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ABSTRACTS

GAME THEORY AND COMPARATIVE POLITICS

NEW PERSPECTIVES AND OLD CONCERNS

By GERARDO L. MUNCK

In an effort to take stock of the claims put forth by advocates of game theory, this article offers an assessment that considers game theory both as a set of theoretical principles that extends rational choice theory to interdependent decision making and as a type of formal methodology. Some important strengths of game theory are identified, such as its emphasis on actors and strategic choices and its ability to generate predictions in a logically rigorous and internally consistent manner. But many shortcomings are also discussed. One shortcoming is that the effort to develop a theory of action falls short, both in the sense of failing to provide a full explanation of actions and in the sense of not applying to domains of great significance. A second shortcoming is the failure of the procedures used in formal modeling to offer guidance pertaining to a critical step in the process of modeling: the conceptualization of the model. Thus, the challenge facing scholars in comparative politics is to consider the new perspectives offered by game theory and draw upon its strengths, but to do so without losing sight of a series of old concerns in the social sciences that game theory is not suited to tackle.

FISCAL DECENTRALIZATION

A POLITICAL THEORY WITH LATIN AMERICAN CASES

By CHRISTOPHER GARMAN, STEPHAN HAGGARD, and ELIZA WILLIS

Theories of fiscal federalism explain the efficiency and other economic gains from decentralization but do not explain its extent and nature in practice. The authors develop a political theory of decentralization that focuses on the lines of political accountability between politicians at different levels of government. The more accountable central-level politicians—presidents and legislators—are to subnational politicians, the greater the extent of decentralization and the more it will conform to the preferences of subnational politicians, for example, with respect to the degree of the center's discretion. The model is tested on five Latin American countries that, although formally decentralized, in fact exhibit wide differences in the distribution of spending and revenue responsibilities. The theory also helps explain a number of problems governments have encountered in decentralizing, including subnational debt crises and a mismatch between responsibilities and resources.

EUGENIC IDEAS, POLITICAL INTERESTS, AND POLICY VARIANCE

IMMIGRATION AND STERILIZATION POLICY IN BRITAIN AND THE U.S.

By RANDALL HANSEN and DESMOND KING

A burgeoning literature in comparative politics has sought to incorporate ideas into political analysis. In this article the authors categorize the main ways in which this incorporation has occurred—ideas as culture, ideas as expert knowledge, ideas as solutions to collective action problems, and ideas as programmatic beliefs—and explicate the different assumptions about causality and the permanence of ideas implied by these different frameworks. This theoretical exercise is then applied to an empirical examination of eugenic ideas about sterilization and immigration and their influence on public policy in Britain and the United States between the world wars. Given that ideational ideas were (broadly) equally powerful in both countries, the cases provide a basis for shedding light on when and how extant ideational frameworks influence public policy. Employing primary sources the authors conclude that ideas remain powerful expressions of societal interests but depend upon key carriers to realize such expressions.

INEQUALITY, GROWTH, AND DEMOCRACY

By DIMITRI LANDA and ETHAN B. KAPSTEIN

The analysis of the relationship between inequality and economic growth in distinct politicoeconomic environments has been one of the central preoccupations of the extensive theoretical and empirical work on growth in the last decade. The authors argue that the empirical evidence available to date strongly indicates the relevance of this work for understanding the elusive causal connection between economic development and democracy. The state of the literature suggests considerable sophistication in conceptualizing the direct economic effects of inequality and contains critical insights into politically unconstrained policy-making aimed at the alleviation of their negative economic impact. However, the political feasibility of the recommended policy measures and the politically mediated effects of inequality and redistributive policy on growth and on the strength and stability of democratic regimes are understood less well. The authors discuss the critical factors influencing these effects and sketch several approaches to creating a comprehensive politicoeconomic account of the interaction between inequality, redistributive policy-making, and political regimes.

USURPING THE SOVEREIGNTY OF SOVEREIGNTY?

By DANIEL PHILPOTT

Stephen Krasner's *Sovereignty* and Michael Ross Fowler and Julie Marie Bunck's *Law, Power, and the Sovereign State* together pose the deepest challenge yet to the assumption of sovereignty in international relations scholarship. Both claim not merely that state sovereignty is now compromised but also that it has always been severely truncated, violated, and curtailed. Both works contribute importantly to the field by amassing and cataloging formidable evidence of compromises of sovereignty. Yet by failing to provide a yardstick by which to compare these compromises with states' comparative respect for sovereignty, both works ultimately fail to sustain their thesis. Both also overlook the constitutive dimension of sovereignty, a dimension whose acknowledgment would render sovereignty far more stable than either admits. By contrast, a third work, Rodney Bruce Hall's *National Collective Identity*, commendably explores the constitutive role of sovereignty and applies it to the development of the nation-state system. The strengths and weaknesses of all three works help set an agenda for future scholarship on sovereignty.

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