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International Organization

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The Politics, Power, and Pathologies of International Organizations

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Political Culture and State Behavior

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Debate and Dissent on Moravcsik's "A New Statecraft"

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Abstracts

Explaining Costly International Moral Action: Britain's Sixty-year Campaign Against the Atlantic Slave Trade

by Chaim D. Kaufmann and Robert A. Pape

Most of the major theoretical traditions in international relations offer little advice on how costly international moral action could be accomplished. The main exception is the constructivist approach that focuses on the spread of cosmopolitan ethical beliefs through transnational interaction. While the logic of this theory does not imply any limit on the scale of goals that might be achieved, most constructivist empirical work so far has focused on relatively inexpensive moral efforts, such as food aid, and so may not identify the conditions under which states will take on much more costly moral projects. In this article, we test the constructivist theory of moral action against the record of the most costly international moral action in modern history: Britain's sixty-year effort to suppress the Atlantic slave trade from 1807 to 1867. We find that the willingness of British abolitionists to accept high costs was driven less by a cosmopolitan commitment to a moral community of all people than by parochial religious imperatives to impose their moral vision on others and, especially, to reform their domestic society. Transnational influences also had no important effect. Rather, the abolitionists' success in getting the British state to enact their program was determined mainly by opportunities provided by the fragile balance of power in British domestic politics. Although testing in more cases is needed, these findings suggest that better explanations of international moral action might be provided by a type of domestic coalition politics model based on what we call "saintly logrolls."

The Magic Bullet? The RTAA, Institutional Reform, and Trade Liberalization

by Michael J. Hiscox

The Reciprocal Trade Agreements Act (RTAA) of 1934 has long been heralded as a simple institutional reform with revolutionary consequences: namely, by changing the trade policymaking process in the United States, the RTAA is held responsible for the dramatic liberalization in U.S. policy beginning in the 1930s and 1940s. This article takes issue with this conventional wisdom. I argue that the standard accounts—which emphasize the importance of delegation for overcoming logrolling in Congress or for facilitating reciprocity in international trade negotiations—fail to provide an adequate explanation for just how the institutional innovation was achieved and sustained in the face of protectionist opposition. I suggest instead that trade liberalization was driven by exogenous changes in party constituencies and societal preferences that had crucial effects on congressional votes to extend the RTAA authority and liberalize trade after 1945. The preservation of the RTAA program was symptomatic rather than causal; as a consequence, it may well be abandoned in the future. The evolution of

U.S. trade policy has been, and will continue to be, powerfully shaped by changes in the preferences of societal groups and in the positions taken by parties on the trade issue.

The Politics, Power, and Pathologies of International Organizations

by Michael N. Barnett and Martha Finnemore

International Relations scholars have vigorous theories to explain why international organizations (IOs) are created, but they have paid little attention to IO behavior and whether IOs actually do what their creators intend. This blind spot flows logically from the economic theories of organization that have dominated the study of international institutions and regimes. To recover the agency and autonomy of IOs, we offer a constructivist approach. Building on Max Weber's well-known analysis of bureaucracy, we argue that IOs are much more powerful than even neoliberals have argued, and that the same characteristics of bureaucracy that make IOs powerful can also make them prone to dysfunctional behavior. IOs are powerful because, like all bureaucracies, they make rules, and, in so doing, they create social knowledge. IOs deploy this knowledge in ways that define shared international tasks, create new categories of actors, form new interests for actors, and transfer new models of political organization around the world. However, the same normative valuation on impersonal rules that defines bureaucracies and makes them powerful in modern life can also make them unresponsive to their environments, obsessed with their own rules at the expense of primary missions, and ultimately produce inefficient and self-defeating behavior. Sociological and constructivist approaches thus allow us to expand the research agenda beyond IO creation and to ask important questions about the consequences of global bureaucratization and the effects of IOs in world politics.

In the Shadow of the Vote? Decision Making in the European Community

by Jonathan Golub

Scholarship on the European Community (EC) focuses particular attention on how formal voting rules and institutional reform condition decision-making outcomes. The predominant view of EC history holds that decision making remained paralyzed until institutional reforms in 1987 and 1992 restored and expanded adherence to majority voting rules, which in turn unblocked and expedited EC legislative efforts. In this study I challenge these fundamental assumptions using comprehensive data for 1974–95 and a series of quantitative assessments, including event history analysis. I show that decision making in the 1970s was anything but paralyzed, that the impact of the Luxembourg Compromise has been greatly overstated, that institutional reforms actually encumbered rather than eased the EC legislative process, and that institutional effects are mediated by the underlying distribution of member state preferences. The findings have important implications for our understanding of the history and future trajectory of European integration and highlight the applicability of standard political science theories and methods to the study of the EC.

Political Culture and State Behavior: Why Germany Confounds Neorealism

by John S. Duffield

During the past decade, a growing number of scholars have turned to cultural approaches to account for the foreign and security policies of states. Surprisingly, however, these scholars have devoted little attention to the concept that boasts the most venerable tradition in the field of political science, that of political culture, as a possible source of state behavior. This neglect is unjustified. Like other cultural variables, political culture promises to explain phenomena that are enigmatic from the perspective of leading noncultural theories, such as neorealism. Yet

it applies to a broader range of cases than do the many alternative cultural concepts, such as strategic culture and organizational culture, that have been employed. I begin by describing an important puzzle in the international relations literature that suggests the need to consider culture as a variable: the failure of neorealism to predict German security policy after unification. I then assess the various cultural approaches used in recent years to explain state behavior. After noting the similarities in these approaches, I discuss the important differences that mark them and identify the reasons for the greater utility of political culture. Finally, I illustrate the explanatory power of the political culture approach by applying it to the case of German security policy since 1990.