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Internet Gambling Offshore: Caribbean Struggles over Casino Capitalism. Andrew F. Cooper. Basingstoke, U.K.: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011. xvii + 201 pp. (Cloth US\$ 85.00)

Chronicling the dispute between Antigua and the United States over offshore Internet gambling, this book is set against the backdrop of the historic speculative boom in finance that precipitated the global financial crisis. Antigua hosted offshore gambling operations that eventually brought it to the World Trade Organization (WTO) to argue—and win—its case against the United States. Other Caribbean islands meanwhile served booking functions for derivatives, insurance, and complicated subsidiary structures. Yet even in the wake of the financial crisis that began in 2008, official sanctions against financial speculation have been significantly weaker than those against offshore gambling. Furthermore, despite Antigua's win at the WTO, the United States was able to stop offshore Internet gambling. The international effort against Caribbean tax havens has not been as successful. This fascinating book helps explain why: U.S. politics are full of strange bedfellows, regulatory carve-outs for specific industries, and unlikely alliances that thwart easy International Relations (IR) accounts of power in the global political economy.

Since ancient times, gambling has faced moral stigma. One reason is the confounding of media of value with mechanisms of chance. States thus have sought to segregate gambling spatially from other economic activities (think Las Vegas . . . or Wall Street). The Internet complicates this enclaving. If you are physically in Ohio but logged into a server in Antigua, what is the connection—metaphysical, moral, legal—between the actions of your fingers, the transmission of data through wireless and fiber optic networks, and the act of gambling? There are obvious parallels to offshore finance: registering a company offshore creates a legal fiction that confounds space. Cooper argues that offshore gambling has been an easier target for international actors than offshore finance because the former is not as “decoupled” from the “real” economy as the latter: it relies on local ancillary labor, media, and advertising in order to achieve the scale to make it profitable (p. 43). Internet gambling is a mass phenomenon; its market is not the high net worth individuals of offshore finance but the common man, sitting at his computer, bored, looking to play some online poker or off-track betting.

A brief summary of the plot of this morality play: American and Israeli entrepreneurs sought to locate Internet gambling operations offshore to avoid U.S. regulations. The initial players were Silicon Valley-inspired startups. U.S. legislators reacted along somewhat predictable lines, American self-appointed guardians of morality wanting to stamp it out and progressive civil libertarians adopting a *laissez-faire* attitude. Other right-wing conservatives, staunch states' rights advocates (latter day Confederates) who are against federal power and taxation allied with the progressives—as they would later in light of efforts to curtail offshore finance. Still, the stigmatizers carried the day, tarring offshore gambling with the brush usually wielded by citizens' groups and NGOs that seek to shame bad corporate and state actors. This is an important point, as it problematizes IR theory about shaming in international politics (p. 64). Antigua's response was to activate the WTO. The normal international order of things was inverted, for often multilateral organizations serve the interests of their larger, more powerful members. The government of Antigua was able to operate quite effectively as a sovereign on the world stage despite the political perversities of the Bird administration. Cooper attributes this to a "resilience" (p. 65) borne of private-public partnerships between the government and several key individuals. The story appears at times to be one of "Antigua without Antiguan" (p. 67), but the centrality of Sir Ronald Sanders, former High Commissioner for Antigua, and the country's history in international affairs as a staunch advocate for democracy (ironically, given politics at home [p. 71]) tempers that assessment. Antigua had an "agility of purpose" on the international stage (p. 71), while its traditional allies, the United Kingdom and the European Union, chose not to come to its aid.

The win at the WTO was a hollow one, however: multilateral organizations operate through soft law rather than actual sanction. After its loss, the United States pursued offshore gambling unilaterally, arresting key figures and adopting an enforcement regime that gradually eroded the industry by blocking Internet advertising. The effort culminated, in 2006, with legislative prohibition.

Regardless, this is not the usual "script of an asymmetrical struggle" between a superpower and a small state (p. 168). There was no decisive victory for anyone here: Antigua could claim vindication from the WTO and a significant projection of its sovereignty globally—remarkable, for Jamaica

Kincaid's "small place" of only 70,000 people—yet not without the bitterness of its own internal disharmony. The United States could claim victory over vice, but it almost offered compensation and development aid—an implicit gesture of reparation—and was forced to negotiate (p. 166). Despite the Antigua/U.S. row, there has not been "a fundamental transformation in the United States about the legitimization of [Internet gambling]" (p. 148). Whether the same can be said about the legitimization of finance itself is another matter.

Cooper leans heavily on the late Susan Strange's appropriation of Keynes's "casino" metaphor (1986). For Keynes, speculation is not necessarily bad; but "when enterprise becomes the bubble on a whirlpool of speculation" and "the capital development of a country becomes a by-product of the activities of a casino, the job is likely to be ill-done" (1965:159). Cooper literalizes the metaphor, through a trenchant analysis of the economics, politics, and personalities of one Caribbean country's attempt to establish itself as a global power in a technologically innovative economic niche. The Internet brought gambling directly into the home; those self-same homes were about to become the star players in a gigantic morality tale about casino capitalism.

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