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International Organization

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Winners and Losers in the Global Economy

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Abstracts

Clashes in the Assembly

by Erik Voeten

I apply NOMINATE scaling to analyze a database of Cold War and post-Cold War roll call votes in the United Nations General Assembly. I investigate the dimensionality and stability of global conflict as well as the substantive content of the voting alignments that have replaced the Cold War East-West dimension. I find that post-Cold War conflict in the UN General Assembly is mostly one-dimensional. This single dimension positions countries on a continuum that runs from a group of Western countries at one extreme to a “counterhegemonic” bloc of countries that frequently clashes with the West, and the United States in particular. Levels of democracy and wealth are important independent determinants of the voting behavior of states. The positions of countries along the single dimension are remarkably stable across time, issue area, and issue importance. Except for the Eastern European countries switching sides, they are very similar to the positions on the Cold War East-West dimension. Contrary to expectations, post-Cold War conflict shows little resemblance to Cold War North-South conflict.

The Origins of Human Rights Regimes: Democratic Delegation in Postwar Europe

by Andrew Moravcsik

Most formal international human rights regimes establish international committees and courts that hold governments accountable to their own citizens for purely internal activities. Why would governments establish arrangements so invasive of domestic sovereignty? Two views dominate the literature. “Realist” theories assert that the most powerful democracies coerce or entice weaker countries to accept norms; “ideational” theories maintain that transnational processes of diffusion and persuasion socialize less-democratic governments to accept norms. Drawing on theories of rational delegation, I propose and test a third “republican liberal” view: Governments delegate self-interestedly to combat future threats to domestic democratic governance. Thus it is not mature and powerful democracies, but new and less-established democracies that will most strongly favor mandatory and enforceable human rights obligations. I test this proposition in the case of the European Convention on Human Rights—the most successful system of formal international human rights guarantees in the world today. The historical record of its founding—national positions, negotiating tactics, and confidential deliberations—confirms the republican liberal explanation. My claim that governments will sacrifice sovereignty to international regimes in order to dampen domestic political uncertainty and “lock in” more credible policies is then generalized theoretically and applied to

other human rights regimes, coordination of conservative reaction, and international trade and monetary policy.

Whence American Internationalism

by Jeffrey W. Legro

One of the most important puzzles of twentieth-century international relations is why the American conception of security vis-à-vis the European Powers shifted from unilateralism to internationalism after World War II but not after World War I. In this article I document that this shift was measurably one of collective ideas and explain the transformation. Scholarship on the sea change in American global thinking has been hampered by the lack of attention to the broader issues of when and why collective ideas change. To address this gap I offer a general framework to account for ideational change: I highlight the interaction between collective ideas and events that allows individuals and societies to overcome barriers to ideational change in some circumstances but not others. This argument clarifies the otherwise puzzling development of American ideas and offers a template for understanding change in other areas.

The Politics of Speculative Attacks in Industrial Democracies

by David Leblang and William Bernhard

Recent models of speculative currency crises contend that market expectations of policy behavior can trigger a speculative attack. We argue that political processes and partisan objectives inform expectations about the government's commitment to the exchange rate. First, market actors anticipate periods when the partisan identity of a government may change through an election or a cabinet collapse. Second, party labels provide information to currency traders about the policy objectives of a potential government. Consequently, we contend that the probability of a speculative attack will be higher when markets expect the cabinet to end and when the cabinet dissolution is likely to produce a leftward shift in policy. A discrete time-survival model is used to estimate the probability that a cabinet will dissolve in any given month for sixteen parliamentary democracies from 1970 to 1995. The predicted values are then used as a proxy for market expectations in a model of speculative currency crises.

Trust, Reassurance, and Cooperation

by Andrew Kydd

Many scholars have argued that mistrust can prevent cooperation. These arguments often fail to adequately address the possibility that states can take steps to reassure each other, build trust, and thereby avoid conflict. I present a rational choice theory of reassurance focusing on costly signals and identify the conditions under which players can use costly signals to reassure the other side. The central result is that reassurance will be possible between trustworthy players in equilibrium if trustworthy actors are more willing to take risks to attain mutual cooperation than untrustworthy actors. I discuss the implications of the model in the context of the reassurance strategies pursued by Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev at the end of the Cold War.

Winners and Losers in the Global Economy

by Ethan B. Kapstein

During the 1980s, economists began to observe a trend of rising income inequality in the advanced industrial economies. At the same time, the data revealed that these economies were becoming increasingly exposed to imports of manufactured goods from developing countries.

The question that follows is whether these outcomes are causally related, as economic theory suggests is possible.

The literature under review represents the current thinking on that question. These studies, all by mainstream economists, accept that free trade makes for good policy, since it results in efficiency gains that are enjoyed by consumers. But these scholars also recognize that free trade can alter the returns to the factors of production, creating new patterns of winners and losers.

Although this body of literature provides an impressive display of technical skills and formal economic reasoning, and on the whole gives convincing evidence that trade is only one culprit among many in explaining the problems facing blue-collar workers, it still sheds relatively little light on the *political economy* of the outcome. That is, it tells us little about the role that political, economic, and labor market institutions might play in shaping factor returns. This deeper understanding requires that we take a fresh look at existing institutions and the material interests and ideas underpinning them. Only then will we discover why societies have allowed a certain group of citizens—mainly the least skilled and least educated—to fall by the economic wayside.

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