoliberalism;[46]
- international effects on domestic politics;[47]
- populism and world politics.[48]

Scholars concerned with these issues should welcome the challenge and discover whether PDT can in fact provide any added value. This symposium thus takes a first step in this direction, exploring what PDT can add to our understanding of conceptual debates in the study of world politics, broadly understood. The remainder of this introduction sets out to do two main things. The next section provides a brief overview of PDT's ontological framework and

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[45] Wolfgang Streeck, *How Will Capitalism End?* (New York: Verso, 2017); Peter A. Hall and David W. Soskice, eds., *Varieties of Capitalism: The Institutional Foundations of Comparative Advantage* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001).

[46] David Harvey, *A Brief History of Neoliberalism* (Oxford University Press, USA, 2007); Simon Springer, Kean Birch, and Julie MacLeavy, eds., *The Handbook of Neoliberalism* (London: Routledge, 2017).

[47] We are referring here to the "second image reversed", see Peter Gourevitch, "The Second Image Reversed: The International Sources of Domestic Politics," *International Organization* 32, no. 4 (1978): 881-912; Ira Katznelson and Martin Shefter, eds., *Shaped by War and Trade: International Influences on American Political Development* (Pinceton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2002).

[48] Frank A. Stengel, David B. MacDonald, and Dirk Nabers, eds. *Populism and World Politics: Exploring Inter- and Transnational Dimensions* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2019); Thomassen, this issue.

its theoretical model of social change. Since, all of the contributions to this symposium draw on PDT, we have opted for discussing general theoretical issues in the introduction to avoid any unnecessary overlap and repetition between the individual contributions. The final section provides an overview of the individual articles in this symposium.

Poststructuralist Discourse Theory: Core Assumptions

This section provides a brief overview of the central tenets of PDT, focusing on its social ontology and its model of social change.

Ontological Basics: Rethinking the Social as Discursive

As the name indicates, discourse theory is a theory of discourse. However, discourse must not be reduced to its linguistic dimension. In a PDT perspective, discourse must be seen as material in a post-Gramscian sense, as it is "embodied in institutions and apparatuses, which welds together a historical bloc around a number of basic articulatory principles".[49] Linguistic and non-linguistic properties of a discourse are not played out against each other, but jointly constitute a structure of differential articulations which are only graspable within this structure, not from a position external to it. At the same time, as opposed to structuralism in linguistics, which conceives of discourses

[49] Laclau and Mouffe, *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy*, 67.

as fixed systems of meaning,[50] discourse theory emphasizes the "impossibility of closure" of any and all discursive structures.[51] What this means is that neither the meaning of a discursive element nor of a discursive totality (a discursive formation as a whole) can ever be completely fixed;[52] the structure remains marked by "an ineradicable distance from itself".[53] This unfixity of discourse is also what makes change possible in the first place. Otherwise, different signifiers, for instance 'apple,' could not assume different identities (meanings) in different contexts, for instance a fruit, a painting of a fruit, a specific computer type or a person.[54] The way identities are fixed is through their articulation as part of a discourse, while articulation is not a purely linguistic term but encompasses the whole sphere of social relations.

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[50] Ferdinand de Saussure, *Course in General Linguistics* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2011).

[51] Laclau and Mouffe, *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy*, 122.

[52] Ernesto Laclau, "Politics and the Limits of Modernity," *Social Text*, no. 21 (1989): 63-82, 69.

[53] Ernesto Laclau, "New Reflections on the Revolution of Our Time," in *New Reflections on the Revolution of Our Time*, ed. Ernesto Laclau (London & New York: Verso), 67.

[54] We are referring there to the daughter of Hollywood actress Gwyneth Paltrow. See Alisdair Glennie, "My Baby Days Are over, Says Gwyneth, I Can't Face Dealing with Nappies Again," *Daily Mail Online* 2012, http://www.dailymail.co.uk/tvshowbiz/article-2190775/My-baby-days-I-dont-feel-I-dealing-nappies-says-Gwyneth.html.

In order to elucidate this process in more precise terms, Laclau's differentiation between the discursive (or discursivity) and discourse is crucial: While discursivity remains essentially open and resembles an infinite structure of social differences, discourse ties together those elements which are connectable to others in a specific situation and thereby transforms them into moments. The process of transforming elements into moments (in a specific discourse) is what Laclau calls *articulation*. What happens in the process of articulation is that a number of discursive elements (signifiers, subjects, objects, practices) are connected to each other, as a result of which the identity (meaning) of the individual elements and the discursive totality as a whole is fixed.[55] The discursive element, be it a term like "evil" or a human being (say, a citizen of a particular country) is "reduced to a moment of that totality".[56] That is, any discursive moment assumes a particular meaning within that context and all other possible meanings are excluded. In this context, the outside (other potential meanings that were ruled out in the moment of fixation) is threatening because it makes the fixation of meaning unstable, and it is also constitutive because the specific understanding is only possible because the other meanings are excluded. Similarly, the discourse as a whole has a constitutive outside. As a consequence, any result of articulatory practices (either a whole discourse or

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[55] Laclau and Mouffe, *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy*, 105.

[56] Ibid., 106, italics removed.

individual identities) is always only temporary and incomplete, which makes all meaning and identity highly context-dependent and inherently unstable.

Now, if discourse is not limited to linguistic phenomena (speech and written text), but includes all meaningful practices, objects, subjects and so on, then a whole new ontology of the social can be formulated.[57] As Laclau and Mouffe point out,

> "any distinction between what are usually called the linguistic and behavioural aspects of a social practice, is either an incorrect distinction or ought to find its place as a differentiation within the social production of meaning, which is structured under the form of discursive totalities".[58]

This claim is much more far-reaching than it might initially seem. For what it means is that everything meaningful is inherent to discourse. Meaning*less* elements are literally unintelligible and as such do not play a role for social life. Consequently, discourse theory is, despite its name, above all a social and political theory.[59]

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[57] Ernesto Laclau, *On Populist Reason* (London & New York: Verso), 68.

[58] Laclau and Mouffe, *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy*, 107.

[59] Martin Nonhoff, "Diskurs, Radikale Demokratie, Hegemonie - Einleitung," in *Diskurs - Radikale Demokratie - Hegemonie. Zum politischen Denken von Ernesto Laclau und Chantal Mouffe*, ed. Martin Nonhoff (Bielefeld: transcript, 2007), 8.

Theorizing Discursive Change

Starting from this broad discursive ontology of the social, Laclau and Mouffe set out to understand processes of "hegemonization" by which certain discourses manage to establish themselves as universally valid.[60] At the heart of their model is the concept of hegemony. Put very simply, hegemony involves a specific demand (a particularity) functioning as a symbol not only of a broad range of social demands but also of the (unattainable) ideal of a perfect, that is, fully constituted, society (the universal), in which all demands are fulfilled.[61] At the same time, if successful, it also means that one particular way of understanding the world (one particular discourse) establishes itself as the only valid understanding of the world, for instance, of one particular concept of world order becoming universally accepted[62] or of a specific issue becoming understood (primarily) as a security issue, not as something else.[63] Usually, hegemonization follows an ideal-typical process involving the structural

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[60] Laclau and Mouffe, *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy*, 48; Aletta J. Norval, "Hegemony after Deconstruction: The Consequences of Undecidability," *Journal of Political Ideologies* 9, no. 2 (2004): 139-57, 145; Nabers, *A Poststructuralist Discourse Theory of Global Politics*.

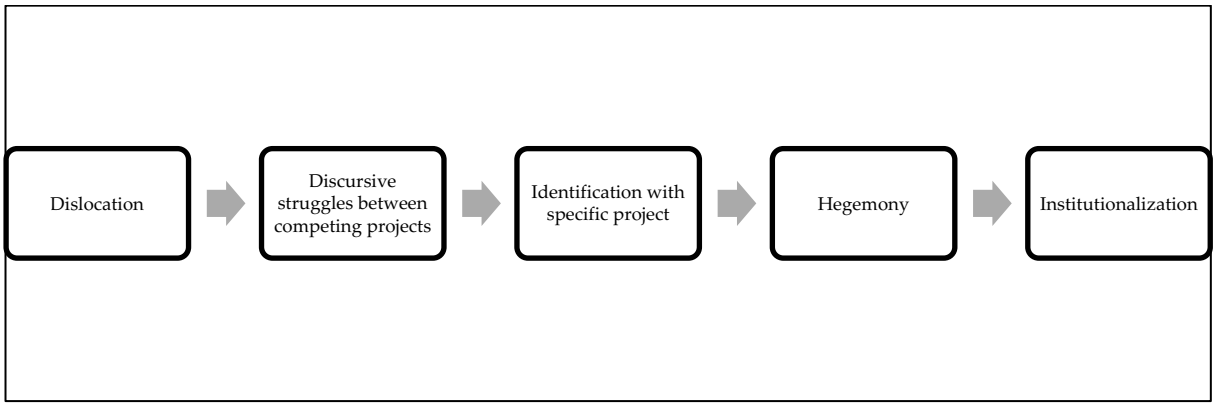
[61] Laclau, *On Populist Reason*, 71.

[62] Wojczewski, *India's Foreign Policy Discourse and Its Conceptions of World Order*; Wilhelm, this issue.

[63] Stengel, this issue.

dislocation of a dominant discursive order,[64] the emergence of struggles and the establishment and institutionalization of a new order (see figure 1 below).

Figure 1. Hegemonization.



Source: authors' illustration

Now, how can we explain that some hegemonic projects – attempts to establish a certain discourse as dominant – are more effective than others? Laclau highlights in particular three elements of any ideal-typical hegemonic project: (1) the construction of a broad range of social demands as equivalent (as going hand in hand), (2) the articulation of an antagonistic frontier between the Self and a radically threatening Other (that blocks the Self's identity), (3) the representation of the totality of equivalent demands by one particular demand (an empty or master signifier).

[64] Nabers, this issue.

First, since any hegemonic project has to garner support to become dominant, it has to attempt to construct a broad chain of equivalences between different demands. What this means, put simply, is that the project claims that a number of demands that were previously considered disparate or even contradictory actually go hand in hand and that, as a consequence, these different demands' proponents should work together. Thus, the "logic of difference" stresses the equivalential (common) content of the different demands.[65] As opposed to that, the "logic of difference" stresses their differential demand, *i.e.*, that they are actually disparate or even contradictory. Thus, the logic of difference can disrupt or break up the formation of hegemonic projects.[66] This is the way resistance to hegemonic projects (or the defense of an old dislocated regime) manifests itself. Note that the transformation of elements into (equivalential) moments is never complete; also moments always retain some particular content.[67] If they did not, they would become identical and collapse into one single demand.[68] Thus, "all identity is

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[65] Laclau and Mouffe, *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy*, 127-34; Jason Glynos and David Howarth, *Logics of Critical Explanation in Social and Political Theory* (London & New York: Routledge), 106f.

[66] Laclau and Mouffe, *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy*, 127-34; Glynos and Howarth, *Logics of Critical Explanation*, 106f.

[67] Laclau and Mouffe, *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy*, 113.

[68] Ernesto Laclau, "Converging on an Open Quest," *Diacritics* 27, no. 1 (1997), 320f.

constructed within this tension between the equivalential and the differential logics".[69] As a general rule, the broader a chain of equivalence, the more subjects' demands are incorporated and the likelier that they will identify with the project and the subject positions provided by it. At the same time, however, the breadth of a chain can also be a destabilizing factor. For the broader a chain is, the more moments with individual particular meanings it will include that might in other contexts be contradictory,[70] and the more open to rearticulation and contestation it also is.

Second, the process of transforming elements into moments is intertwined with the construction of social antagonism. For the relation of equivalence is the result of the construction of an antagonistic frontier. Antagonism is the construction of a particular type of Self/Other relationship in which the radical (antagonistic) Other is blamed for (1) the fact that certain demands (e.g. for social welfare, peace and/or security) remain unfulfilled and (2) for the incompleteness of the Self's identity (which is actually due to the constitutive dislocation of the structure).[71] Different demands become

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[69] Laclau, *On Populist Reason*, 70.

[70] Ernesto Laclau, "The Death and Resurrection of the Theory of Ideology," in *The Rhetorical Foundations of Society*, ed. Ernesto Laclau (London: Verso, 2014), 19f.

[71] Thus, antagonism should not be mixed up with other types of Self/Other relationships, such as enmity or the construction of a physical security threat, see Stengel, this issue.

equivalent only *in reference to* the excluded Other that is said to stand in the way of their realization.[72] Linked to this is the claim that if only the radical Other could be overcome, all demands would be realized. Implied in the exclusion of an Other is always the production of a specific articulation of the Self:[73] for instance, 'the West' emerges as a specific identity only in opposition to 'the East',[74] 'the rest'[75] or various other Others.[76] The result is a split of the discursive space into two opposing camps.

Third, hegemony involves the actual hegemonic operation "of taking up, by a particularity, of an incommensurable universal signification".[77] What is meant by this is that one demand (one particular) out of the totality of equivalent demands assumes the representation of all of the demands as well as, symbolically, the fullness of society (the universal) that can never be

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[72] Laclau, *On Populist Reason*; *Emancipation(s)*; Lasse Thomassen, "Antagonism, Hegemony and Ideology after Heterogeneity," *Journal of Political Ideologies* 10, no. 3 (2005): 289-309.

[73] Ernesto Laclau, "The Politics of Rhetoric," in *The Rhetorical Foundations of Society*, ed. Ernesto Laclau (London: Verso, 2014), 85.

[74] Campbell, *Writing Security*; Bradley S. Klein, "How the West Was One: Representational Politics of Nato," *International Studies Quarterly* 34, no. 3 (1990): 311-25.

[75] Stuart Hall, "The West and the Rest: Discourse and Power," in *Modernity: An Introduction to Modern Societies*, ed. Stuart Hall, et al. (Oxford: Blackwell, 1992).

[76] Andreas Behnke, *Nato's Security Discourse after the Cold War: Representing the West* (London & New York: Routledge, 2013); Hansen, *Security as Practice*.

[77] Laclau, *On Populist Reason*, 70.

reached. Hegemonic discourses are organized around privileged signifiers, so-called "nodal points" or "points de capiton",[78] which function as a horizon for subjects to identify, and associate their demands, with. The way this happens is that one demand empties itself of its particular content and becomes a "master signifier"[79] or an "empty signifier", that is, a "signifier without a signified".[80] For instance, 'freedom' can refer to any number of more specific demands, like 'free' trade, democracy, the freedom from wage labor, or the legalization of marijuana. Thus, rather than having a specific content in itself, freedom functions as a blank canvas for subjects to imagine their own pictures on. This way, an empty signifier becomes "a surface for inscription" with which a broad number of people can associate their demands and desires.[81] Through this operation, the discursive formation receives a name and is as such constituted as a unified object in the first place (instead of having an *a priori* essence). As

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[78] Laclau and Mouffe, *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy*, 112, italics removed.

[79] Wullweber, this issue.

[80] Ernesto Laclau, "Why Do Empty Signifiers Matter to Politics?," in *Emancipation(s)*, ed. Ernesto Laclau (London: Verso, 1996), 36.

[81] David Howarth, "The Difficult Emergence of a Democratic Imaginary: Black Consciousness and Non-Racial Democracy in South Africa," in *Discourse Theory and Political Analysis: Identities, Hegemonies and Social Change*, ed. David Howarth, Aletta Norval, and Yannis Stavrakakis (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000), 173.

Laclau put it, "the name is the ground of the thing".[82] Linked to this is the promise that if only the demand that takes up the representation of the chain of equivalences were to be realized, the antagonistic Other would be overcome, with the effect not only of the realization of all demands but also, symbolically, the attainment of a full identity.

In this context, the constributions to the symposium also bring up points of debate within PDT. The empty signifier is an example here. The majority of empircial studies have interpreted the empty signifier in linguistic terms, understanding it as a word or combination of words like the "social market economy",[83] "justice," "freedom",[84] "comprehensive/networked security,"[85] a "people's Europe" or "political union".[86] In his contribution to this symposium, Wullweber challenges this interpretation, arguing that the hegemonic relation can also be practical or material.[87] Drawing on Laclau's argument that discourse also includes all meaningful social practices, objects and so on, Wullweber

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[82] Ernesto Laclau, "Ideology and Post-Marxism," *Journal of Political Ideologies* 11, no. 2 (2006): 103-14, 109, italics removed.

[83] Martin Nonhoff, *Politischer Diskurs und Hegemonie. Das Projekt 'Soziale Marktwirtschaft'* (Bielefeld: transcript, 2006).

[84] Nabers, *A Poststructuralist Discourse Theory of Global Politics*.

[85] Stengel, this issue.

[86] Biegoń, *Hegemonies of Legitimation*, ch. 5, 6.

[87] Wullweber, this issue.

analyzes money as a master signifier but without falling back on a linguistic point of view.

At the same time, the empty signifier is not completely void of particular meaning but is, like all other moments of the chain, "split between its equivalential content and its differential content".[88] This is precisely the reason why it is important which signifier comes to represent the overall chain, as the emerging totality is not a pre-existing entity that only becomes named in the moment of representation. Rather, the moment of representation is performative. For the remaining particularity, the "minimal remainder",[89] not only ensures that signifiers can be recognized in different contexts but in the case of the empty signifier significantly influences the meaning of the new discursive order, because it comes to represent the overall formation. Which signifier assumes the role of empty signifier is not predetermined and has to be established during the course of any analysis.

Two additional, broad characteristics of any successful hegemonic project need to be mentioned. First, any such project needs to demonstrate "its

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[88] Laclau, "Ideology and Post-Marxism," 107.

[89] David Howarth, *Discourse* (Buckingham & Philadelphia, PA: Open University Press, 2000), 39.

radical discontinuity with the dislocations of the dominant structural forms",[90] put simply, that is has learned "from the failure of previous discourses".[91] That means also that the new project has to hold within it the (ultimately unavoidably empty) promise to (this time!) fully repair the dislocated structure (which however is ontologically impossible). This is the mythical element of any hegemonic project, as it functions as an incarnation of a fully constituted "perfect society" that cannot really ever be reached.[92]

Second, it is also important that a new hegemonic project does not clash with the "ensemble of sedimented practices constituting the normative framework of a certain society".[93] Discursive orders are usually not created

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[90] Ernesto Laclau, "Deconstruction, Pragmatism, Hegemony," in *Deconstruction and Pragmatism*, ed. Chantal Mouffe (London: Routledge, 1996), 67.

[91] Dirk Nabers, "Filling the Void of Meaning: Identity Construction in U.S. Foreign Policy after September 11, 2001," *Foreign Policy Analysis* 5, no. 2 (2009): 197.

[92] Eva Herschinger, "'Hell Is the Other': Conceptualising Hegemony and Identity through Discourse Theory," *Millennium: Journal of International* Studies 42, no. 1 (2012): 86; Nabers, *A Poststructuralist Discourse Theory of Global Politics*, ch. 7. This glossing over the fact that society can never be fully constituted but is the always-temporary result of contingent political decisions is what Laclau refers to as ideology Laclau, "The Death and Resurrection of the Theory of Ideology"; "Ideology and Post-Marxism."

[93] Ernesto Laclau, "Identity and Hegemony: The Role of Universality in the Constitution of Political Logics," in *Contingency, Hegemony, Universality: Contemporary Dialogues on the*

from scratch but in a field partially structured by sedimented practices,[94] that is, discursive practices that have become institutionalized to such an extent that their origin in political struggles have been forgotten. They are taken for granted as if they are, and have always been, without alternative.[95] The contributions to this symposium will illustrate that any successful project has to be credible in light of sedimented practices. For instance, if, say, "security" and "peace" seem to carry a special weight in discursive struggles, this is so because as a result of past discursive struggles they have been articulated as, in the case of security, the core function of the modern state[96] and, in the case of peace, a core normative commitment in and precondition of the functioning of, democratic societies.[97]

The Contributions to the Symposium

The articles of the symposium are a selection of papers originally presented at an international workshop on "Laclau's Contribution to IR: Rethinking Core

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Left, ed. Judith Butler, Ernesto Laclau, and Slavoj Žižek (London & New York: Verso, 2000), 82; "New Reflections on the Revolution of Our Time," 66.

[94] See Nabers, *A Poststructuralist Discourse Theory of Global Politics*.

[95] Laclau, "New Reflections on the Revolution of Our Time," 34.

[96] Bernhard Zangl and Michael Zürn, "The Effects of Denationalisation on Security in the OECD World," *Global Society* 13, no. 2 (1999): 139-61.

[97] Thomas Risse-Kappen, "Democratic Peace - Warlike Democracies?," *European Journal of International Relations* 1, no. 4 (1995): 491-517.

Concepts" that took place in April 2016 at Kiel University, Germany. The symposium begins with Dirk Nabers's article, which formulates a discourse theoretical concept of crisis. Nabers argues that despite the widespread use of the notion in IR and related fields, a convincing definition of crisis has yet to be found. In contrast in particular to rationalist approaches, Nabers stresses the importance of understanding crises not as exogenously given phenomena but as social constructs. Drawing on Laclau's notion of dislocation, he argues that crisis is actually a constant feature of any social structures. Understanding crisis in such a way directs our attention to the "futility of social identities" as well as their political nature.[98]

Eva Herschinger's article turns to the issue of war– a core concern to scholars in a number of fields, including not just IR but also sociology or philosophy.[99] Drawing on, and adding to, recent research in Feminist Security Studies and Critical Military Studies that challenge the conventional

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[98] Nabers, this issue.

[99] E.g., Yves Boyer and Julian Lindley-French, eds., *The Oxford Handbook of War* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012); Jeff McMahan, "War," in *The Oxford Handbook of Political Philosophy*, ed. David Estlund (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012); Henry Shue, "War," in *The Oxford Handbook of Practical Ethics*, ed. Hugh LaFollette (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012); Andreas Wimmer, "War," *Annual Review of Sociology* 40, no. 1 (2014): 173-97; Maja Zehfuss, *War and the Politics of Ethics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018).

assumption that war and peace can be as neatly separated from each other as can conflict zones from peaceful societies,[100] Herschinger zones in on how everyday life in Western societies is influenced by war. Focusing on the link between (the suppression of) empathy and the creation of 'suspect communities', Herschinger traces war's effect on identity formation and a resulting constant expansion of the "field of hostility".[101]

Frank A. Stengel's contribution presents a theoretical reformulation of processes of threat construction or, as is it often referred to in IR, securitization. Stengel distinguishes two different types of securitization, depending on the scope and breadth of discursive change they represent. He differentiates between securitization (1) within an existing security discourse and (2) as part of larger discursive change in which a whole security discourse is modified or replaced. Specifically, Stengel focuses on the conditions that influence the relative effectiveness of different attempts to securitize issues (securitizing moves), which he argues differ depending on the type of securitization.

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[100] See Victoria M. Basham, "Liberal Militarism as Insecurity, Desire and Ambivalence: Gender, Race and the Everyday Geopolitics of War," *Security Dialogue* 49, no. 1-2 (2018): 32-43; Victoria M. Basham, Aaron Belkin, and Jess Gifkins, "What Is Critical Military Studies?," *Critical Military Studies* 1, no. 1 (2015): 1-2; Annick T. R. Wibben, "Why We Need to Study (US) Militarism: A Critical Feminist Lens," *Security Dialogue* 49, no. 1-2 (2018): 136-48.

[101] Herschinger, this issue.

In the contribution most explicitly located in the field of IPE (as well as economic sociology), Joscha Wullweber proposes a theoretical conception of money. In contrast to the still prevalent practice of empirically analyzing the empty signifier as an actual linguistic signifier (e.g., a word like "freedom"), Wullweber sets out to redeem Laclau's promise of a comprehensive (not just linguistic) notion of discourse by arguing that money (not the signifier, but the object) acts as a master signifier, functioning as "the general expression of the value relation of commodities".[102] Reconceptualizing money this way directs our attention to its inherently political nature.

The symposium concludes with two contributions primarily located in political theory, Lasse Thomassen's article on representation and Fränze Wilhelm's paper on the ontology of global order. In his contribution, Thomassen carves out Laclau's understanding of representation, which he contrasts with conventional understandings as a "correspondence between principals' […] interests […] and the agents acting on their behalf".[103] Although primarily a theoretical argument, Thomassen's intervention is also of relevance to scholars concerned with substantive phenomena of world politics. Thus, Thomassen demonstrates the analytical added value of rethinking representation by linking it up with salient debates about populism and what

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[102] Wullweber, this issue.

[103] Thomassen, this issue.

many perceive as a severe crisis of democratic institutions – topics IR scholars have only very recently begun to turn their attention to, in particular in connection with Donald Trump's assumption of the US presidency.[104]

Drawing on Martin Heidegger in addition to Laclau, Fränze Wilhelm develops an ontology of global order (whether economic or political). Wilhelm criticizes objectivist notions of order as a given 'thing' and argues in favor of conceiving of order as the contingent, context-dependent and temporary result of on-going processes of ordering. As Wilhelm puts it, "order only *is* as the effects of the ordering of the things-which-are".[105] Like populism, the question of global or world order has become a particularly salient topic in current IR debates in the wake of the Trump presidency.[106] In this context, arguments

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[104] See Frank A. Stengel, David B. MacDonald and Dirk Nabers, "Introduction: Analyzing the Nexus Between Populism and International Relations," in *Populism and World Politics: Exploring Inter- and Transnational Dimensions* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2019).

[105] Wilhelm, this issue.

[106] See, for instance, Amitav Acharya, "Norm Subsidiarity and Regional Orders: Sovereignty, Regionalism, and Rule-Making in the Third World1," *International Studies Quarterly* 55, no. 1 (2011): 95-123; Constance Duncombe and Tim Dunne, "After Liberal World Order," *International Affairs* 94, no. 1 (2018): 25-42; Stacie E. Goddard, "Embedded Revisionism: Networks, Institutions, and Challenges to World Order," *International Organization* Online first (2018), doi: 10.1017/s0020818318000206; Richard Haass, *A World in Disarray: American Foreign Policy and the Crisis of the Old Order* (New York: Penguin, 2017); Gunther Hellmann, ed. *Theorizing Global Order* (Ffrankfurt am Main: Campus, 2018); G.

about the precise ontological nature of world order – precisely what kind of a thing (liberal) world order is, whether it is a monolith or actually multiple, etc. – significantly influences our empirical discussions, including whether world order is universally accepted or contested, if and how it conditions states' behavior, and how resistant it is to 'populist' (and other) challenges.

Together, the contributions to this symposium demonstrate that a PDT perspective has a lot to offer to central conceptual debates in IR and IPE. Still, as noted at the outset, an infinitely broader range of phenomena than the ones tentatively explored here remains to be analyzed from a PDT perspective, and Laclau remains far from being established even among the canon of critical scholars in IR/IPE. This, we argue, is to the detriment of both IR and IPE. It is our hope that this symposium serves as a stepping stone for scholars interested in exploring what PDT can offer for the analysis of a broad range of international phenomena.

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John Ikenberry, "The End of Liberal International Order?," *International Affairs* 94, no. 1 (2018): 7-23; G. John Ikenberry, Inderjeet Parmar, and Doug Stokes, "Introduction: Ordering the World? Liberal Internationalism in Theory and Practice," *International Affairs* 94, no. 1 (2018): 1-5; Stokes, "Trump, American Hegemony and the Future of the Liberal International Order," *International Affairs* 94, no. 1 (2018): 133-50.

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