

## ***International Law and the Pin Factory***

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The conceptual lens through which international law has dominantly been viewed in modernity is that of state sovereignty – its limiting through custom and contract and its reassertion against the humanitarian claims of cosmopolitan legal orders. Yet, the focus upon this projected realm of territory, jurisdiction and rights has obscured another mode of thought which has played, perhaps, an even more decisive role in shaping the modern understanding of the global legal order – Adam Smith’s ‘pin factory’.

The image of the ‘pin factory’ set out by Adam Smith at the beginning of his *Wealth of Nations* (1776) develops an account of the division of labour, productivity and growth which allows a justification for the global re-ordering of sovereignty and develops a new account of politics and of global ‘right’. The image might be thought to play a role in organizing and re-shaping material life and producing new subjects (Marx, Foucault), as well as de-linking traditional modes of responsibility and enabling bureaucratic harm (Bauman).

This paper considers what it might mean to think of international law through the image of the pin factory? In particular it focuses upon the way in which the image frames an understanding of global property relations, in which the pin factory’s account of legitimacy attempts to trump objections grounded in claims of poverty, inequality, theft and injustice.