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The Political Economy of Predation

Manhunting and the Economics of Escape

Mehrdad Vahabi, Université de Paris VIII and Centre d'Economie de la Sorbonne

Still in early stages of development, conflict theory presents a growing interest in understanding the economic costs and benefits of conflicts. In this book, Mehrdad Vahabi analyses one type of conflict in particular: manhunting, or predation, in which a dominant power hunts down its prey and the goal of the prey is to escape and thus survive. This contrasts with traditional warfare, in which two (or more) powers enter into a conflict and the goal is to fight to win domination. The economics of escape casts light on costs and benefits of predatory activities, and explores the impact of violence as an impediment to developing countries with respect to assets structure. This book is unprecedented in its research and thought and develops a new theory of predation in economics that makes a significant contribution to the field.

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Endorsements

“Standard economics has long assumed a society of free, contracting individuals with equal legal rights. Power and authority are understood in contractual terms. In his most powerful statement to date, Mehrdad Vahabi challenges all that. Violence and subjugation are brought back into the picture. We are forced to rethink everything.”

Geoffrey M. Hodgson, Hertfordshire Business School, University of Hertfordshire

“Mehrdad Vahabi is an exceptional thinker. His truly interdisciplinary book draws on a deep knowledge from diverse disciplines. It promises profound insights on predation, which is one of the most fundamental aspects of human interaction.”

Kai A. Konrad, Managing Director at the Max Planck Institute for Tax Law and Public Finance

“The dark aspects of life (conflict, violence, predation, manhunt, enslavement, aggression) are studied by various disciplines and research programs, history, psychology, mathematical game theory, criminology, political philosophy and economics among them. Mehrdad Vahabi’s book is unique, as he, a genuine interdisciplinary thinker, overviews the so far separated analyses and enriches them with important new ideas.”

János Kornai, Professor of Economics Emeritus, Harvard University and Corvinus University of Budapest

“A fascinating and provocative analysis of predators and their prey. Mehrdad Vahabi’s book will stimulate the minds of all who have been intrigued by the political economy of coercion.”

Peter T. Leeson, Duncan Black Professor of Economics and Law, George Mason University

“In this compelling book, Mehrdad Vahabi delivers an in-depth analysis of the logic of conflicts and predation. In doing so he is proposing a new and much needed economic perspective on violence as a core component of human societies.”

Claude Ménard, University of Paris (Panthéon-Sorbonne)

“A work of great originality and ambition. Mehrdad Vahabi’s concept of predation is an illuminating lens through which to see different forms of rule. The idea of domestication as a ‘prolonged’ form of predation, compatible with the survival (indeed, possibly thriving) of the object (plant, mammal, homo-sapiens) of that predation is, I think, very good to think with.”

James C. Scott, Sterling Professor of Political Science and Anthropology, Yale University

“In this book Mehrdad Vahabi examines one-sided conflicts in many different settings. In many such situations, despite the seeming helplessness of the prey, he shows many possibilities for escape that are surprising (and gives hope for the condition of the less powerful). Vahabi draws upon – and usefully integrates – vast and diverse literatures, ranging from economics and the other social sciences to the history of thought and biology.”

Stergios Skaperdas, University of California, Irvine

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