Interview – Edythe E. Weeks

https://www.e-ir.info/2020/12/15/interview-edythe-e-weeks/

E-INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS, DEC 15 2020

Dr. Edythe E. Weeks, Esq serves as an adjunct professor for the Department of History, Politics and International Relations at Webster University. She also develops and teaches courses at Washington University and Northern Arizona University. She is a Fulbright Specialist Program alumnus, after being awarded grants for the successful completion of teaching appointments at Omsk F.M. Dostoevsky State University (Омский государственный университет им. Ф.М. Достоевского), in Siberia (2015) and Universidad Veracruzana, North American Studies Program, Escuela para Estudiantes Extranjeros in Xalapa, Mexico and Universidad de Guadalajara Pacific Studies Department, Social Sciences and Humanities Campus, Jalisco Guadalajara, México (2016). Weeks earned her PhD in political science from Northern Arizona University's Department of Politics & International Affairs in 2006, and a Juris Doctors degree from the University of Missouri – Columbia, School of Law in 1987. Although Weeks tends to aim her focus on remote regions, her methodology allows participants to generate innovative and creative insights, which can be extended and applied to a wide variety of international topics.

Where do you see the most exciting research/debates happening in your field?

The most exciting research in my field, which is distinct from the most exciting debate, involves the increasingly intelligent space telescopes exploring the universe and sending us information about what's out there. For example, the Kepler space telescope has revealed thousands of exoplanets and confirmed Earthlike planets. As new telescopes are being developed, we are likely to be shown more and more of what is out there in our universe. New types of spaceships and starships are being perfected and developed for missions to Mars and elsewhere in deep space and the universe. It is also exciting for me to connect predictable competitions to mine natural resources of Near-Earth asteroids and the moon to natural resources being discovered in the rapidly melting polar regions – the Arctic and Antarctica. So far, I am the first scholar to systematically include these regions and to suggest they be incorporated into a pre-colonization studies theme, which would then be added to the curriculum – worldwide – for all people, irrespective of their situation. For space law, the most exciting debate in international relations is the same today as in 1991. Key actors from within the international community are increasingly speaking in direct opposition to state action. A key debate in the field of space law is whether individual states have the right to grant private property rights over outer space territories and resources.

My research is aimed at increasing levels of awareness, thereby, enabling future generations of scholars to produce positive change in the world based on emerging colonization and development trends. For example, the Outer Space Treaty of 1967 proclaims outer space as res communis territory. New and old key actors have already placed trigger events on the agenda such as developing new types of spaceships, plans for colonizing Mars, the Moon and other outer space locations. Gold, iridium, osmium and other platinum group metals have been located on Near Earth asteroids and asteroid mining is an emergent industry. Knowing what the discovery of gold and other precious natural resources has meant in connection to "development" and "colonization" scenarios, I find myself excited by new reports and commercials on asteroid mining. They indicate that asteroids are potentially estimated as being worth, for example $10,000,000,000,000,000 (ten quadrillion dollars). Asteroid mining operations are scheduled and are anticipated to accrue trillions, or quadrillions of dollars in natural resources. Companies such as Deep Space Industries and Planetary Resources have formed. Therefore, this is a critically pivotal matter of international law. These are data points that I can now point to in support of my hypothesis that outer space and the polar regions are in the process of development.

How has the way you understand the world changed over time, and what (or who) prompted the most significant shifts in your thinking?

My field was created in my mind, as a PhD student of political science/international relations. After completing an undergraduate degree in economics and a Juris Doctor in law, with an emphasis in international law, I felt unable to do anything about the continuing patterns of inequality linked with misery, playing out over and over throughout humanity. This prompted me to pursue the PhD path with the hope that I could finally gain the skillset needed to be able to do or say something to effectuate a real change globally. What drove me to pursue emerging changes in space law were various articles which began to appear in the Post-Cold War era. Articles began to appear around 1991, suggesting that now was the time to change international space law to match the new free market global environment. I began studying these discourses. To find my voice and to make a relevant contribution to peaceful international relations for what I was perceiving to be outer space development, I got admitted into a PhD program for the purpose of learning the tools and methodologies for speaking to and calling attention to yet another emergent paradigm.

Although outer space development and space law sound strange to most people, the first and second wave of outer space development have already happened. Throughout the world, it is now common for people to use cell phones, the Internet, debit or credit cards and ATM machines. These everyday goods and services stem from technologies ushered in via space law and located off Earth – in the territory known as outer space. Many of the richest people in the world became rich because of their ability to understand, foresee and link a product or service to emerging space technologies. For example, Elon Musk, before founding SpaceX, initiated PayPal. Without the Internet, there would be no PayPal. The Internet is connected to satellite technology, which is outer space technology.

Using my own meager resources and most of my time, energy and physical strength studying and promoting the study of space law. I began my investigation and self-study into space law in 1991. Over the past several decades of study and observations, the least interesting and most disheartening aspect of my ongoing research has been just how little interest there has been in these emerging phenomena. Apathy is at an all time high. If people are not being paid money to care or to research these issues, they are not at all moved — this has been my realization. The majority of people are still unwilling to break away from the social conditioning which causes people to perceive outer space and polar regions development as something only important to specialized groups or for rich people. This will mean a complete green light, since the laws and economic initiatives and mission statements appear to be in full bloom. The way I understand the world today has evolved into a more cynical view. For example, I once believed that if all people, from all backgrounds and nations were given opportunities to make their dreams come true by being linked to the outer space development process, this would ensure peace and prosperity for all humankind. I am no longer able to hope for this vision. Rather, today I have come to believe that as outer space development continues, more inequality is likely to continue and more conflicts are likely to emerge. Observations, conversations, public speaking and interactions over the past few decades, in addition to continued research and study of what has happened regarding outer space development, has prompted me to change my thinking over time.

In your book *Outer Space Development, International Relations and Space Law*, you discussed the importance of bridging the knowledge gap between the general public and the space community in relation to outer space development studies. To what extent has the gap been narrowed? What more can be done?

My goal in pursing a PhD and becoming a member of the outer space development community was to increase awareness and engagement in outer space activities for a broader range of people throughout the global general public. I have witnessed a wider array of participants in the process of outer space development from a wider color spectrum, ethnicity, nationalities, religions, and more panels and technical discussions addressing the importance of triggering more diversity as humanity moves forward with outer space development. More universities, scholars, teachers and academic institutions are participating in these conferences and discussions and focusing their skills aimed at doing something related to outer space development. I have seen a broader range of diversity in terms of participation in the Annual International Astronautical Federation Congresses. More panel discussions and presentations addressing the topic of the need for all people from all nations to benefit from outer space development

have appeared on the agenda. More countries have gotten involved and some have formed national space agencies. More companies and corporations from a wider variety of regions of the world have started getting involved in outer space development.

In addition, libraries in approximately sixty nations acquired a copy of my book, mainly in e-book form for patrons in their respective countries. Hopefully, there are people out there who are focusing on this important area of international relations and international law. More law review journal articles are being published on these key themes and topics in recent years. Lip service is being articulated to the importance of diversity in asteroid mining commercials and other discourses centered around themes connected to outer space development and emerging industries. Every student, scholar, writer, artist, entrepreneur, troubled soul, potential worker, or retiree would need to be helped into understanding what the future awaits. Plans for all of our immediate futures have largely been written into economic initiatives and public policies. The largest efforts towards new territories and development scenarios have been for outer space and the polar regions. Since these are res communis territories and public funds have been used for development projects thus far, people have the right to focus on these regions. The key government actors have a vested interest in gaining public support for outer space and public regions development — it can be a win-win situation.

However, outer space and polar regions studies will need to be petitioned for. Subject areas such as diversity studies and ethnic studies are the result of students' persistent demands for a culturally relevant education. People reading this article can spend a moment considering what contributions can an interdisciplinary field, which includes building knowledge about outer space development and polar regions development, make to students' educational experiences. A legal basis has already been written upon which students, scholars, academics and others can base their claim for including outer space and polar development courses in the curriculum. The international community has produced The Outer Space Treaty of 1967 which is part of international law; it mandates that this be so. It specifically states that the "exploration and use of outer space should be carried on for the benefit of all peoples irrespective of the degree of their economic or scientific development". How can people benefit if they have no relevant or working knowledge of outer space development? The remedy is sharing this knowledge with everyone, everywhere. This way, the global general public can gain knowledge about newly emerging space trends and find ways to produce greater opportunity by linking themselves to these trends.

Who are the emerging leaders in outer space development and who is lagging behind?

The present drive towards outer space development involves a culmination of forces — hearings, policies, economic initiatives, international and domestic laws, as well as various historical, legal, ideological, institutional, political, economic, psychological, and structural factors — all operating together in the post–Cold War era amid the heightened cultural dominance of free-market ideology. Outer space is arguably in the process of being developed or colonized through the mechanism of politics and law. The first wave of outer space development in the last half of the 20th century changed the world. This first wave resulted in the colonization of the geostationary orbit via the success of a revolutionary satellite telecommunications system and the globalization of new high-tech products and services. For example, widespread global use of cell phones, the Internet, social networks, and wireless financial transactions all appear to have happened overnight. Telecommunications technologies coming from the space programs have revolutionized how we communicate. Contrary to the popular belief that emerging leaders are (highly publicized) private sector entrepreneurs and their companies such as Elon Musk and SpaceX, or Sir Richard Branson and Virgin Galactic, or China and India because of recent successful missions to the Moon and Mars, there is only one emerging leader in outer space development today. This emerging leader is the outer space development regime.

The concept of a "regime" allows a scholar to discuss the parts that we can see, show, point to and illustrate, and other parts which are more difficult to capture in concrete terms. The body of this regime is made up of key actors, norms, laws, policies, industries, and activities, as well as social, behavioral, and institutional practices. It can be said to contain parts that we can see and measure, and other parts which are more difficult to capture in concrete terms. International space lawmaking activities can be examined visibly and a person can be located in the international treaties, declarations, domestic laws and policies, commercial rules and regulations. The value of the concept of a regime lies in its ability to describe a myriad of discourses and behavioral patterns in a way which increases our

ability to understand who has power to effect change or to make things actually happen related to outer space development. Political discourses produce and reproduce discourse coalitions, rhetorical troupes, beliefs, opinions, and ideologies; moreover, they often persuade lawmakers to produce specific laws and policies matching those political beliefs. Using this approach to study the international relations aspects of outer space and polar regions development, we can create an explanatory framework capable of explaining the key periods of change and the events therein.

The outer space territory does not currently belong to any nation, group of nations, any person, institution, organization or corporation or set of organizations and/or corporations. Any significant key actor's activity, aims or goals can only move forward by those who acknowledge the need to participate in accordance with the longstanding rules of the game in this ongoing competition, on the outer space development chessboard. Long term established leaders, emergent and emerging leaders are all seen to be playing a role in the process of furthering outer space development. For example, in the International Astronautical Federation Congress Technical Programme, various key players in space are listed. Key actors include, nations, individuals, groups of nations, partnerships, corporations, institutions, organizations, collaborative alliances, groups, clubs and other arrangements. There are thousands of perceived or potential emerging leaders in the process of outer space development. However, I often suggest that it is possible for individuals to conduct their own research to discern who the key actors are in the process of outer space development. Any one or group of participants from the recent International Astronautical Federation Congress – The CyberSpace Edition, for example, may be perceived and named as emerging leaders in outer space development.

What misconceptions surround the Cold War "space race"?

A common misconception regarding "the space race" is that at the beginning there were two superpower competitors or leaders – the U.S. and the U.S.S.R. This is what tends to lead people into further believing that new additional leaders have emerged today to form a new space race. Historical accounts detailing the diplomatic activities causing the drafting and enactment of the international space treaties clearly show that there were three key actors in the space race – the United States, the Soviet Union, and a collection of nearly 100 other states and institutions acting through the United Nations.

The 1957 launch of Sputnik by the U.S.S.R. was the key event in the formation of the international space law. From a legal perspective, the concern in the United Nations was that launching satellites into orbit would become an acceptable international practice. Unchallenged, the Sputnik and subsequent launches could have become permissible as legal custom (Metcalf, 1999: 82–84). The first debates on space law took place in the United Nations from November 17–24, 1958. On the first day of these debates, November 17, 1958, the United States addressed the United Nations and urged it to adopt the U.S. proposed Resolution 1348 (XIII). This resolution was to form an ad hoc committee to create space law. This is because outer space – the planets, asteroids, celestial bodies, moons, star systems, stars, galaxies, water and natural resources – was perceived as not belonging to any one nation. In 1959, the United Nations General Assembly passed Resolution No. 1472 (XIV) which created the first space lawmaking institution, the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space (COPUOS), and its Legal Subcommittee.

From 1957 to 1967 the international community of nearly 100 nations, held meetings and working groups to hash out the terms for the outer space treaties that all of the parties felt they could live with. After ten years of negotiations, it was agreed upon that outer space was a global commons territory and the Outer Space Treaty opened for signature on January 27, 1966. It entered into force as the constitution for outer space the year after. The Outer Space Treaty was well received; it was ratified by ninety-six nations and signed by an additional twenty-seven states. As of January 1, 2020 the Outer Space Treaty has been ratified by 110 and signed, but not ratified by an additional 23 nations. As the first effort to regulate activities occurring in outer space, it established several principles of international law, making it the most important treaty in the field of space law.

In negotiating the space law treaties, less powerful nations agreed to define outer space as a res communis territory (Jasentuliyana and Lee 1979–1981). Prior to this, outer space could have been defined as belonging to each nation in accordance with its sovereign territory, similar to air space. It is clear from the travaux préparatoires and related

documents that the nations of the world were against ownership of outer space territory, whether by individuals, or private, corporate, international, or governmental bodies. It is also clear from the record that the non-superpower nations participating in the outer space treaty negotiations, made a bargain for exchange. To prevent the U.S. and U.S.S.R. from militarizing or colonizing outer space, they agreed that the legal effect of this concession was that outer space territory was no longer subject to the possibility of belonging to sovereign nations in analogy with their air space and land rights. Outer space was deemed as belonging to no state in particular. Since they were the only two spacefaring nations at the time, this benefited the U.S. and the Soviet Union by granting them legal free reign over outer space to develop the satellite communications industry.

In exchange for these new legal rights granted to the spacefaring nations, the other nations were granted the right to share in the benefits derived from outer space exploration. This is why one of the key principles of space law is that space activities are to be for the benefit of all nations, "irrespective of their stage of economic or scientific development" (Von Bencke, 1997: 43). This tripartite dynamic characterizes the politics which led to the specific terms being written into the international space treaties.

What role can outer space development play in addressing cybersecurity vulnerabilities?

The more advanced the development of outer space becomes, the more likely it is that attackers, intruders and those with the intent to harm, gain access to sensitive information, disrupt and/or make ransom demands against outer space assets, including satellite communications technologies, networks, spaceships, settlements, stations and individuals. Advanced outer space development will undoubtedly give rise to advanced cybersecurity attacks, as has been the historical trend. This will also bring advanced opportunities and demand for individuals capable of problem solving in this area. It is also likely to bring advanced opportunities for those interested in pursuing efforts towards cyber attacks, stealing and selling information and other imaginable activities.

The Arctic region is often described as the next global flashpoint. What are some emerging trends and challenges when it comes to competition in the region?

I would like to add to that that Antarctica and outer space should also be considered global "flashpoints" in that these territories are being perceived by key actors as part of a competition for natural resources and other industry-making hubs. The emerging trends and challenges concerning competition in the Arctic region are similar to those in Antarctica and outer space. Key actors with the resources and time to focus or to pay individuals and companies to take action in these regions, are the only ones who really get to determine what will happen in these regions. People who are not promised or are not slotted to receive material gains from concerning themselves with what happens in these regions are very unlikely to care, concern themselves or take any sort of action. This has been the trend. The concern should be that new forms of wealth are likely to amass to key actor nations, companies and individuals who play a part in the emerging competitions in these "flashpoint" regions. The research and development and most of the equipment, intellectual and other resources are usually paid for by the general publics of most of the nations involved in this competition. Even companies and entrepreneurs are usually funded to a certain extent by public dollars. Yet, the trend has been that only a handful of people are likely to benefit from these adventures. Opportunities are likely to be missed for wealth creation for more people or for peaceful relations between nations. Perhaps, nations will decide to cooperate as the Arctic region is developed and maybe companies will decide to do no harm to the environment in the Arctic or to the Indigenous people living in the region. However, so far, the opposite has been the trend.

How can the development of the Arctic region be pursued in a sustainable way?

This would require experts, activists and scholars who are skilled at making sustainability happen, to get involved in the pre-colonization of the Arctic stage of development. This is unlikely to happen without financial compensation for the work that will be involved in shifting the focus to the Arctic. Most of the people gifted with the ability to effect sustainable development are likely to perceive the Arctic region as outside of their purview. Likewise, the global general public is unlikely to do and say things to ensure that the Arctic, or Antarctica are developed in a sustainable way, unless they would be financially compensated for making sure that this happens. In addition, they too are likely

to perceive the Arctic as no place for their activism, a no man's land, or a being too far out there for them to commit to problem-solving or concerning themselves with polar issues.

What is the potential significance of research and development of outer space and the polar region to a post-pandemic world?

Long before COVID-19, humanity has been occupying a post-pandemic world. Humanity has overcome many pandemics and epidemics. The most important pandemic to overcome is that of apathy regarding what is scheduled to happen next on our planet. The public agenda and economic initiatives are usually researchable for plans concerning outer space and polar development. Historically, development paradigms have resulted in environmental disruption and degradation, inequality and mass global conflict. Yet, most people just do not care. This, for me, is an ongoing pandemic more powerful than all the military forces in the world and more powerful than COVID-19. The way things have been going, the potential significance of research and development of outer space the polar regions are likely to result in wonderful opportunities for life beyond Earth and/or opportunities for new pristine-disease free lands and water and new lives full of natural abundance, but only for a few individuals. This is only likely to last for a few generations, however. This vision is likely to be followed by environmental degradation, destruction, inequality, brewing resentments, conflict and war. International law has been created to prevent these patterned trends.

In the midst of COVID-19, just about everything has been placed on hold, except for plans towards outer space development. The recently concluded 71st International Astronautical Federation Congress (IAC), for example, took place in Cyberspace and gathered experts from around the globe to present and discuss cutting-edge developments related to outer space. Plans for funding emerging outer space activities are researchable and being at the IAC, dubbed as the "Olympic Games" of space, allows a person to understand discussions on future plans and activities for outer space.

What is the most important advice you could give to young scholars of International Relations?

Young and young at heart scholars and young scholars who will soon turn into old scholars, teach yourself to translate relevance for outer space and polar regions development, as an overlay, onto your career goals and other aspirations. Young scholars, as they become older scholars, must now begin to notice, see, unpack, witness and research emergent trends that will likely significantly impact the global economy in the near future. This methodology will enable scholars to hone their specialty skills to help solve foreseeable problems before those problems take root. Scholars are able to understand and provide useful analyses and explanations for today's emerging trends. This is humanity's next step. Publish articles, books, dissertations, thesis, films and screenplays that apply facts, rules, concepts and ideas to evaluate and judge key events and issues related to explaining outer space and polar activities through the lens of political science. Learn how to create a new set of ideas and explanations from evaluating and applying, digesting and breaking down ideas, concepts and rule-like social and behavioral phenomena, to provide an analytical explanation of how outer space and polar activities may impact political outcomes. Learn how to synthesize and compile component ideas to construct and write analytical explanations to the questions posed concerning the debates on outer space and polar themes and discussions concerning outer space and polar resources and territories. Practice the arts of evaluating and articulating, or choosing a perspective in current or evoked debates, and illustrate and dissect the key arguments then consider, assess, judge and weigh evidence on either side of the debate. Discover, understand and be able to speak to opposing viewpoints and show knowledge of countering viewpoints to persuade audiences.

Gaining knowledge, information and education – even self-study education – is the key to enabling more people to shape positive futures for themselves and to influence others. In addition, there is the UNESCO Incheon Declaration and Framework for Action for the Implementation of Sustainable Development (Goal 4) – Ensure Inclusive and Equitable Quality Education and Promote Lifelong Learning Opportunities for All. However, unless this mandate is linked to outer space and polar regions development, it is unlikely to have any major or significant impact. Unless all people, throughout all nations are preparing for outer space development and colonization in the polar regions, once again, only a few nations are likely to benefit. The world community created these international space laws decades ago. And, today we can see how brilliantly foresighted the international space law negotiators were. As it stands

today, because of this mass programmed apathy, only a handful of people are aware, or even care about all of this stuff, covered in my research. This will further the widening inequality gaps.

By the time these ideas catch on and are accepted, young scholars are likely to have become old scholars. Therefore, my advice to young, midrange and senior scholars of international relations is to realize that now is the time to establish the study of outer space and polar regions development as a sub-discipline across the curriculum. This can be facilitated by determining local key actors with the authority to advance or expand the university and school curriculum. Perhaps the most effective way would be to influence policy makers and education administrators to initiate rules requiring the inclusion of outer space and polar regions knowledge into current learning outcomes for existing courses or to systematically add topics with outer space and polar themes. Vast opportunities exist for scholars from all nations, to pioneer studies in all disciplines. People can empower themselves by imagining what our world might be like, if past colonization and development scenarios had involved a broader range of people. Humankind has this type of opportunity today. People from all nations and all walks of life have a chance to play a major role in the development of new territories. Someone will need to begin the process of advocating and speaking for this in order for it to happen before it is, yet again, too late.