
Alternatives

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Abstracts

Religion and (Inter-)National Politics: On the Heuristics of Identities, Structures, and Agents

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Starting from the puzzling effects of religion on conflict, both its escalation and deescalation, this article investigates the role of religion in maintaining boundaries (sacred/profane, clean/unclean, good/evil, etc.) that become constitutive of “self” and “society.” The conceptual tools developed in this context are then applied to the issue of “fundamentalism” in contemporary politics. Keywords: Religion, conflict, reconciliation, boundaries, self.

Remodeling the Transnational Political Realm: Partnerships, Best-Practice Schemes, and the Digitalization of Governance

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and Dorte Salskov-Iversen*

Drawing on theories of governance and governmentality, this article investigates the growing array of transnational organizational forms that create, share, and provide knowledge and expertise about various aspects of information and communication technologies (ICTs) and e-modernization. It analyzes the characteristics and role of transnational partnerships and transnational best-practice schemes. These organizational forms, viewed as instantiations of soft-governance techniques of agency and performance, are illustrated by examples based on the authors' fieldwork: the World Bank–initiated Global Knowledge Partnership, the Balanced E-Government Index (BEGIX) launched by the Bertelsmann Foundation, and the Stockholm Challenge. Such transnational forms aim to enhance participation and empowerment while promoting competition and self-discipline at the level of organizations and individuals. In addition, transnational partnerships and best-practice schemes constitute nodes through which the accomplished actors of these emergent organizational forms communicate, flow, mix, and create alliances on a transnational scale, while capitalizing on them in domestic and other organizational realms. Keywords: governmentality, transnational, best-practice, partnerships, ICTs, e-modernization.

The Impact of Microcredit on the Poor in Bangladesh

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This article presents a comparative overview of the most relevant findings from studies of the impact of microcredit institutions like the Grameen Bank and BRAC in Bangladesh. It first evaluates the evidence on economic impacts, which suggests that the vulnerability of bank members has been reduced even if there is no consensus about whether the two institutions also reduce poverty. It then considers the social impact, especially in relation to the situation of poor women and to various spill-over effects in different spheres of social and economic life. Keywords: microcredit, development, Bangladesh, Grameen Bank, BRAC.

Confidence- and Security-Building Measures for India and Pakistan

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This article presents a conceptual and historical overview of confidence- and security-building measures between India and Pakistan in order to provide a context in which to evaluate prospects for the mitigation of conflict between these two countries. It examines such sites of conflict as Kashmir and the Siachen Glacier, as well as concerns over nuclear proliferation, and evaluates the measures that have been taken so far in relation both to processes of arms control and of political negotiation. Keywords: security, confidence building, arms control, India, Pakistan.

Justice and the Return of Imperialism

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The article describes how U.S. liberal conservative internationalists (Andrew Carnegie, Elihu Root, Teddy Roosevelt, and Woodrow Wilson) used an idea of justice to legitimize “accumulation by dispossession” and America’s use of the World War I to renew the imperial project as war to “make the world safe for democracy.” It looks at how a similar attempt is being made today by George W. Bush and others to seize the word back from the global justice movement and, by looking at how U.S. socialists (Eugene Debs) resisted the attempt to use the language of justice against them, suggests how that attempt can be overcome. Keywords: justice, imperialism, war, United States, Homestead.