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ABSTRACTS

INSTITUTIONS, PARTISANSHIP, AND INEQUALITY IN THE LONG RUN

By KENNETH SCHEVE AND DAVID STASAVAGE

It has been widely suggested by political scientists and economists, based on empirical evidence for the period since 1970, that the institution of centralized wage bargaining and the presence of a government of the left are associated with lower levels of income inequality. The authors make use of new data on top income shares as well as long-run series on wage inequality to examine the effects of partisanship and wage bargaining over a much longer time period, nearly the entire twentieth century. Their empirical results provide little support for the idea that either of these two factors is correlated with income inequality over this period. They then show that a closer look at the introduction of centralized wage bargaining in individual countries during the middle part of the twentieth century reveals that in countries that moved to centralize wage bargaining, income inequality had already been trending downward well before the institutional change, that the move to centralized bargaining did not alter this trend, and that these changes in income inequality were also observed in countries that did not adopt centralized wage bargaining at this time. The results suggest that there were alternative institutional paths to reduced income inequality during most of the twentieth century. This raises the possibility that either structural economic changes or commonly shared economic and political events, such as world wars and economic crises, may ultimately be more important for understanding the evolution of income inequality than are the institutional or partisan characteristics commonly considered to be decisive by political scientists.

THE COMPETITIVE ROAD TO PROPORTIONAL REPRESENTATION PARTISAN BIASES AND ELECTORAL REGIME CHANGE UNDER INCREASING PARTY COMPETITION

By ERNESTO CALVO

One of the most noteworthy political regularities in the early twentieth century was the shift away from majoritarian electoral rules in Western Europe. The conventional wisdom suggests that proportional representation (PR) was introduced by elites who believed that under the existing majoritarian rules (simple plurality, block-vote, two-ballot rules) they would soon lose power to rapidly growing socialist parties. But this does not explain why many electoral reforms were carried out in countries with weak or nonexistent socialist parties. The author shows that increasing the number of parties distorts the seat-vote properties of electoral rules to a larger degree than previously anticipated. Under increasing party competition, electoral regimes display larger partisan biases than those observed in two-party races and crowd out minority parties that have territorially dispersed constituencies in favor of minority parties that have territorially concentrated constituencies. Using a dynamic Bayesian model for seats and votes, the author measures the partisan biases brought about by the expansion of voting rights in the late nineteenth century to explain the drive to reform majoritarian electoral systems.

REVISITING THE ROLE OF LABOR WORKER SOLIDARITY, EMPLOYER OPPOSITION, AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF OLD-AGE PENSIONS IN THE NETHERLANDS AND THE UNITED KINGDOM

By DENNIE OUDE NIJHUIS

The purpose of this article is to emphasize the importance of the organizational blueprint of labor unions for welfare state outcomes. As a result of the tendency of scholars to view labor as a homogenous and disadvantaged class, the existing literature has paid little attention to this. Many scholars have simply taken labor union support for welfare state development for granted and consequently have focused only on labor union strength. This article argues, rather, that labor union support for welfare state development cannot be taken for granted. It shows that

labor unions support or oppose welfare state development depending on their organizational blueprint. This new approach highlights the importance of the labor union movement's organizational structure, as opposed to its organizational strength, for welfare state outcomes. The article also explores how the organizational structure of the labor union movement shapes the stance of employer interest groups toward welfare state development. The empirical findings are based on a comparison of British and Dutch postwar old-age pension development

THE BALANCE OF POWER IN THE BALANCE

By DANIEL H. NEXON

This article reviews four recent books on balancing and the balance of power. Both in isolation and when taken together, they provide strong analytical and empirical warrants against the proposition that balance of power equilibria represent the “normal condition” or “natural tendency” of international relations. They also reflect the growing dissensus among realists concerning how to conceptualize and operationalize the key concept of “balancing.”

The author argues that their analysis implies a tripartite distinction between *balance of power theory*, *theories of power balances*, and *theories of balancing*. Recognizing this distinction undermines many objections to expanding the concept of balancing to include “nontraditional” variants, but it also helps elucidate why we should eschew describing nontraditional balancing through the language of hard and soft balancing.

Even a more expansive conception of balancing, however, fails to insulate balance of power theory against mounting disconfirming evidence. While one might be able to salvage a “weak” variant of balance of power theory, realists are probably better off adopting a more nuanced and comprehensive approach to power-political competition. The entire field would benefit from treating “balancing” and the “balance of power” as objects of inquiry in their own right, rather than as the province of realist theory.

SEEING DOUBLE

HUMAN RIGHTS IMPACT THROUGH QUALITATIVE AND QUANTITATIVE EYES

By EMILIE M. HAFNER-BURTON AND JAMES RON

Over the past two decades, human rights language has spread like wildfire across international policy arenas. The activists who sparked this fire are engaged in two different campaigns. The first is comparatively modest, involving the persuasion of tens of thousands of global elites such as journalists, UN officials, donors, and national political leaders. The second is broader and more complex: to have a real impact on the behavior of tens of millions of state agents worldwide. While most international relations scholars agree that the first campaign has made real gains, opinions are split on the success—past, present, and future—of the second. In part, these divisions fall along methodological lines. With some exceptions, qualitative scholars working in the empirical international relations tradition express more optimism than their quantitative counterparts, whose contributions to the subfield are relatively new. This article reviews several new books on human rights and shows how their insights engage with these ongoing methodological debates. The authors argue that both qualitative and quantitative approaches offer important strengths and that neither has a monopoly on truth. Still, the human rights discourse may be thriving, at least in part, for reasons unrelated to impact. The authors conclude with suggestions for a more systematic and multimethod research, along with a plea for scholarly attention to the potential downsides of international human rights promotion.