

## ***Constructing Global Enemies: Hegemony and Identity in International Discourses on Terrorism and Drug Prohibition* by Eva Herschinger**

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Herschinger, Eva. *Constructing Global Enemies: Hegemony and Identity in International Discourses on Terrorism and Drug Prohibition*. London and New York: Routledge Press, 2011. xv + 203 pages; \$ 130.00 cloth.



Eva Herschinger's *Constructing Global Enemies: Hegemony and Identity in International Discourses on Terrorism and Drug Prohibition* is one in a range of recent scholarly works that address the shifting topographies of international terrorism and drug trafficking. Some of these recent texts include Merrill Singer's *Drugs and Development: The Global Impact on Sustainable Growth and Development* (2008), Juanita León's *Country of Bullets: Chronicles of War* (2009), Robert Bunker's edited text, *Narcos Over the Border: Gangs, Cartels and Mercenaries* (2010), and Julia Buxton's *The Politics of Narcotic Drugs: A Survey* (2010). However, Herschinger's discursive approach is a unique contribution to the field of narco studies. Previous treatments of this topic either study the moral and ethical implications of terrorism and drug trafficking or propose strategic remedies for these transnational acts after they happen. In contrast, Herschinger exposes the processes by which the United Nations establishes and reifies global hegemonic orders in an international arena. She focuses exclusively on the UN as the most significant organizing body involved in maintaining a worldwide consensus on the danger drugs and terrorism pose to the well-being of an international community. This global hegemonic order is buttressed by discourses on international civil society and global terror.

The analysis in *Constructing Global Enemies* is structured around a quantitative poststructuralist examination of the discourse on international terrorism and drug prohibition using the official records of UN conferences and conventions on these issues. For Herschinger, UN conventions on drug prohibition and terrorism serve as productive sites of analysis because they function as international treaties that, despite having no legal impact, have plenty of symbolic and hegemonic importance. Using Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe's approach to hegemony, Herschinger engages in a rigorous examination of hegemonic and counter-hegemonic strategies, logics of difference, and nodal points in international discourses on drug prohibition and terrorism. Here, the "international community" discursively modeled after other forms of collective identity, emerges as the most powerful identity in security discourses. In this argument, "international community" is the symbolic Self against which the Other is framed, an entity needing to be protected from a variety of different actors, including the international terrorist and drug trafficker. By creating an antagonistic frontier between the holistic Self and "evil Other," Herschinger argues that the operating Self embodied by an "international community" is able to believe its own fictions of universal rights to liberty, freedom, and equality. Therefore, in UN documents, acts of terrorism as well as drug production, consumption, and distribution are treated as criminal, barbaric, and as threats to a globalized civil society.

However, although Herschinger acknowledges that the antagonistic frontier between civilization and barbarism is a means inducing consent in a global community, the presence of powerful counter-hegemonic strategies is a far greater threat to "international community" than terrorism and drug trafficking. In other words, although an international community might be persuaded to think of itself as a singular collective body under siege (from drugs and terror) and therefore in need of protection through a unified front (against drugs and terror), ruptures emerge that threaten these hegemonic structures. The most powerful of these counter-hegemonic strategies is "particularization," where, for example, a developing state might re-inscribe its own difference while attempting to mitigate developing countries' anxieties over drug production and terrorism. In cases like these, developing states might demand the right to address drug production internally rather than risk losing its sovereignty to an international collective.

The first two of the five chapters in *Constructing Global Enemies* explain the complex structures of hegemony, the mechanisms of discourse analysis as a methodology, and, more generally, how hegemonies emerge. Chapters three and four contain discussions of the specificities of the discourse on drugs and terrorism, respectively, and follow a meticulous inventory of the significance, methods, and varied operations of discourse analysis. Herschinger anchors her examination of international drug prohibition in an historical overview of the discourse of drugs as illicit starting with the opium wars in the mid-nineteenth century and ending with the medicinal use of drugs in the present. UN conventions on narcotic drugs from 1961 to 1991 provide a means of understanding the rise of international consensus regarding the production and distribution of drugs. Herschinger argues that once the antagonistic frontier of drugs as social evil has been collectively agreed upon, drugs and drug dealers function as dangers to global social and financial well-being. She also tracks the shifts in international responses to drug

trafficking: whereas in the 1960s the “international community” was most concerned with the supply, circulation, and consumption of drugs, by the 1980s states were most concerned with drug trafficking as a threat to economic stability. By tracing the development of drugs from social evil to global economic peril, Herschinger establishes how drug consumption and trade come to constitute, in the discourse of the international community, a crime against humanity and therefore sustain architectures of drug dealers as stateless mercenaries to be challenged with a collective global front.

Herschinger’s discussion of international terrorism concludes with the claim that global hegemony on international terrorism is unrealizable given that terrorism’s counter-hegemonic strategies fail to overwhelm its productive hegemonic tactics. She traces the development of terrorism, from acts of state violence in the aftermath of the French Revolution to anti-state acts of aggression rooted in anarchic movements of the 19th century. Modern terrorism too, Herschinger argues, sees a similar development: from anti-colonial resistance of the mid-20th century to struggles against Western ideology in the early 21st century. Given the range of possible terrorist acts, Herschinger suggests that the terrorist Other remains heterogeneous despite an international need to reach consensus on the legal definition of terrorism. In other words, a powerful and irreconcilable dialectic emerges: although terrorism is a menace to civil society, democracy, and global peace, acts of terror sometimes constitute accepted and just forms of violence. Ultimately, Herschinger positions these highly essentialist discourses on drugs and terrorism as central to the mechanisms of global warfare. Comparing these discourses, she concludes that although the current global wars on drugs and terror are internationally determined responses to threats to a unified “international community,” discourses on drugs and drug-trafficking have been much more effective than discourses on terrorism in establishing a global hegemonic order and orchestrating the attendant strategic countermeasures to protect this order.

Although not explicitly concerned with international drug cartels, Herschinger’s text does point to a gap that should inform future studies on this topic. The field of narco studies needs a more thorough discussion of a figure that exists at the intersection of global capital and discourses on drugs and terrorism: the transnational drug trafficker. The significance of this figure in an hemispheric context can be seen in contemporary U.S. discourses on immigration policy. Arizona senate bill 1070, for example, responded to anxieties over increased undocumented immigration *as well as* the Mexican drug war and its effect on life in the U.S. In this respect, *Constructing Global Enemies* serves as a model for more regionally specific discourse analyses in an American context.

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