

Abstracts

Anatomy of a Done Deal: The Fight over the Iran Nuclear Accord

Gregory Shank

This article explores the political forces most involved in the contest over the Obama administration's landmark signing, on July 14, 2015, of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, along with the permanent members of the UN Security Council, plus Germany. The accord codifies in international law Iran's reaffirmation to refrain from seeking, developing, or acquiring nuclear weapons, in exchange for relief from Western sanctions. It represents a departure from the post-Cold War dominance of neoconservatives and liberal interventionists over US foreign policymaking, but the 2016 presidential campaign will keep the issue in the limelight. The author suggests alternative future directions for US foreign policy in the Middle East, the inertia toward war versus containment in the military, intelligence, and national security bureaucracies, as well as the contradictory interests of transnational corporations, many of which will continue to chafe under a sanctions regime that has freed up European and Asian firms. So long as Congress does not reverse states of emergency, including anti-Iran measures in the Patriot Act, true détente and full reintegration of Iran in the world economy will remain elusive. A powerful constellation of states is ready to move on without the United States to stabilize the Middle East.

Keywords: nuclear nonproliferation, sanctions, Iran, foreign policy, neoconservative-Likud nexus, Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), oil, BRICS, Shanghai Cooperation Organization, 2016 election

Absolutely Sovereign Victims: Rethinking the Victim Movement

Ronnie Lippens

This article attempts to rethink the emergence and subsequent development of what could be called the victim movement, or victim culture, which has crystallized in the latter half of the twentieth century. The author argues that a great variety of elements have, in the wake of World War II, come together to create a new form of life, one of whose manifestations is a pervasive victim culture. At the heart of this newly emerged form of life resides a radical desire for, or will to, absolute personal sovereignty, and a related radical desire for, or will to, absolute control. This form of life, and the desire and will that fuel it (however imaginary, or illusory this desire and this will) are neither homogenous nor monolithic.

Keywords: control society, World War II, consumer society, victimization, Belgium

“Putting Cruelty First”: Liberal Penal Reform and the Rise of the Carceral State
Jason Vick

Why are so many people in prison today? How do we make sense, more generally, of the fact that all the world’s liberal democracies rely on incarceration as an essential tool of punishment? Specifically, why is it that the discourses and practices surrounding punishment in today’s liberal democracies consider torture and other forms of physical abuse to be unacceptably cruel, while long-term incarceration is considered unproblematic? Vick approaches this problem through a consideration of the liberal reformism of Cesare Beccaria and Jeremy Bentham, which helped to pave the way for a transition from irregular, and usually corporal, punishment to the regular, systematic liberal justice system that eschews corporal punishment but relies heavily on incarceration. To develop this argument, the author engages with the literature that focuses on the role of cruelty within liberalism, in particular the work of Judith Shklar. By drawing on Shklar’s distinction between physical cruelty (which liberals abhor) and moral-psychological cruelty (about which liberals are ambivalent), the author is able to better illuminate how humane reformists such as Beccaria and Bentham could both oppose corporal punishment and favor incarceration as a satisfactory liberal solution to the issue of punishment that minimizes (physical) cruelty.

Keywords: Beccaria, Bentham, penal reform, liberalism, cruelty, incarceration, Shklar, Nietzsche

Sweetheart Settlements, the Financial Crisis, and Impunity: A Case Study of SEC v. Citigroup Global Markets, Inc.

William Calathes and Matthew G. Yeager

This article highlights the inherent limitations and current failures of securities laws, with a particular focus on the abdication of power by state agents to protect the public interest from financial frauds. Through a case study of *SEC v. Citigroup Global Market, Inc.*, the authors examine the SEC’s practice of settling enforcement actions alleging serious patterns of fraud. Here, corporate and bank fraud is successfully moved away from the criminal courts to the civil fraud arena, and then takes the form of “consent decrees” in which the offending party can negotiate a penalty, usually in the form of a modest fine and no admission of liability. This finding is consistent with criminological literature dating back to Willem E. Bonger and Edward H. Sutherland, and, more recently, to the work of Richard Quinney, William Chambliss, and Jeffrey Reiman and Paul Leighton.

Keywords: critical criminology, state-corporate crime, securities fraud, elite power, Securities and Exchange Commission, participatory action research

The Perfect Storm of High-Stakes Education Reform: High-Stakes Testing and Teacher Evaluation

Sheryl J. Croft, Mari Ann Roberts, and Vera L. Stenhouse

This article examines seemingly disconnected education reform policies and posits that their unprecedented alignment is eroding the bedrock of public education. Using Georgia as an example, the authors demonstrate how neoliberal efforts to reform education occur through three systematic and interconnected fronts: political climate change, the testing industrial complex, and a mesoscale evaluation system. The authors challenge assertions that those reforms increase academic achievement and global competitiveness. Instead, the orchestrated alignment is being experienced as an assault on the supposed beneficiaries (i.e., public education and teacher education). These conceptual weather fronts can serve as a means to analyze stated intentions versus outcomes of education policy. The authors conclude with grassroots responses by students, teachers, and others to the destructive elements of reform.

Keywords: high-stakes testing, teacher evaluation, teacher performance assessment, education reform, public education, teacher education

Dialectics, Super-Exploitation, and Dependency: Notes on The Dialectics of Dependency

Jaime Osorio

With the publication of *Dialéctica de la dependencia (The Dialectics of Dependency)* by Ruy Mauro Marini, Latin American social theory was able to culminate a great effort in the interest of formulating a theory of dependent capitalism and the laws by which it is reproduced. At the center of diverse characteristics, the super-exploitation of the labor power is raised as a fundamental element in articulating and explaining the current tendencies in the reproduction of capital in the region. This essay argues that it is the development of value in itself that encourages the tendencies to violate it. Along the same lines, the political dimension of Marini's analysis is emphasized, highlighting the responsibilities of local ruling classes in the reproduction of dependency.

Keywords: dependency, super-exploitation, reproduction of capital, Latin America

Tribute to Alonso Aguilar Monteverde: Ten Key Policies for Understanding the Neoliberal Transformation of Mexican Capitalism

Alejandro Álvarez Bejar

This tribute to teacher and social activist, Alonso Aguilar Monteverde, outlines crucial aspects of the neoliberal transformation of the Mexican socioeconomic system. Among the changes are aspects of the operation of capitalism in Mexico,

the political synthesis between economic crisis and neoliberal reforms, the toll budgetary austerity took on social spending, wage restraint and head-on combat with labor unions, the extreme polarization of wealth issuing from privatization and other fiscal policies, the intensive and coordinated use of the mass media in support of this political current, institutional reform of the state via decentralization, the use of pacts to forge political cohesion between the leaders of business organizations and sectors of urban and rural workers, the use of state violence, profound changes in capital/wage-labor relations, and the accentuation of the parasitism of finance capital in Mexico (and in the world).

Keywords: state-monopoly capitalism, privatization, foreign investment, financial crisis, paramilitarization

Uruguay: A Woman Remembers

Emilia Carlevaro and Margaret Randall

This conversation between Emilia Carlevaro, a longtime political activist and Uruguayan member of the Latin American Organization of the Families of the Disappeared, and Margaret Randall, a feminist poet, writer, photographer, and social activist is a valuable history with lessons for new generations of activists. It explores the shared experience of Argentina, Chile, and Uruguay. Their revolutionary cadre often crossed borders, as did Operation Condor, the regional paramilitary organization charged with destroying them.

Keywords: social movements, Latin America, Uruguay