International Responses to Human Displacement: Neo-liberalism and Post-Cold War Geopolitics

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Abstract

This paper explores the conditions which shape current international interventions to assist displaced persons. In particular, the interaction of neo-liberal politics at the national level with international geopolitics after the Cold War, and subsequent strategies of managing human displacement are examined. First, a trend in domestic politics and policies in Canada is illustrated through a series of current examples. From these vignettes, a pattern of neo-liberalism emerges. Second, a trend is noted towards...
increased peacekeeping operations and the deployment of ‘preventive protection’—a strategy which emphasizes assistance to displaced persons within their country of origin, often within a conflict zone—since the end of the Cold War. The possibility of a connection between neo-liberalism at home and peacekeeping and preventive protection abroad is explored. The imperfect humanism of the international refugee regime is being superseded, it is argued, by a dangerous ‘neo-humanism’ maintained through pervasive neoliberal policies at national and international levels.

Liberalism also argues that stability and relative peace can be achieved in the international system via a hegemon who sets the agenda for global institutions by playing an active part in international politics. Neo-realism also puts forth a theory for relative peace to be achieved by suggesting the concept of mutually assured destruction based on the fundamental principles of nuclear deterrence. (Sagan & Waltz, 2010, pp.90-94) Realist response to the nuclear cover argument remains absent however Desch (2003) argues that United States can prevent nuclear weapons from falling into the wrong hands by engaging countries such as Pakistan and India and developing secure command and control protocol for the weapons in question.