

---

## ***International Organization at Century's End: Some of the Best***

**Peter Gourevitch and David A. Lake**

---

During our five years as co-editors, we had the good fortune of receiving many excellent submissions. The work of our predecessors, particularly Bob Keohane, Peter Katzenstein, and Steve Krasner, created the structure *IO* still enjoys: high academic standing, intellectual openness, an efficient but rigorous review process, timely editorial response, and valuable feedback to authors. Our immediate predecessor, John Odell, significantly broadened the substantive scope of the journal, making it into a “full service” outlet for research on all facets of world politics. The result was a constant stream of excellent submissions. We aspired to navigate the flow rather than chart a new channel. Nonetheless, mostly reflecting changes then underway in the field, submissions and then published articles started to include more formal and quantitative research, presenting new challenges in recruiting excellent reviewers. During our tenure, we were proud to publish outstanding articles on an incredibly wide range of topics from diverse theoretical perspectives and using varied methodologies.

Working together was one of the most delightful aspects of editing the journal. We were colleagues at the same university but we had not previously collaborated in any significant way. After five years of “living in each other’s back pocket,” as we often joked, all that changed. To our pleasant surprise, and contrary to many expectations, we found working together was more efficient: we could make a judgment call quickly, confident the other would check against inconsiderate haste, relying effectively on what we know now from Daniel Kahneman and others as the wisdom of first evaluation! We found we liked working together, which we did on every paper that received at least a “revise and resubmit” during our term. Most of all, we rarely disagreed—with each other or with our reviewers.

Out of many fine papers, we note four that seem particularly compelling. Our criteria mix together impact, citations, provocation, insight, and diversity. They raise issues, ideas, and ways of thinking to which we return in our own work but that also come up in conversations with colleagues and students. Any such selection is subjective and many excellent alternatives are necessarily neglected. Following our top four, we list a few “sleepers”—papers of sharp interest that lie in the “unconscious” of our field—influential, known somehow, but not cited as much as we think they should be.

**Barbara J. Walter. *The Critical Barrier to Civil War Settlement*.  
*International Organization* 51, 3 (1997): 335–64**

Walter turned civil wars into a problem in international relations, rather than one of domestic politics. Outcomes did not turn on initial goals, ideology, ethnicity, or other characteristics of the participants, but upon issues of bargaining and contracting—essential elements of strategic interaction in international relations. Civil wars, she showed, were rarely resolved at the bargaining table, but most often on the battlefield. She theorized and then tested empirically how civil wars that were negotiated required external intervention by

a third party able to guarantee a peace agreement. This mode of thinking integrated the civil wars and ethnic conflicts so prevalent in our times into our field and our journal.

**James D. Fearon. Bargaining, Enforcement, and International Cooperation. *International Organization* 52, 2 (1998): 269–305**

The existing literature had paid a lot of attention to the “shadow of the future” (the discount rate) and to reciprocity as solutions to the problem of cooperation in self-enforcing agreements. Without disputing that a longer shadow of the future helps resolve the enforcement problem, Fearon clearly shows in this article that it simultaneously makes the bargaining problem more difficult. As the actors place more weight on future gains, the division of costs and benefits in any “deal” will also matter more, making a bargain harder to reach. Illustrating the simple formal model with evidence from trade and arms-control negotiations, the article helps explain costly standoffs in cases where the threat of cheating does not appear to be an impossible barrier to cooperation.

**Michael N. Barnett and Martha Finnemore. The Politics, Power, and Pathologies of International Organizations. *International Organization* 53, 4 (1999): 699–732**

This article helped introduce organizational culture into the study of international organizations. At a time when many focused on institutions as sets of rules, Barnett and Finnemore were among the first to consider international institutions as organizations in which real people inhabited spaces defined by those rules and, in turn, were guided by them in the conduct of their business. Highlighting their bureaucratic nature, Barnett and Finnemore compelled the field to ask how organizations understand their own interests and cultures, and how these subjectively defined interests affect how they do their work and to what extent they actually promote international cooperation. The authors may be surprised to see this article on our list of greatest hits. We argued vigorously with them over the paper, its theory, and its presentation over several rounds of revisions. In the end, we were not necessarily persuaded by the way they presented their more cultural approach but were convinced that it was a view worth a public hearing—as indeed it was.

**Michael Hiscox. Class Versus Industry Cleavages: Inter-Industry Factor Mobility and the Politics of Trade. *International Organization* 55, 1 (2001): 1–46**

In this piece, Hiscox redefined a long-standing debate over how to understand the cleavages that underlie the politics of international trade. Where these had been pitted as factor based versus sector based, Hiscox showed that both could be the case, depending on the degree of factor mobility, which was itself a variable: class coalitions prevailed when and where factor mobility was high, while industry-sectoral coalitions prevailed when factor mobility was low, so that labor and capital had reasons to band together to defend their firm and industry. Recent research has looked at sociotropic factors that fit neither

category, but this piece resolved a key debate in the field within a historical and geographical framework that provided a strong foundation for further research.

Beyond these four, here are some other papers that we were equally proud to publish though, perhaps, they have received less attention. Several made a particular impact on us, usually with a compelling finding that provoked our thinking. Among these are:

**Oona A. Hathaway. Positive Feedback: The Impact of Trade Liberalization on Industry Demands for Protection. *International Organization* 52, 3 (1998): 575–612.** In a dynamic view of trade policy, Hathaway demonstrates that freer trade restructures industry by steadily reducing the presence and political clout of comparatively disadvantaged sectors, thereby weakening pressures for protection.

**Nina Tannenwald. The Nuclear Taboo: The United States and the Normative Basis of Nuclear Non-Use. *International Organization* 53, 3 (1999), 433–68.** This article asks why nuclear weapons have not been used and provides a compelling answer in the normative stigma attached to them.

**Chaim D. Kaufman and Robert A. Pape. Explaining Costly International Moral Action: Britain's Sixty-year Campaign Against the Atlantic Slave Trade. *International Organization* 53, 4 (1999): 631–68.** Kaufman and Pape show that behind the unfamiliar dependent variable of anti-slavery norm promotion was the familiar process of interest group politics.

**Mark Zacher. The Territorial Integrity Norm: International Boundaries and the Use of Force. *International Organization* 55, 2 (2001): 215–50.** Zacher observes that the boundaries of states after 1945 have generally not been compromised by force, creating a new territorial integrity norm. Even where states have broken up, secessions usually follow internal administrative boundaries, reducing the potential for conflict over territory.

**Andreas Osiander. Sovereignty, International Relations, and the Westphalian Myth. *International Organization* 55, 2 (2001): 251–87.** This article attacks the Treaty of Westphalia as a myth created in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries for a variety of political purposes, inhibiting our ability to think clearly about issues of domestic politics and international hierarchy that are important in contemporary international relations.

Editing was a rewarding experience, intellectually and personally. We learned a lot about the field; we learned more about intellectual exchange; and we learned how to present ideas more effectively—and how to help authors do the same. Some colleagues enjoyed the feedback, and we are proud of cases in which extensive exchanges with the authors improved the papers. Our most enjoyable case involved a reviewer who criticized a piece for lacking enough reference to the works of a specific author, when that very person was the author of the

submission. This allowed us to write to that author about how we really did have blind reviewing!

Publishing scholarly research creates an invisible community. Although reviews many not always be welcome at the moment they are received, authors are always given gifts of time and judgment from their peers. Reviewers offer these gifts in the hope that they can improve our understanding of the world. It is difficult to convey appreciation to everyone involved—authors who submit their work for scrutiny, reviewers who engage arguments and evidence, and board members who review frequently and guide the journal—but we feel it deeply. It is this Tocquevillian community that has allowed *IO* to sustain itself for these many years.