I had the honor of working from the IO editor’s chair during 1992 through 1996. Two articles that appeared in the journal during that period achieved special impact, and seven others deserve greater attention than they have received so far. I could name more and these are personal opinions; other scholars will have their own ideas.


I remember Steve telling me in 1991 that, given the rate of submissions and that referees were rejecting 90 percent, he had sometimes worried he would not have enough manuscripts to fill the issue by the publisher’s deadline—believe it or not. I took several steps to increase submissions and they rose by more than half. I also believed International Organization would be strongest and most effective if it were known as a place to find the best new knowledge generated by every major theoretical and methodological approach to international relations in the broad sense, including but not limited to international institutions and political economy.

Among these steps, I encouraged a number of esteemed authors, who were publishing in other highly selective journals but not submitting to IO, to send papers for normal review. One response was James Fearon’s “Rationalist Explanations for War” (published in 1995), which had outstanding impact in rationalist literatures on war and bargaining.

I think each of the following articles especially merits reading today as well, for different reasons.


how the nation-state triumphed over alternatives as the dominant form in the world power structure.


Barbara F. Walter. 1997. The Critical Barrier to Civil War Settlement. *International Organization* 51 (3): 335–64. Published analysis is wrong in many cases. The critical barrier is parties’ inabilities to make their commitments to peace credible. Negotiations succeed when outside powers guarantee the parties’ safety during the transition.

It is still a pleasure to recall working with fellow board members and many authors who submitted and published fine work during those years.