

22. Jul. 2014

von benkamis

in Popkultur,  
Sicherheitskultur,  
Sozialwissenschaft  
Online

Kommentare ( 0 )

## Out of area or out of business?: the bourgeois parochialism of international studies conferences

Most face-to-face interaction with other IR types happens at conferences, and it's easy to break conferences down by profile and inclusiveness. The ISA annual conference is supposed to rate pretty highly on both, and almost everyone has been a few times by the end of their post-grad careers. Then there are the conferences that are high profile but less inclusive. APSA, BISA, the ISA regional conferences, and the newly constituted EISA are fairly high profile in that most IR professionals have heard of them, but they're less inclusive in that few of us would cross broad bodies of water and long customs lines to participate.

Many have recently noticed how this concentration of conferences in the (global) North and the (ominous italics) *West* means that none of them are very inclusive, and the association with prestige is a problem. Even more recently, many new conferences have started popping up to be more inclusive in a global sense. These efforts to expand the scope of participation in the discourse are bound to fail, and I'm going to argue that they're going to fail on purpose by accident. (Yes, I proofread.)

One notable effort to expand the discourse at conference level is WISC, the *World International Studies Committee*. **WISC came into being** after it became increasingly obvious that holding ISA conferences and regional affiliates every year in locations like San Diego, New York, Hawaii, or even Toronto is prohibitively expensive for many. They say that putting on a global conference is their 'raison d'être'. Further, it's an embarrassment when a branch of study that calls itself international and includes colonialism as a legitimate research object and post-colonialism as a legitimate approach insulates itself in (North) America. WISC arose as an answer to this, and the idea is roughly to hold an ISA outside of N. America, which will make it easier for, say, Africans, East Europeans and many Asians to attend.

Another notable effort is the **Global South Caucus for International Studies** (GSCIS) conference. Whereas WISC is formally independent but still within the ISA's sphere of influence – something like a client state, GSCIS is more directly dependent on the ISA institutionally and organisationally – a protectorate, if you will. One of the goals GSCIS lists is to promote the participation of 'south scholars' in ISA conferences.

Let's start by looking at the locations of these to efforts to expand. This year WISC is going to be held in Frankfurt. While Frankfurt is geographically

### SOCIAL MEDIA



### SUCHE

### TWITTER FEED

Neue #Jobs für  
Politikwissenschaftler\_innen!  
<http://t.co/f3vSzfJpMG>  
5. Dezember 2014, 9:03 von &s

In den nächsten Wochen bei uns: Eine  
Beitragsreihe zu #Cyberpeace.  
Großartige Autoren, spannende Posts!  
[@fiff\\_de](http://t.co/z54MUpBFNc)  
3. Dezember 2014, 12:28 von &s

Ein kleiner Konferenzbericht zur  
#doeffl4 von @seditioni und ein  
großes Lob an die Organisator\_innen!  
<http://t.co/tUtsCX4Vdg>  
1. Dezember 2014, 10:08 von &s

### TAGS

much closer to Bamako or Baghdad than Honolulu or Montreal, it's not necessarily easier to get to from outside the North and West. This is admittedly anecdotal evidence, but let me illustrate. I'll be on 3 different panels at WISC next month, and on those 3 panels there will be a total of 16 participants. They'll be coming from Germany, England, Wales, Denmark and Finland. How that differs from EISA or ECPR or BISA is beyond me. There will certainly be a participant or two from, say, Romania or Estonia or Kenya, but there always are. Even the EISA conference in Warsaw last year included a few Poles! In order to improve WISC's non-western credentials, its programme committee is based in Moscow.\*

As for GSCIS, it was originally planned for Bangkok. However, Thailand had this little putsch, and now Bangkok is under control of a military junta with tacit legitimization by a hereditary monarch. Because holding a conference under such conditions would threaten 'free and open discussion', GSCIS was delighted to announce last month that the conference will now be held in Singapore. So the solution to the problem military dictatorship backed by undemocratic political institutions is an undemocratic polity backed by paramilitary institutions. And Singapore is about 800% more expensive than Thailand. The jump in terms of affordability for less well-heeled participants is comparable to the difference between Albania and Norway (!).

So what's the problem? These conference have been set up more (in the GSCIS case) or less (in the WISC case) outside of the North and West. What more could you want?

Well, it would be a weak improvement to hold these conferences in Southern countries that meet the organisations' own rhetorical standards. Functioning democracies in the South aren't that common, but there are more than there used to be, and India, the Philippines, Costa Rica and company are all supposed to be quite nice. It would also be legitimate to drop Bangkok and say that most of us Northern and Western academics lead comfortable lives, and we fear for our safety in seemingly volatile Bangkok, but we feel safer in the stable authoritarianism of Singapore. I'm getting older, I have a family and whatnot, and I don't want to get bludgeoned or worse for being at the wrong place at the wrong time any more than the next egghead. But that's different from praising democracy or condemning its opposite. The aversion isn't about our virtue, but about our fear. Fear motivates, but it's not obviously a virtue.

The easiest thing would be to hold ISA elsewhere, like in Amman or Montevideo, but that's not going to happen because *then we northerners would have to go*. If an ISA meeting in the South was the only game in town, it would compel a real change in habits, a real reconsideration of priorities and what words like dialogue and inclusion mean. Setting up a different meeting while preserving the old habits, however, allows for a fig leaf of inclusion while changing nothing substantive. It's rather like a junkie who, wanting to kick the habit, moves in with his dealer until he gets back on his feet. It's a strategy nominally directed at change, but doomed to fail because

BELIEBT KOMMENTARE NEU

Hell yeah, it's Political Science!  
Wissenschaftliche Podcasts

Das Internet darf ein cyberfreier  
Raum sein

Deutschlands Irak-Politik –  
Verantwortung nach außen,  
Intransparenz nach innen.

Wir haben Geburtstag!

„Mit Sicherheit nicht!“ Sexuelle  
Gewalt als politisches Mittel

## KATEGORIEN

Außenpolitik (59)

Bürgerkriege (16)

Cyber Security (40)

Demokratisierung (9)

Drohnen (15)

Humanitäre Interventionen (15)

Innere Sicherheit (24)

Interviews (10)

Katastrophen (4)

Konferenz (20)

Militär (27)

Pandemien (2)

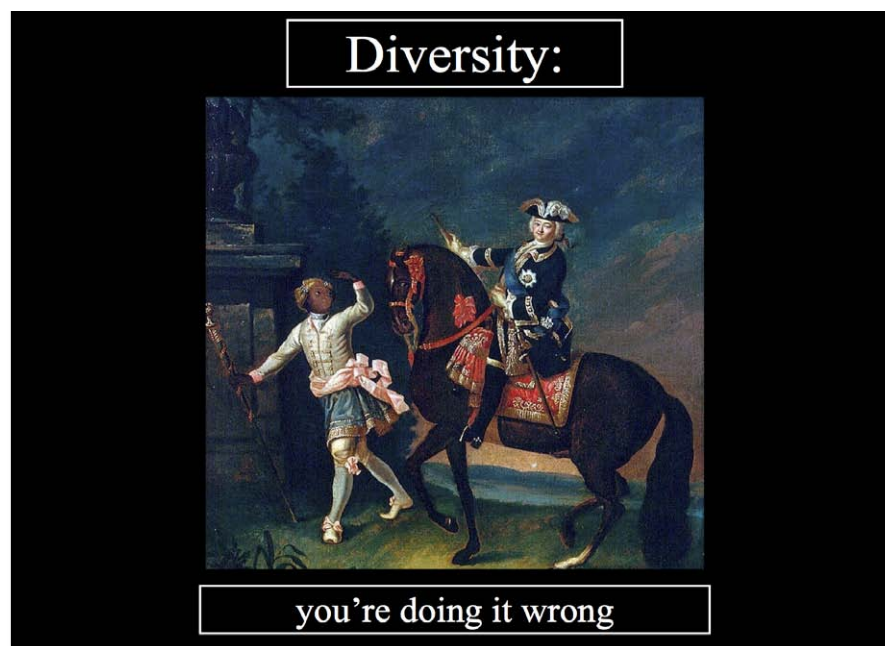
Podcast (7)

Popkultur (20)

Sanktionen (8)

Security Culture (13)

it makes the undesired behaviour easier than before. It's a solution designed to fail on purpose.



\*I'd like to rant about how a member of that committee responded in an email with 'Fuck! Sorry. We'll fix problem' and how they seemed to have drawn their list of topics from the 1988 ISA, but dealing with that kind of difference is part of the challenge, isn't it?

Tags: [ASPA](#), [BISA](#), [Conference](#), [EISA](#), [Global South](#), [GSCIS](#), [international relations](#), [International Studies](#), [ISA](#), [WISC](#)

[« IR Theories of Future Past, Part 2](#)

[Stellenanzeigen Juli 1/2 »](#)

Sicherheits-Kommunikation (14)
Sicherheitskultur (204)
Sozialwissenschaft Online (57)
Stellenangebote (42)
Strategie (10)
Terrorismus (14)
Theorie (2)
Umwelt (1)
Versicherheitlichung (21)
Visualisierung (5)
Whistleblowing (8)
WikiLeaks (17)
WMD (10)
Zivilgesellschaft (48)

## BLOGROLL

- [Arbeitskreis soziale Bewegungen](#)
- [AG Augen geradaus](#)
- [Dan Drezner](#)
- [Dart-Throwing Chimp](#)
- [David Campbell](#)
- [de.hypotheses.org](#)
- [Demokratieforschung Göttingen](#)
- [Duck Of Minerva](#)
- [Future and Politics](#)
- [Hylaeon Flow](#)
- [Internet und Politik](#)
- [IR Blog](#)
- [Just Security Blog](#)
- [justsecurity.org](#)
- [Killer Apps](#)
- [Kings Of War](#)
- [netzpolitik.org](#)

**Bislang keine Kommentare**

**Einen Kommentar hinterlassen**

Name

Email

Webseite

## Kommentar

Geben Sie den Text ein.



[Datenschutz - Nutzungsbedingungen](#)

Benachrichtige mich über nachfolgende Kommentare per E-Mail.

[shabka.org](#)

[Terrorismus in Deutschland](#)

[theorieblog.de](#)

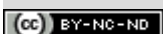
[Verfassungsblog](#)

[Vom Bohren harter Bretter](#)

[whistleblower-net.de](#)

## ARCHIV

Wähle den Monat



[Impressum](#) |

Dieses Werk bzw. Inhalt steht unter einer Creative Commons Namensnennung-NichtKommerziell-KeineBearbeitung 3.0 Unported Lizenz.

Über diese Lizenz hinausgehende Erlaubnisse können Sie unter [redaktion@sicherheitspolitik-blog.de](mailto:redaktion@sicherheitspolitik-blog.de) erhalten