

VOLUME 32, ISSUE 1, JANUARY - MARCH, 2025

ISSN 0972-5563

Journal of Peace Studies

A Peer-Reviewed Journal of the International Centre for Peace Studies (ICPS)



ISSN 0972-5563

Journal of Peace Studies

VOLUME 32, ISSUE 1, JANUARY - MARCH, 2025

Journal of Peace Studies

C	O	N	T	E	N	T	S
---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---

From the Editors' Desk 1

ARTICLES

Bhutan - China Boundary Dispute: Evaluating the Impact of a New Roadmap	<i>Nihar R Nayak</i>	3
Foreign Policy of Pakistan: A Case of Misplaced Priorities	<i>Mohmad Waseem Malla & Ashok Behuria</i>	22
Beyond Assad: The Syrian Civil War, Humanitarian Crisis, and the Path to an Inclusive Future	<i>Subhash Singh & Saleem Ahmad</i>	47
Pakistan's CPEC Gamble: Balancing Economic Needs Against the Cost of Dependence	<i>Mohmad Waseem Malla & Kazima Zargar</i>	66

OPINION

Navigating Afghan Refugee Dilemma in Pakistan, Post Taliban: 2021-2024	<i>Puspa Kumari</i>	85
Trump's Second Term: Recalibrating U.S. Policy Towards South Asia with a Focus on India	<i>Imran Khurshid</i>	99
Imagining a Nation: Muslim Political thought and identity in South Asia -1850-1950	<i>Taha Ali</i>	109

BOOK REVIEW

<i>Birth of the State: The Place of the body in Crafting Modern Politics</i> by Charlotte Epsteing	<i>Nazir Ahmad Mir</i>	123
<i>Azadi Ke Baad</i> by Danish Irshad	<i>Imran Khurshid</i>	128

Journal of Peace Studies

**FOUNDING EDITOR**

LATE PROF. RIYAZ PUNJABI

ADVISORY BOARD

T. K. OOMMEN
RENÉ WADLOW
G BALACHANDRAN

EDITORIAL BOARD

NOOR A. BABA
AJAY DARSHAN BEHERA
DIPTI RANJAN PATTNAIK

GUEST EDITOR (HONY)

SALEEM KIDWAI

CONSULTING EDITOR (HONY)

SMRUTI S. PATTANAIK

ASST. EDITORS

PRATEEK JOSHI
MOHMAD WASEEM MALLA

DESIGN

BRINDA DATTA

PRINTED & PUBLISHED BY

SHEIKH KHALID JEHangIR

International Centre for Peace Studies

Printed at:

A.M. Offsetters
Kotla Mubarakpur, New Delhi
PIN- 110 003, TEL: 2463 2395

Office Address:

157/9, Block 4, Second Floor,
Kishangarh, Vasant Kunj, New Delhi-
1110070

Regd. Address:

C-11 Jangpura Extension
New Delhi - 110 014

Tel: (91-11) 49989230, +91-9810317972

<http://www.icpsnet.org>

Emails: cpsndjps@gmail.com;

jps@icpsnet.org

SUBSCRIPTION

In India

This Copy	
(Two Issues):	Rs. 600.00
Annual	
(Individual)	Rs. 1200.00
(Institutional)	Rs. 1800.00

Overseas (Air Mail)

This Copy:	US\$ 15.00
	UK£ 9.00
Annual:	US\$ 60.00

BOOK REVIEW

BIRTH OF THE STATE: THE PLACE OF THE BODY IN CRAFTING MODERN POLITICS

By

CHARLOTTE EPSTEIN

**Publisher: OXFORD
UNIVERSITY PRESS 2021**

Price: INR 2396.00

PP. X+327

ISBN: 9780-190-917630

Nazir Ahmad Mir*



Often, the immediate issues and spectacle of politics occupy the attention of students of both domestic and international affairs. Rarely do they reflect on the everyday practices they voluntarily engage in—practices that enable the state to exert control over their bodies. These practices, being normalised and deeply woven into the

functioning of the modern state, are seldom questioned. We often overlook the need to investigate their premises or trace the history that has led us to the present political arrangement.

Charlotte Epstein's *Birth of the State* adopts a poststructuralist approach to explore the historical construction of three pivotal modern concepts—security, liberty, and property—upon which politics ostensibly rests. By examining how these concepts were contingently constructed within the evolving relationship between the state and the subject, Epstein invites readers to reflect on their status and function in relation to the corporeal body today. Are these principles now the essence of the modern state, or have they become the very sites of its violations, she asks. At the outset, Epstein lays out the purpose of her inquiry as “about the co-constitution of the state and the modern political subject” (p. 2), contending that neither the state nor the political subject exists independently of the other. What links them then, she

**Nazir Ahmad Mir, PhD in conflict analysis and peace building, is a researcher based in New Delhi, India.*

argues, is their mutual constitution as mediated through the triad of political concepts—security, liberty, and property.

Epstein argues that this configuration began to take shape during two major crises in Europe: the religious wars and the scientific revolution. The latter played a particularly crucial role in ushering in modernity. “Modernity began the moment the knowledge turned upon itself, in order to consider not only what could be known in the world, but how such a knowledge was possible in the first place” (p.44). This turning point in epistemology opened space for alternative understandings of the world and, more importantly, of human beings and their role within it. Amid the chaos of religious conflict, Thomas Hobbes found an opportunity to articulate a vision that denaturalised humans and instead sought to construct a contract between corporeal bodies that would eliminate the violence perpetuated by religious dogma. His aim, as Epstein notes, was to replace “a naturalist final cause with a human-made one: peace” (p.46).

Modern politics, then, becomes the craft of individuals who construct a political mechanism to bind even religious rulers by

persuading them that it is the most efficient means of securing a stable political community. Hobbes achieved this by denaturalising human beings and emphasising their corporeality, arguing that “what is incorporeal is nothing” (p.57). By dismissing the non-material dimensions of human life, he reduced political motivation to a “pure natural-cum-political” impulse: self-preservation (p.60). Once humans were separated from nature and their souls neutralised, Hobbes concluded that “the desire to be safe is [a] natural desire that drives humans out of the state of nature to build the state” (ibid.). In this framework, the state thus becomes not just a choice but a necessary condition for security.

The creation of the state, however, did not exclude the people who would comprise it. Rather, it came into being through a contract voluntarily agreed upon by newly defined political subjects with an agency to consent (p.86). In this process, traditional communal and topological understandings of liberty were transformed into a singular notion of liberty linked directly to the corporeal body (p.109, 112). Calvin’s case further entrenched this transformation and became foundational in this shift by marking the beginning of ‘laws of naturalisation’ and ‘citizenship

rights' tied to territorial belonging (p.114). In this context, Epstein notes that "the Sovereign-Subject relation was corpo-realised in the law in Calvin's Case, realised by being rooted in the body" (p.118).

While Hobbes externalised liberty by rooting it in the physical body, John Locke reintroduced liberty through the interior domain of conscience. Yet, Locke's concept of conscience was not entirely internal or natural; it was, as Epstein puts it, "a disciplined conscience" (p.132). Locke maintained that humans, as "sensible beings," possessed faculties that enabled them to acquire knowledge (p.152). Thus, the idea of consent diverged in meaning between Hobbes and Locke: for Hobbes, it was "the movement of an embodied will" aimed at securing safety; for Locke, "consent was unavoidably a matter of and for the conscience" (p.145).

In both perspectives, however, human agency remained bound to the corporeal self. The key distinction was that Locke believed humans could be trained to act rationally through education and discipline. Herein, discipline and proper conduct play an essential role in Locke's framework. While Hobbes's state, being comprehensive, left no room for "unreason," which was

precisely what it aimed to eliminate; however, for Locke, "unreason denotes what lies beyond the space of collective living and threatens to tear it apart" (p.166). This difference in approach had broader implications.

Locke's labour theory of value further developed the individual's role in property creation. Through "appropriation," he defined the mechanism by which something is drawn into the sphere of the self through one's labour (p.198). In doing so, they not only secured material property but also fashioned themselves into autonomous subjects capable of giving consent (p.202). Epstein extends this logic and contends that by "once applying his labour, the man not only owns the property but he also owns the 'person' that he has crafted in expending himself. A human becomes a person in labouring" (p.205).

Herein lies the contradiction. Although Locke painstakingly revised theories of labour and property developed by thinkers like Francisco Suárez, Hugo Grotius, and Samuel Pufendorf, he ultimately compromised the universality of his theory due to personal interests. He argued that enslaved people lacked the right to property because they

BOOK REVIEW

had forfeited it upon being conquered—suffering punishment for a crime they committed in rebelling and failing.

In her final chapter, Epstein explores how public anatomy lessons in the 17th century became a tool of state power. Dead bodies—often foreigners or outsiders—were used as public spectacles, dissected not only to advance empirical knowledge of the human body but also to reinforce state authority (pp.234–252). One enduring mystery, however, was female biology. Epstein argues that “modern science’s subject-object distinction operated from its inception as a gendered structure of domination” (p.257), with nature—and by extension, women—figured as feminine and subordinate.

Birth of the State offers a compelling genealogy of the subject-state relationship. While deftly engaging political philosophy, scientific discoveries like blood circulation and inventions like air pumps, Epstein masterfully draws from art history to demonstrate how the trinity of security, liberty, and property were constructed and how they continue to shape the role of the state. This is not merely an academic exercise as she seeks to connect these foundational structures with

contemporary realities, arguing that the body continues to be central to state control—through surveillance technologies, biometrics, and other mechanisms that perpetuate state power.

Although it seems that there is no way out from this system, Epstein emphasises the enduring potential of human creativity—the very force that originally gave birth to the state. Much like thinkers like Hobbes, Locke and others started with critique, she contends that it was the duty of responsible individuals to strive for ushering a meaningful change.

The challenge, however, lies in retaining and exercising creative human agency in an age increasingly dominated by digital systems. Much of contemporary labour is now digitised, and individuals often merely follow algorithms. For instance, both Hobbes and Locke forbade speech that could harm others. Yet, in the digital age, a single tweet or video can spark unrest far beyond its point of origin. The August 2024 riots in Britain, sparked by fake tweets targeting a vulnerable minority community, are a sobering example. More so, when digital platforms are driven purely by profit, they undermine the responsibility of their users.

BOOK REVIEW

Nonetheless, *Birth of the State* offers a comprehensive and detailed exploration of the mechanisms through which the state operates and reproduces itself. It should be read with keen interest by students of

political theory, comparative politics, international politics and political sociology, among others, who want to understand the evolution of discourses on security, liberty, and property and the inherent dialectic therein. ■

Note for readers and subscribers

We are happy to inform you that from January 2009 we have introduced the system of peer review of articles to ensure quality of publications and improve the scholarly value of our journal. We have a renowned group of scholars and academicians associated with our Centre and they are helping us in this process. We are grateful to them for their kind support and cooperation.

We would request our readers and subscribers to take note of these changes and we would, as ever, encourage them to send in research articles for publication to us. The manuscripts of research papers submitted for publication should be neatly typed in double space and the length of the papers should be ideally between 3,000-5000 words including the references. They should contain an abstract and a short introduction of the author. The authors should use Chicago Manual Style for their references. The articles can be sent to us in an electronic format, preferably Ms Word. For detailed guidelines they may send their queries to us in the following address.

Journal of Peace Studies Research Section

Emails: cpsndjps@gmail.com, jps@icpsnet.org



INTERNATIONAL CENTRE FOR PEACE STUDIES

C-11, Jangpura Extension,
New Delhi – 110 014, INDIA

Tel: (91-11) 49989230, +91-9560126157, 9810317972

Websites: <http://www.icpsnet.org> (Main),
www.icpsorg.com (Kashmir chapter)

Emails: cpsndjps@gmail.com, jps@icpsnet.org