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Sponsored by the World Peace Foundation
Edited at Cornell University
Published quarterly by The MIT Press

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Subscriptions and business correspondence: All inquiries concerning subscriptions should be sent to the MIT Press Journals, 28 Carleton Street, Cambridge, MA 02142. Yearly subscription rates are: individuals, \$18; institutions, \$40. Subscribers outside the United States and Canada should add \$4 for surface mail and \$18 for airmail. Postmaster: send address changes to *International Organization*, 28 Carleton Street, Cambridge, MA 02142. Second Class postage is paid at Boston, MA and at additional mailing offices.

International Organization is published quarterly, Winter, Spring, Summer, and Fall by The MIT Press, 28 Carleton Street, Cambridge, MA 02142.

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ISSN 0020-8183

International Organization

Volume 39, Number 4, Autumn 1985

Articles

- The limits of hegemonic stability theory *Duncan Snidal* 579
- The International Committee of the Red Cross and political prisoners *J. D. Armstrong* 615
- Domestic contention on critical foreign-policy issues: the case of the United States *John A. Vasquez* 643
- Explaining choice of development strategies: suggestions from Mexico, 1970–1982 *David R. Mares* 667

Global Debt and National Policy

- International debt and linkage strategies: some foreign-policy implications for the United States *Benjamin J. Cohen* 699
- Economic stabilization, conditionality, and political stability *Henry S. Bienen and Mark Gersovitz* 729

Review Essay

- Perspectives on the Central American crisis *James D. Cochrane* 755

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Abstracts

The limits of hegemonic stability theory

by Duncan Snidal

Hegemonic stability theory has been advanced as an explanation of successful cooperation in the international system. The basis of this “hegemonic cooperation” is the leadership of the hegemonic state; its appeal rests on attractive implications about distribution. However, two distinct strands of the theory (“coercive” and “benevolent”) must be distinguished. These strands have different conceptions of hegemony and the role of hegemonic leaders and so have different implications. Both require us to assume that the underlying international issues are public goods and that the international system does not allow for collective action. The former assumption limits the theory’s range of application while the likely failure of the latter means that the theory may be wrong even within this more limited range. Simple formal models demonstrate a conclusion completely at odds with hegemonic stability theory: the decline of a hegemonic power may actually lead to an outcome both collectively superior and distributively preferable than when the hegemon was at the apogee of its power. Thus hegemonic stability is, in fact, only a special case of international cooperation. Understanding cooperation in general requires less restrictive assumptions.

The International Committee of the Red Cross and political prisoners

by J. D. Armstrong

The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) has greatly expanded its activities on behalf of political prisoners since the Second World War. The ICRC’s involvement with this issue has resulted from a series of incremental steps, taken over more than a hundred years, and it raises difficult legal, political, and moral questions. Is the ICRC, by operating in this highly sensitive area, endangering its special relationship with governments—a relationship that is vital for the performance of its more traditional functions in wartime? Should the organization be more open or less Swiss? Is it evading fundamental moral issues? The ICRC’s success in achieving its objectives also raises questions as to why states have permitted a nongovernmental organization to intervene in their internal affairs and whether the ICRC provides a model that other nongovernmental organizations concerned with human rights might seek to emulate.

Domestic contention on critical foreign-policy issues: the case of the United States

by John A. Vasquez

Variations in domestic contention on foreign policy, particularly variations of a cyclical nature within the United States, have been often identified but not explained. Changes in international interactions on global issues affect domestic contention. Such external events as the rise of new global issues, the emergence of crises, moves toward accommodation and resolution, war, and foreign-policy failure are related to the diverse forms that domestic contention can take. U.S. domestic contention, both in the recent past and in the short-term future, illustrates particularly well how hard-liners and accommodationists battle over the lessons of history.

Explaining choice of development strategies: suggestions from Mexico, 1970–1982

by David R. Mares

Economic development requires choices among a broad spectrum of alternative strategies and, as the recent experience of Mexico suggests, those choices are not easy. A complex politics is involved in the transition from one development strategy to another. The international political economy and domestic social coalitions both influence the costs and benefits associated with various development policies; they rule out some choices, but numerous options still remain. How can one explain actual outcomes? Observers may significantly increase their ability to explain outcomes by incorporating a statist component into their analyses. Within the very broad parameters set by the international political economy the state influences (but does not determine) the creation and the demands of the social coalition itself. In addition, the state may use policy instruments and advantages from the domestic and international arenas to implement policy even in the face of domestic opposition. The structure of the domestic political economy determines the space within which the statist perspective contributes to explanatory power. Eventually, it is in a historically based ideology that the chief explanation for the state's choice of policy and the construction of particular domestic coalitions is to be found.

International debt and linkage strategies: some foreign-policy implications for the United States

by Benjamin J. Cohen

The global debt problem influences the foreign-policy capabilities of the United States through its impact on the government's "linkage strategies" in foreign affairs. In some circumstances policy makers are forced to make connections between different policy instruments or issues that might not otherwise have been felt necessary; in others, opportunities for connections are created that might not otherwise have been felt possible. The Polish debt crisis of 1981–82, the Latin American debt crisis of 1982–83, and the IMF quota increase in 1983 are suggestive in this regard. Linkage strategies bred by the debt issue are more apt to be successful when the interest shared by the United States with other countries in avoiding default is reinforced by other shared economic or political interests. They will also be more successful to the extent that

the government can supplement its own power resources by relating bank decisions to foreign-policy considerations. Power in such situations, however, is a wasting asset, even when employed indirectly through the intermediation of the IMF.

Economic stabilization, conditionality, and political stability

by Henry S. Bienen and Mark Gersovitz

IMF conditionality is seldom so important that it dominates all other considerations for political stability. IMF stabilization programs often shift benefits from one group to another. They expose elites to charges of selling the sovereignty of their countries. The imposition of IMF conditions, particularly subsidy cuts, may lead to sharp outbreaks of civil disorder. Nonetheless, the IMF provides resources that make adjustment easier and thus may lessen the chances of political instability for a country. IMF programs are seldom implemented fully as negotiated, and the penalties for partial compliance are not great. Debtor countries have more flexibility in imposing austerity measures, and the economic constraints are less binding than often assumed. The very availability of alternatives to IMF programs results in internal divisions because some favor debt repudiation and others oppose it. Groups now contend over solutions to the debt problems of their countries.