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Abstracts

The search for order in a disorderly world: worldviews and prescriptive decision paradigms

by Miriam Steiner

All prescriptive decision-making epistemologies are rooted in worldviews. If the worldview assumptions of an epistemology are not congruent with the world in which decisions are to be made, that epistemology ought not to be granted prescriptive authority. The rationalistic worldview is described in two versions, classic and modified, together with the prescriptive decision-making epistemologies that depend on them. The classic version is firmly grounded in the assumptions of the 18th century Enlightenment; the modified version is more pragmatic in orientation. Both emphasize order, clarity, empiricism, and logical analysis. An alternative, nonrationalistic worldview concerns itself with novelty, incongruity, intuition, and subjective awareness. Foreign-policy decision theorists routinely assume that the foreign-policy world contains a mixture of rationalistic and nonrationalistic elements but are reluctant to grant decision makers the intuitive and subjective capabilities that, together with logical thinking and empirical observation, are necessary to operate in such a world. This reluctance inhibits the development of a prescriptive decision-making epistemology suitable for a mixed world. Analytical psychology provides one avenue for exploring the prescriptive implications of a more comprehensive psychology. It is clear that in a world with important nonrationalistic elements, true rationality requires that non-rationalistic capabilities and skills be both appreciated and developed.

New development approaches and the adaptability of international agencies: the case of the World Bank

by William Ascher

Certain "realist" views of the international economic regime construe international financial agencies as straightforward reflections of the power and interests of nation states. However, the World Bank's responsiveness to a wide range of demands for new development priorities and approaches also depends on the compliance of its huge staff. The staff's discretion in shaping, implementing, discrediting, or resisting these approaches requires an organizational-theoretic analysis of the sources of acceptance of or resistance to particular initiatives. Role-set theory accounts for many of the motivational sources of resistance. The capabilities to resist new initiatives

through “bureaucratic politics” can be understood through March and Simon’s emphasis on the importance of absorbing uncertainty. On the basis of these theories and findings on attitudes expressed by Bank staff, strategies can be developed to enhance the Bank’s responsiveness to such initiatives as greater emphasis on the alleviation of poverty. Theory and findings also provide a basis for speculating on the characteristics required of an international agency to warrant treating it as an autonomous variable in the international system.

Tariff protection in developed and developing countries: a cross-sectional and longitudinal analysis

by John A. C. Conybeare

Four political models (the international system, rational domestic economic policy, intragovernmental politics, and interest group influence) may explain the cross-national structure of average nominal levels of tariffs on manufactures. Using available data measuring or approximating the explanatory variables for the time periods 1902 and 1971, selected hypotheses were tested in regression equations. The 1971 tariff levels are best predicted by rational economic policy variables while for 1902, international power variables provide the best predictions of the tariff. In general, the causal forces influencing the cross-national pattern of tariff levels appear to have shifted in the 20th century from those indicating international power to those measuring domestic politico-economic development. These results provide evidence relevant to some of the general propositions about size and development suggested by the contemporary political economy literature. They also lend support to those who argue that a rising level of international interdependence has resulted in long-term changes in the pattern of influences on national public policies.

Transgovernmental processes in the League of Nations

by Martin David Dubin

International relations specialists who have been examining transgovernmental processes in the contemporary international system may be surprised to learn that at the Paris Peace Conference in 1919 conscious efforts were made to organize the League of Nations along transgovernmental lines. Key British and French officials, most notably Sir James Arthur Salter and Jean Monnet, supported by Americans involved in implementing the Covenant, hoped to employ both the Secretariat and the organs designed for functionally specific cooperation to bring officials of national social and economic ministries into direct contact with one another, without the intermediation of their respective foreign ministries. While these officials only partially realized their objectives, sections of the League’s Secretariat, an elaborate system of expert committees, and the League of Nations Assembly did provide transgovernmental linkages during the interwar period.