

# Concepts at Work

On the Linguistic Infrastructure of World Politics

Concepts are socially and linguistically constructed and used for multiple purposes, such as justifying war in the name of democracy; or, using the idea of democracy to resist Western intervention and influence. In this fascinating and novel edited collection, Piki Ish-Shalom and the contributors interrogate the “conceptions of concepts” in international relations. Using theoretical frameworks from Gramsci and Bourdieu, among others, the authors show that not interrogating the meaning of the language we use to talk about international relations obscures the way we understand (or portray) IR. The authors examine self-determination, winning in war, avoidance of war, military design and reform agenda, vagueness in political discourse, “blue economy,” friendship, and finally, the very idea of the “international community” itself. As the author asserts, Bourdieu’s sociology of field and Gramsci’s political theory, combined, “offer us a socio-political theory of relations of power and domination concealed by doxic knowledge and taken-for-granted rules, in which essential contested concepts and political-serving conceptions can and do play an important role.”

**Piki Ish-Shalom** is the A. Ephraim and Shirley Diamond Family Chair in International Relations and Associate Professor in the Department of International Relations at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem.

“In the field of International Relations, we are pretty sure that concepts convey meaning but disagree on what they mean. What we haven’t thought through sufficiently is how contestation over concepts produces a meaningful world. This book goes a long way toward filling the void with fresh (and contestable) meaning.”

—Nicholas Onuf, Florida International University

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**Piki Ish-Shalom**, EDITOR



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