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## Book Note

**Bredel, Ralf. 2007. *The Ethical Economy of Conflict Prevention And Development: Towards A Model for International Organizations*. Leiden: Martinus Nijhoff Publishers. xi + 257 pp. ISBN 90-04-15305-5 (pb). Price: \$104.00.**

Reviewed by Bjørn Møller [22 May 2007]

This work is an attempt at combining economic theory with ethics with a special focus on conflict prevention, written by an author holding doctoral degrees in both disciplines. Unfortunately, however much needed such a combination is, the analytical framework employed by Bredel may be too complex to really convince readers, and the presentation is too long-winded to keep his or her attention focused.

The book commences with a general introduction to political economy, including both liberalist and Marxists, in which a special focus is placed on the elements of both theories which explain conflict – yet without distinguishing clearly enough between violent conflicts (e.g., revolutions) motivated by economic factors and the conflict elements inherent in the workings of the market. This is followed by a chapter devoted to various forms of inequality which might presumably motivate conflict behavior. Inspired by concepts of relative deprivation, the author prefers the yardstick of “horizontal inequality,” especially as found in a couple of papers by Frances Stewart. As opposed to vertical inequality within groups, e.g., between leaders and the rank-and-file, Bredel finds horizontal inequality between groups to be the best predictor of conflict – yet without substantiating this view with empirical data. The argument is somewhat obfuscated with the extension of inequality to also pertain to non-economic and immaterial values such as culture.

In the following chapters, devoted to ethics, the classics of ethical theory (Spinoza, Kant, and utilitarians, among others) are surveyed for what they have to say about rights and obligations as well as on conflicts and their prevention. This is followed by chapters on values (again *in abstracto*) and on international organizations, ending with some rather unsurprising suggestions for a rights-based approach to development, in turn intended to prevent conflict.

Even though the book contains many interesting elements, it is far too unfocused. Indeed, one gets the impression that the gist of the argument could easily have been fitted into a journal article, in which form it might even have been more persuasive.

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