

Abstracts

Klaus Schlichte

Contested Legitimacies: Conflict as a Basis for a Historical Sociology of Politics ZeFKo Vol. 1 (2012), No. 1, pp. 9-43

The extremely successful governance-paradigm, so prominent inter alia in political science, has big blind spots. This article uses a critique of its negated political character in order to draw a positive consequence, namely re-centering the concept of the political around social conflicts, understood as »contested legitimacies«. Based on the Weberian distinction between »states of power« and »states of domination«, it maintains that prominent authors in political sociology share a perspective on the centrality of contested legitimacies as the core question of social conflict and of politics generally. The article furthermore argues that new questions arise from such a perspective for peace and conflict studies. They concern the ways of the internationalization of domination and the role of obedience.

Keywords: conflict, governance, politics, political sociology, obedience

Andrea Schneiker / Jutta Joachim

Private Security and Military Companies: A Chameleon in International Politics? ZeFKo Vol. 1 (2012), No. 1, pp. 44-71

Research related to Private Security and Military Companies (PSMCs) has addressed primarily the causes and consequences of privatized security thus far. This article, by comparison, focuses on the agential qualities of PSMCs. We show that PSMCs have multiple identities: Sometimes they stress their former military background, helping states to protect their citizens from terrorist threats. At other times PSMCs emphasize that they are civilian security experts performing risk analysis for companies and other clients, or they present themselves as humanitarians who assist those in need. By doing so, PSMCs blur the distinction between state and private actors and sectors. It becomes difficult to conceive them as being merely instruments of states facilitating the realization of military aims. Instead, our analysis illustrates that PSMCs are security actors in their own right and that their actions have political consequences.

Keywords: PSMCs, security, civilian security experts, private actors

Claudia Brunner

»Suicide Bombing/Terrorism« as an Object of Knowledge and a Formula of Meaning

On the Relations between Political and Epistemic Violence in Contemporary Terrorism Research

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In this article, I present the results of a research project about mainstream terrorism research on suicide bombing/terrorism. Texts, images and graphics/diagrams from major English publications between 1996 and 2007 were analyzed in a frame of discourse analysis based on the tradition of sociology of knowledge and a post-colonial and feminist perspective. I argue that critical peace and conflict research should pay more attention to the relations between political violence (the attacks) and epistemic violence (the research about it), both of which are deeply embedded in globally asymmetric power relations. The object of knowledge »suicide bombing/terrorism« that has emerged in this field of research can be considered as a privileged signifier for multiple concepts of Selfness and Otherness. These representations do not only tell us about the attacks and the subjects who are involved in perpetrating them. Moreover, a feminist postcolonial and sociology of knowledge based analysis of scholarly expertise on the issue informs us about the conditions favorable for the emergence of such an object of knowledge and its ambivalences across the field of terrorism research. Finally, mainstream terrorism expertise is to be thought of as interrelated with non-academic discourse about the issue, which fosters the ongoing culturalization of political violence in a purported »clash of civilizations«.

Keywords: suicide bombing, knowledge, Occidentalism, epistemic violence, terrorism

Rousbeh Legatis

The Indispensables: About the Constructive Role of Media and Journalists in Peacebuilding

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Like almost no other conflict actors, the media and journalists shape the attitudes of the bearers of a peace order and therefore represent a great opportunity for successful conflict transformation. They can make a contribution by providing a deeper understanding of the causes of conflict which will open up new options for action and change hardened perceptions of the participating actors. Thus they play a decisive role when the goal is to deal with conflicts in a constructive manner and establish and strengthen peace-supporting structures of civil conflict management.

Critically examining the role of media and media assistance in practical peacebuilding, the article clarifies aspects for the successful and constructive transformation of conflict. Experiences in Colombia, however, show that some socio-political determinants also limit such a contribution. The article concludes that in every conflict an interdisciplinary learning process is needed, in course of which policy-makers, donors and media workers should carefully evaluate together when, how and why media and journalists should be integrated into peacebuilding.

Keywords: constructive conflict transformation; conflict coverage; media assistance; Colombia

Margit Bussmann

Quantitative Studies on Gender Equality and Peace
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Research in public opinion confirms that women are more pacifistic in their attitudes than men and are generally more reluctant to support the use of military force. An implication of the general peacefulness of women is that there would be fewer militarized conflicts if women were more highly represented in political decision-making processes. A systematic test of this hypothesis is difficult because there are too few cases of women in political positions that allow them to decide whether troops will be deployed. However, various quantitative studies show that states with a higher percentage of women in parliament are more peaceful. In addition, studies attest a relationship between gender equality on the societal level and peace in and between states. A higher participation of women in the formal labour market, more equal access to education and health facilities are variables that are negatively related to the onset of armed conflict.

Keywords: attitudes, pacifism, public opinion, women, peace, political participation

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