
Preface: *International Organization* at Its Golden Anniversary

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This special issue of *International Organization* looks back on the first fifty years, and especially the last thirty, of this journal. As former editors, we were asked by the editorial board in 1996 to create a special fiftieth anniversary issue. In good academic style, the thought came late and the issue is tardy: you will notice that this is volume 52 of *International Organization* (founded in 1947). Like many a graduate student over these decades, we hope that the quality of our product will compensate for our long-standing “incomplete.”

In its recent history, *IO* has emphasized certain themes: international political economy—a field pioneered largely in these pages during the 1970s; the connections between domestic and international political economy; how international institutions operate and change. But *IO* has not enunciated an orthodoxy. Controversy has flourished on issues ranging from the relative merits of approaches such as realism, rational institutionalism, and constructivism to the interaction between the pressures of an increasingly globalized world economy and the diverse institutions of domestic politics or the connections between security issues and political economy.

In this issue we try to capture this combination of thematic coherence and theoretical controversy. We emphasize the themes that have been most important to *IO* over the years. We do not pretend to survey “the field” of international politics, much less to pass judgment on the relative importance of all the research programs that have flourished, or atrophied, over the last thirty years. We have deliberately overlooked major areas of study that have not been prominent in these pages, such as issues of rationality and war, the “democratic peace,” the success and failure of deterrence strategies, foreign policy decision making, and quantitative methodology and modeling in international relations. These literatures are all large and contain illustrious, important work, but little of that work first appeared in *IO*. Likewise, in our own article we have not surveyed the large body of work by scholars outside the United States that did not find an outlet in *IO*. However, we regarded this work as sufficiently important, and U.S. scholarship as sufficiently parochial, to commission an article by Ole Wæver that would critically review U.S. work in light of European

traditions. For better or worse, we have circumscribed our subject by the themes that *IO* has stressed.

In our article in this issue we speak with our own “voice”—not as editors, but as scholars in the field looking back especially on the thirty or so years during which we have been active in it. While preparing the article we encountered a dilemma that we were unable to fully resolve. We tried to write candidly and forcefully about how international political economy has evolved and also to represent a variety of research traditions fairly. Yet we know that we are not neutral external observers. We have been participants in the process, with our own axes to grind. Our views are clear on some debates because we were protagonists in them; other debates—equally important in generating interesting scholarship and enhancing our knowledge of the world—are more opaque to us because we were not so directly involved in them. Judging from reactions to earlier drafts, the article will encounter more debate than assent. No one else would tell the story just as we have; indeed, each of us individually would tell it somewhat differently. We hope, at least, that it is interesting and thought provoking.

The purpose of this issue is to illuminate past pathways and to open vistas on future directions for research. The articles explore major lines of research in the field of international political economy (IPE) broadly defined, demonstrate how they have evolved over time, show how they have interrogated one another, and illustrate how the engagement of scholars writing from many different orientations has illuminated an extraordinarily complex range of phenomena, encompassing international and domestic politics, power and wealth, and ideas and material concerns. As students of politics we know that power matters also in academia. Nevertheless, we hope that we have given open expression to diverse perspectives.

This issue is organized around three clusters of work. We built the core of the issue by commissioning articles that would develop arguments about the “state of the art” on different substantive or theoretical questions that have been important in the pages of *IO*. We began by asking for proposals from more than twenty distinguished scholars who have made contributions to *IO* over the years. We received sixteen proposals from which we made a selection in an attempt to publish an innovative but coherent set of final articles. In an effort to reach beyond the set of scholars who regularly publish in *IO*, we commissioned the articles by Ole Wæver, James March and Johan Olsen, Barry Eichengreen, and Robert Jervis.

The articles are grouped into five parts. Part I offers a historical overview, with the first article written from the perspective of the United States and the second from the critical distance of Europe. In our own article we seek to weave together the major strands of work published in *IO* over the years; we also seek to make a dialectical argument about how the field has evolved through various points of contestation that, though never reaching definitive resolutions of the conflicts between generic analytical orientations, have enriched our knowledge of world politics. The second article, by Ole Wæver, looks at the whole debate from a European perspective, helping us to

understand the implicit assumptions and biases that have shaped this “American social science.”¹

The four articles in Part II reflect a “rationalist” orientation, as understood broadly. Two of the articles explore issues that have been prominent in *IO*: the study of international institutions, discussed by Lisa L. Martin and Beth Simmons; and international and domestic political economy, analyzed by Helen V. Milner. In the other two articles Geoffrey Garrett examines how global markets relate to national policies, and Michael Mastanduno reviews the connections between economics and security.

The articles in Part III are written from a “constructivist” orientation. In the articles by John Ruggie and by Martha Finnemore and Kathryn Sikkink, the authors differentiate their arguments from rationalism and seek to show why rationalism insufficiently accounts for a range of important issues in world politics.

The two articles in Part IV juxtapose in different ways rationalist and constructivist perspectives. Miles Kahler reflects on the role of reason in the study of international relations—the key point of contestation between contemporary rationalism and constructivism. James March and Johan Olsen emphasize the “logic of appropriateness” and the “logic of consequences” and question the equilibrium-oriented assumption of historical efficiency.

Finally, in Part V two critical commentaries are offered from the perspectives of realism and economics. Robert Jervis discusses the continuing relevance of realism in the study of world politics, counterbalancing the argument we develop in our article, which gives realism a lower profile. Barry Eichengreen compares his own discipline of economics to our field, much to the advantage of the former.

As this brief preview suggests, this special issue seeks to combine thematic coherence with intellectual pluralism. The pluralism may be more obvious than the themes. Yet common themes do exist as authors highlight recurring questions about theory, method, substantive knowledge, and different generic theoretical orientations and specific research programs. A set of issues recurs throughout this issue, including topics such as the role of reason, the impact of power asymmetries on international relations, the connections between economics and politics and between global and domestic political economy, and the processes characteristic of domestic and international institutions. We hope and expect that some of our readers, particularly graduate students, will see new connections among these themes and will develop new criticisms of specific arguments in this issue.

One of our aspirations when we began working on this issue was to link the world of *IO* with the world of policy. Few such connections, however, have been made here. Although one of our authors, John Ruggie, is currently a high official of the United Nations, he does not seek to draw a connection between his theoretical work (which he synthesizes in his article in Part III) and his role as an actor in world politics. As work published in *IO* has become more theoretically and methodologi-

1. Hoffmann 1977.

cally self-conscious, the connections prominent during the first years of the journal between academic analysis and policy have been stretched thin or even broken. Policy relevant articles have become few and far between. Nevertheless, the same cleavages have been at the center of both scholarly and policy discussions: power politics versus the opportunities for mutual gain; the possibilities for altering beliefs and objectives versus a focus on material gains or greater security. This might simply reflect parallel developments in both arenas, or scholars might even be following the lead of policymakers. But it is more likely that decision makers, confronted with multiple demands and short time horizons, draw on intellectual capital that has been generated in universities, often through discussions that are far removed from immediate policy concerns.

First drafts of most of the articles were discussed at an authors' conference held in August 1997. We, as editors, commented on all of the articles. The two other members of the *IO* review committee, Judith Goldstein and Arthur Stein, provided valuable comments on a number of drafts during the winter of 1997–98. We are also grateful to the many colleagues who commented on our own article, and they are individually acknowledged in the authors' note to that article.

For us this process has been a great learning experience. Commenting on the articles—and commenting on each others' comments on the articles—has been fascinating. Writing our own synthesis in a way that seems intelligible was a challenge, and our success is best judged by our readers. We can attest, however, that our friendship not only survived but grew stronger in the process. Nevertheless, it is humbling to recognize how incompletely the three of us understand a subject to which we have devoted, collectively, a century of our intellectual and professional lives.