

Geopolitics of Knowledge about World Politics

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Much of our knowledge about world politics involves the universalizing of what can be called “doubtful particularisms.” These are interpretive projections from the knowledge experiences of specific places/times onto all places/times. By knowledge I mean explanatory schemes, frames of reference, crucial sets of assumptions, narrative traditions, and theories. A great deal of interpretive projection is the result of the imposition of intellectual/political hegemonies from some places onto others. Thus, today much of what today goes for “international relations theory” is the projection onto the world at large of US-originated academic ideas about the nature of statehood and the world economy following a mixture of mid-twentieth century European premises about states and American ones about economies. The theory reflects the application of criteria about how best to model a presumably hostile world drawn from selected aspects of US experience and a US-based reading of world history. In this paper I propose a way of thinking about this geopolitics of knowledge using the example of theories of world politics.