

Interview - Madison Cartwright

Written by E-International Relations

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This interview is part of a series of interviews with academics and practitioners at an early stage of their career. The interviews discuss current research and projects, as well as advice for other young scholars.

Madison Cartwright is a PhD candidate and Postgraduate Teaching Fellow in the Department of Government and International Relations at the University of Sydney. He holds a Bachelor of Economics and Social Sciences with First Class Honours from the University of Sydney, for which he received the *Helen Nelson Prize for the Best Thesis in IVth Year Honours*. He was the recipient of the *RN Spann Scholarship* in 2015 and the *Research Training Program Stipend Scholarship* 2015-18. Madison was also the winner of the E-International Relations Article Award for 2018. Madison has published on historical institutionalism in *Policy Studies* and on preferential trade agreements in *The Pacific Review*. He also co-authored a forthcoming book chapter on corporate agency, in press with Lynne Rienner. His research interests include international standard setting and trade, state-business relations and historical institutionalism.

What (or who) promoted the most significant shifts in your thinking or encouraged you to do research?

I began my undergraduate degree in 2008, just as global financial markets were crashing. At the time I was studying economics. I remember sitting in my classes learning the models as if the world wasn't collapsing outside. No one seemed to acknowledge what was happening to the global economy, let alone trying to apply what we were learning to it. It seemed mad to me. Meanwhile, my political economy and international relations subjects seemed to have much more to say. I dropped economics and majored in political economy and government and international relations instead. International political economy just seemed more relevant. I became very interested in the nation state and the role it plays in capitalism. Again, I think the times were important to this. States were bailing out and buying up banks and other companies. It was clear to me that states were still very much in charge. It was also clear that many corporations depended on this being the case.

That's the 'what'. As for the 'who', I have been influenced by scholars who illuminate the role of the state in the economy. Nationally, comparative capitalists, namely Hall and Soskice, helped me appreciate how markets are embedded and integrated with domestic institutions, including the state. Internationally, scholars such as Ha-Joon Chang, Robert Wade and Eric Helleiner helped me understand how state power is projected in the international economy. More recent work by my PhD supervisor John Mikler on the embeddedness of multinational corporations in their host states, along with work from other scholars such as Sean Starrs, has also been important to my thinking on state-business relations. The two most influential scholars on me, however, are Linda Weiss (whom I'm very grateful to have had as my other PhD supervisor) and Robert Gilpin. Last, I came upon Hannah Arendt when taking a course on political philosophy and human rights – something very different to my usual interests. However her concept of the 'political emancipation of the bourgeoisie' has always stuck in my mind and is the basis of how I see state-business relations occurring.

In your award-winning article for E-IR you argue for a Marxist-Realist synthesis as an alternative to world systems theory and hegemony. Can such a synthesis be applied to the current political environment in the West?

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Yes, absolutely. In fact, I have suggested as much in another article I wrote for E-IR. From my point of view, since WWII the United States has created and maintained an international economic order to serve its political and economic interests and to sustain its hegemonic status. Today, United States hegemony (or the world system) rests on finance and 'knowledge economy' industries, supported by rules on investment, services and intellectual property under the World Trade Organisation and other agreements such as the North American Free Trade Agreement (or 'USMCA'). However, this is a post-Bretton Woods arrangement. Prior to 1971, the power of the United States and other 'core' economies was their dominance over manufacturing.

The transition from the Bretton Woods world system to the post-Bretton Woods world system has had its winners and losers. The winners are to be found in New York, Hollywood, Silicon Valley, London, Paris et cetera – or at least their financial and business districts. The losers are concentrated in the post-industrial areas such as the American Midwest or Northern England. As rising inequality within and between states clearly illustrates, the winners are still winning and the loser are still losing. Cheap consumer goods manufactured in the periphery or semi-periphery and cheap consumer credit is no longer able to placate the losers. This is contributing the social and political upheaval we are witnessing.

What impact could Donald Trump's trade policies have in global political economy?

Trump's fight is not really with China, but rather the post-Bretton Woods world system itself. However, as I have written for E-IR before, post-Bretton Woods world system continues to serve a number of United States interests, including those of its corporations. United States' allies also remain invested in the system and are reluctant to see it erode. It will be difficult for the United States to abandon it as it exists (although many would have said the same of the Bretton Woods system right up to the eve of August 15th 1971, I'm sure). I believe that the emerging contradictions in the system will force the United States to more sharply prioritise between its various objectives and goals.

However, the reality is that the United States' trade deficit is a key component of the post-Bretton Woods world system as it internationalises the dollar and maintains dollar hegemony. It's difficult to imagine Trump seriously threatening this. I could conceive of negotiations between the United States and its trading partners resulting in tokenistic concession to allow Trump to claim victory, whilst leaving the order largely intact. Alternatively, and more substantively, the United States could continue to find itself stuck between embracing and rejecting the post-Bretton Woods world system and unable to develop a coherent strategy. This will allow China and perhaps other states to begin to establish their own institutional orders to rival the United States.

The EU recently voted for a controversial Copyright directive which intends to update online copyright laws. How could this directive influence content creators, businesses and users?

The lesson of the past 20 plus years is that this won't have the effect that its proponents believe. In Australia we have one of the most stringent website blocking regimes in the world, and rights owners are now demanding it be deepened and expanded because it's not working. I see no reason why an uploading filter will be more effective. I also understand the desire to help online media become more profitable, but we need to seriously consider the best way to do this. Perhaps copyright is simply not fit for purpose.

In my research I came across a meeting held around President Clinton's copyright review in 1994, considering what was to be done about the internet. A participant from the Electronic Frontier Foundation argued, prophetically I believe, that the internet may prove too great a threat to copyright for it to survive. That is, a new legal regime may need to be considered. At the end of the day what do we want? We want people creating knowledge and cultural products, we want those people to be able to receive compensation for doing so and we want as many people to have access to knowledge and cultural products as possible, while still achieving the two aforementioned goals. Copyright is one way we have sought to do all of this – perhaps there are others.

The impact that this may have on EU-US relations is interesting too. The rights holders are right about one thing – Silicon Valley hates this. Internet industry lobbyists have raised concerns with the United States Trade

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Representatives about the 'protectionist' European copyright laws over the past decade. Since the Anti-Counterfeiting Trade Agreement, which the internet industry fiercely opposed, the United States has sought to balance the demands of its emerging internet sector and its more established and very political powerful copyright-owning sector. More recently, it has been able to do so: both sectors supported the Trans-Pacific Partnership, for example.

What are you currently working on?

I have recently submitted my PhD thesis, but once it is examined I'll be working to turn it into a book. More broadly I'm looking at state-business relations in setting international economic standards, specifically with regard to copyright and intellectual property which is my focus. Having examined the United States in detail, I'd like to look at other countries, especially developing states. I also have a manuscript in progress on historical institutionalism and technological change.

What advice would you give to young scholars?

All I can say is what I have tried to do. The first is to know what it is that you have to say, but to give yourself time to figure it out. Second, take advantage of your time as a PhD candidate. Be a part of your cohort and your department. Take an interest in what everyone else is researching, even if it has nothing to do with your own research. Third, quarantine your research from the rest of your life. It will take over everything if you let it. I had very strict working hours when writing my thesis. Time outside of these hours were for other things. Fourth, don't get in your head too much. The job market is competitive, and people can get really demoralised. Just focus on your research, trust you have something new or interesting to say and seek out publications where you can. Last, join your union!