

Abstracts

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Moral Discourse in International Relations

Why the »Power of the Better Argument« has only limited Explanatory Power
ZIB, Vol. 15, No. 2, pp. 161-186

The introduction of the Habermasian »arguing theory« into German IR has caused a lively discussion about the agency theory underlying research on international norms. This essay addresses some problematic implications of this theory, which have so far been neglected in the debate. By blending moral philosophy and agency theory in the »logic of arguing«, scholars not only distort their theoretical argument and their empirical analysis, but also compromise the theory's normative-critical contribution. Using the example of Nicole Deitelhoff's »discourse theory of international governance«, the risk of a moralist fallacy will be demonstrated at two levels: At the theoretical level, it occurs when the »arguing theory« subsumes the competing theory of »rhetorical action« on philosophical grounds. At the empirical level, the arguing approach has to rely on moral judgements when it comes to »observing« the power of the »better argument«. Paradoxically, the seemingly formal criterion of universalization conceals such substantive judgements instead of opening up discursive space for normative contestation.

Brigitte Young

The Global Political Economy of Microfinance

Ideational Institutionalism and the Change of Norms in Development Finance
ZIB, Vol. 15, No.2, pp. 187-208

On the basis of the ideational institutionalism, the paper explains the popularity of the microfinance programmes since the 1990s. The literature is divided into two polarising camp: on one side is the Win-Win faction and on the other is the capitalism critical faction. In contrast to these two strongly normative positions, this article analyses the changing ideas and norms in development policies and development finance. Relying on the theoretical insights of the ideational institutionalism, this article demonstrates that the popularity of the microfinance programmes can be explained as a convergence of three ideational trends. First, there was a paradigm change in the World Bank's (re)definition of poverty. In addition, a change in norms occurred as a result of Gender Mainstreaming in development policies, and finally through an ideational shift in the assumptions from state centred development finance to private microfinance strategies.

Zeitschrift für Internationale Beziehungen
15. Jg. (2008) Heft 2, S. 321-323

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Dawid Friedrich

Participatory Governance in the EU

The EU between »Laissez-faire« and Regulated Participation of Organized Civil Society

ZIB, Vol. 15, No. 2, pp. 209-235

This contribution asks in how far the EU – given the intensive discourse on democratic governance and civil society participation – has implemented a participatory regime which is conducive to the democratic character of its policy-making processes. A regulated regime of participation, it is argued here, is necessary in order to make use of the democratic potential of civil society participation by countering the normative deficiencies of functional ad hoc participation. Against the background of pluralist and deliberative theories of democracy, two models of participation are operationalized for the empirical analysis of participatory practices. The empirical focus lies on the current participation regime of European migration and environmental policies. The analysis demonstrates that the participatory infrastructure has not kept up with the intensity of the participatory discourse; instead, a system of *laissez-faire* participation with some corporatist features is emerging.

Jochen Hils

»Democratic Wars«: Products of Forged Preferences?

A Systematic Formulation of the Liberal Manipulation Thesis

ZIB, Vol. 15, No. 2, pp. 237-271

According to the (rationalist) liberal international relations theory, only *deficient* democracies can wage war. From this perspective, a public manipulated via or by the media is among the things which make a democracy deficient. Recent (constructivist) research on »democratic wars«, in contrast, claims that this factor plays only a minor role, if at all. This strand of research assumes that »liberal« legitimizations of war resonate with the (*authentic*) majority culture of some (»militant«) democracies. The debate between these schools of thought, although not explicitly laid out yet, revolves around the existence of *authentic* »democratic wars«. The article outlines both positions, criticizes the respective definition of manipulation and develops a definition of its own, emphasizing the specific informational substance preceding a change in preferences. Findings of an empirical test regarding US policy in the Kosovo crisis (1998-1999), outlined to illustrate the potential of the approach, suggest the need for further research.

Christian Büger/Frank Gadinger

Think Practical!

Practice-theoretical Constructivism(s) in International Relations

ZIB, Vol. 15, No. 2, pp. 273-302

Practice as an analytical category has received re-renewed attention in the discipline of International Relations (IR). We discuss the shared assumptions and disagreements among theories of practice in IR and the challenges these pose. Practice theory is identified as an expression of cultural theorizing, differing from rational-interest based or norm-oriented theories of action. Yet, the locus of meaning is not seen in internal mental stances, or in external textual structures, but in the inbetween of practice. Four crucial challenges are discussed: first, the repetitive character of practice, and the degree of stability reached in social orders, second, materiality and the quest of material agency, third, a moderate reflexive understanding of scientific practice highlighting the social consequences of scientific reasoning, and, fourth, a reconsideration of the spectrum of methods in IR. The contribution provides an analytical summary of the turn to practice in IR, and an identification of the key challenges associated with it.