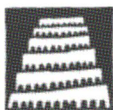


**The International Game of Power  
Past, Present and Future**

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# The International Game of Power

Past, Present and Future

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## Preface

There are a number of very good books on international relations on the market. Still, over the years the present author has become more and more dissatisfied with the available discussions of the problems of the international system. This does not mean that the respective books do not have their merits, given the objectives of their authors. But several ingredients seem to be missing. Thus, usually, the historical perspective is conspicuous by its absence; too much weight is given to recent approaches of minor importance which often turn out to be passing fashions of one or two decades; economic foundations of relative international power are neglected or even forgotten; sometimes states and other organizations are either seen as acting organicist entities or, on the contrary, as mere puppets in class wars; finally, often no clear distinctions are drawn between factual analysis and moral and legal issues of the international system.

Given this impression a different approach suggested itself for this book. First, the international system was sketched as a man-made, mainly anarchical, spontaneous and self-organizing system, which cannot be controlled by anybody and poses an increasing danger to mankind. Secondly, a long historical perspective has been taken, since different systems prevailed for decades and centuries, so that about the whole of written history is needed to get just a few examples of each system. Thirdly, because of this fact it seemed advisable to stress the deep insights of earlier observers of the international scene, namely of politicians, political philosophers, historians and social scientists. Quotations have been presented by such eminent men as Kalidasa, the early Indian politician, of Machiavel, of Louis XIV, George Washington, Frederick II of Prussia, de Tocqueville, Bismarck, the French historian Bainville, who predicted World War II, and George Kennan. Such quotations have especially then been given, when they contain interpretations and predictions which are well-reasoned and which have passed the test of history, like de Tocqueville's famous prediction of the 1830s that the USA and Russia would once dominate the world.

Fourthly, especially economic, but also geographic, demographic and scientific foundations of relative international power and its change over time have been widely discussed and analyzed in their importance for a

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possible future. Finally, terrorism, ideological and guerrilla warfare, whose importance rose strongly with the stalemate produced by the presence of nuclear arsenals, have been considered as important ingredients of the present international system.

The perspective taken can, perhaps, be best described as a public choice approach. This means to begin with the assumption that individuals try to choose rationally for themselves, their relatives and friends in a given institutional and organizational setting inherited from their forefathers, and with ideas, ideologies, and knowledge which have been shaped by their education and their life experiences in this very environment. Thus their knowledge is biased, it is necessarily limited and unexpected, and undesired consequences of their actions are usually inevitable. But this does not mean that men are mere pawns on the chessboard of history, of a totally unpredictable development. Nor does it mean that they are only manipulated or are only means of collective actors like classes, nations, religions or interest groups. An organicist interpretation of history is far from our understanding of the facts. Classes, nations etc. are potent man-made restrictions of human action, but they are no actors themselves.

The above presentation should indicate where the merits, if any, of this book can be found. It tries to present a fresh perspective, an unusual and perhaps illuminating integration of many facts, analytical and empirical results, which are widely scattered in the literature. It should thus, together with the historical examples and the easily accessible level of presentation, appeal especially to the educated layman, but also be useful to the undergraduate student as complementary reading.

It follows, on the other hand, that it has not been the ambition of the book to present and to discuss the wealth of the most recent literature in the field of foreign relations and of the international political system. Reasons of space would have prohibited such a discussion in any case, given the different aims set out above.

The following authors and publishers have kindly granted permission to quote from works mentioned in the book: Little, Brown & Co.; Westview Press; Biblio Verlag; Rowohlt Verlag; A. D. Peters & Co. Ltd.; Reimar Hobbing Verlag; Carl Ed. Schünemann KG.; American Political Association; American Journal of Medicine; Random House Inc.; Alfred A. Knopf; Inc.; Princeton University Press; Cornell University Press; University of Chicago Press; Hoffmann & Campe; Prof. Dr. Konrad Lorenz; Dr. Sebastian Haffner. I would like to express my gratitude to all of them. I am grateful to several people who have read and criticized the first drafts of the manuscript, especially to James M. Buchanan and to Gordon Tullock, both now at George Mason University. It is obvious that they do not share any responsibility for

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Bottmingen, Switzerland  
February 1985

Peter Bernholz





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## Chapter 1

### Human Artifacts, Social Dilemma and the International System

#### 1. The International System as a Human Artifact

We live in an environment strongly shaped by ourselves. To a great degree, this is now true even with respect to our physical environment. In Europe scarcely a plot of earth exists which has not been turned over and cultivated again and again. Which plants are allowed to grow and which animals are permitted to live are determined largely by humans.

Our social environment, too, has been nearly totally created by us. Towns, church, state, democracy, money markets, agencies, goods, taxes and joint stock companies are all human artifacts. What is more, modern man himself is partly a manmade artifact. He is born into his social environment, which limits and determines his acquired behaviour. He is formally educated with the help of human inventions and institutions like the art of writing, schools, radio and television, to say nothing of the informal education provided by the surroundings in which he works and lives.

The fact that the social environment has been created by man does, however, not mean that it has been constructed by one or several individuals designing and executing one or more detailed plans. The Roman Empire, Russia, the English language or the Science of Physics have not been planned or constructed. No single human being or group would have been able to do so. All these human artifacts are the accumulated consequences of a great number of human actions which have led to many intended and perhaps to even more unintended outcomes. Thus most human institutions, rules and organizations have 'emerged' and have somehow successfully survived the struggle with other competing institutions, rules and organizations. The same is true for artifacts like markets, languages, tools, machines and consumer goods.<sup>1</sup>

The mainly unplanned nature of human artifacts does not mean that they are inadequate or inefficient for human purposes. They must have advantages for human beings to survive, they must have been better than competing artifacts because they have outlived them. Languages, cars, houses, joint stock companies, markets and mathematics must serve some human

## 2 *I. Human Artifacts, Social Dilemma and the International System*

needs quite well, otherwise they would be on their way to extinction. And the workings of markets, organizations and languages are not chaotic, even though they have not been planned, but they have emerged as successful adapters in the ceaseless competition for survival.

The above remarks should not be misunderstood. Even if most human artifacts have emerged this does not mean that all of them have. New machines, companies, houses, streets, and even states (like Bismarck's Germany of 1871) have often been carefully planned and been constructed according to plan. But even in these cases the further developments of these artifacts may be quite different from those originally intended or even expected. For nobody can perfectly predict the impact of new, and especially of complex artifacts on social environment and the repercussions from the latter. To believe that any human being or human group could fully understand the present or even more, plan the future social environment, would be lunatic.

The consequences of these facts for man's image and his perception of the world can scarcely be exaggerated. His ideas and even his scientific theories are not only referring to a social environment created by his forefathers, but they are strongly influenced by this very environment. The individual often takes the institutions and organizations around him as if they were given by nature, since he himself can scarcely change them. He thus acts and reacts as if the system were immutable and as if it were ruled and determined by unchangeable laws. As a consequence, his expectations and actions are to a great extent dependent on the environment into which he has been born.

The behaviour just sketched is a rational one seen from an individual perspective. But this should not obscure the fact that our social environment can be changed by ourselves as collectivities since it has been, after all, created by men. This observation leads to important consequences. On the one hand, men may be so impressed with their views of an immutable social system that they form their ideas and act in such a way that society becomes in fact nearly static (like in old Egypt), or that no visions of alternative 'better' or 'worse' organizations of mankind than the existing one are developed. On the other hand, there may be people believing like the Marxists do that there are immutable laws governing social change which lead to a final stage of society, say communism and the withering away of the state, which cannot be prevented by anybody. Finally there may be people so influenced by the fact that social surroundings are artifacts that they believe human beings are able to plan and to bring about any kind of utopian environment they can dream of.

Even social science has often not been able to escape the dangers just mentioned. There are still social scientists who believe that their only job is to explore the social reality presently surrounding them and to find the laws determining its workings. It is obvious that such an attitude can be an obstacle to the use of creativity to invent new and 'better' social institutions and can serve interested groups as a weapon against changes of the status quo. Similar considerations apply to people like Marx who as an economist and philosopher was convinced he had found immutable laws of social change. If enough people believe in such a theory they may be able to bring about some of the changes thought to be inescapable. And, if the theory proves wrong, misery and oppression may result instead of the 'better' society hoped for.

The above considerations about the artifactual nature of social systems are of immediate relevance for foreign policy and for our understanding of it. We usually identify foreign policy as the 'behavior' of one state towards other states. But what if no such entities called 'states' exist? Then no foreign policy in the above sense can be present. But states are human inventions and even in their primitive forms not older than a few thousand years.<sup>2</sup>

Moreover, states have changed their characters during the course of history, and the number of states which were in contact with each other has not remained the same over time. There have been city states, national states and empires; feudal states, tyrannies, decentralized and centralized democracies. Systems have existed comprising many states (multipolar systems), some important states (balance of power systems), two important states (bipolar systems) or only one important state (world state systems). Do all these systems work in the same way? Is their functioning dependent on the nature and internal organisation of the states participating in the system?

The problems thus brought about by different social systems for the study of foreign policy could be easily handled if there existed a general theory able to explain or even to predict not only the behavior of different international systems, but also the changes from one system to another. Such a general theory is, however, not available. It is therefore necessary to use different approaches for different international systems, their developments and the changes between systems.

There are obvious dangers apt to mislead the social scientist following this road. If he is living in a world in which the balance of power system is prevailing, he may take the power relations and the Machiavellian outlook connected with this system as an immutable fact of life. Thus he may overlook the possibility that the system can be destabilized by important factors like revolutionary changes in weapons techniques or in social organization;

and that this change may lead, e.g. to a world state with an international law and ethics approaching those prevailing inside the nation state in which he presently lives. As a consequence of his time-determined outlook or his prejudices he may, moreover, also be unable to design and to propose better-functioning and more humane international systems.

The practising politician is liable to fall prey to similar dangers. Accustomed to, say, a balance of power system with a few important states he may overlook that there can arise participants like Napoleon or Hitler who make use of revolutionary developments to transform the system. Or, worse, not knowing the functioning of a balance of power system he may not realize (as a member of a victorious coalition like Wilson and Lloyd George after the First or Roosevelt and Truman during and after the Second World War) that the system can be destroyed and changed by the dissolution or division of important members (like Austria-Hungary and Germany, thus leaving the USA in a bipolar system with Soviet Russia).

In the following analysis we have strictly to keep in mind the manmade nature of the social environment and especially of international systems. These systems are not immutably given like the movement of the planets around the sun. It may be impossible under 'normal conditions' that they can be changed even by leading politicians. But conditions may change and thus open a chance even for individual actors to transform the existing system. And we should realize that our beliefs and our perceptions, which are formed by the social sciences, too, can be one of the most important factors responsible for such a transformation.

In Chapter 2 our study will begin by looking at different international systems, by studying their internal workings under the assumption that they are given. But we shall not stop there. Factors determining and transforming international systems will preoccupy us as much and we shall also turn to the question how a "better" international system should look, whether it can be established and whether factors working to bring it about exist.

## 2. States and the International System as a Response to the Social Dilemma and as a Means of Exploitation and Oppression

In a large group of human beings there are always some who find it easier to live from the fruits of the work of others than to work themselves. Thus they may cheat or use violence, theft and burglary to get hold of what other people have created, if the risk of being caught is not too high and the punishment to be expected not too severe.

The underlying situation can be described with the help of a simple example (Table 1.1). Let us assume that there are two people or groups *A* and *B* who can either devote all their time and resources to produce goods (*w*), e.g. wheat, or can use only half of them for productive work and the other half for stealing or defence against theft (*s*). The four cells of Table 1.1 give the amounts of goods (wheat) available to *A* and *B* in the four different possible outcomes.

If both *A* and *B* pursue activity *w*, (*w,w*), *A* gets 80 and *B*, who is perhaps less skilful or has smaller resources, 50 units. In case (*w,s*), in which only *B* steals, he gets 70 and *A* only 30 units. Note that the total product of both is now smaller than in case (*w,w*), namely 100 compared to 130 units, since *B* spends less of his time and resources on productive work. A similar outcome prevails, if *A* but not *B* steals, (*s,w*). Finally if both spend half of their time and resources on theft and on safeguarding against it, (*s,s*), *A* gets 40 and *B* 30, thus leaving a total of only 70 units.

Table 1.1

<i>A</i>	<i>B</i>	
	<i>w</i>	<i>s</i>
<i>w</i>	80, 50	30, 70
<i>s</i>	100, 20	40, 30

One realizes at once that activity *s* dominates activity *w*, so that the worst outcome (*s,s*) will result if both act independently. For consider *A*'s options. If he chooses the activity *s* he will be better off than with productive work (*w*) only, whatever *B* will do. For if *B* selects *w*, *A* can get 100 instead of 80, and if *B* prefers *s*, 40 instead of 30 units. *B* is in an analogous situation. But if *A* and *B* as a consequence both select strategy *s* then they are far worse off than if they had both followed strategy *w*, which would have resulted for *A* in 80 instead of 40 and for *B* in 50 instead of 30 units.

The example clarifies the nature of the social dilemma for the simplest possible case. The situation remains fundamentally the same if three or more people are involved. In fact, as we will see later, the dilemma gets more serious. Note again the essence of its nature: everybody follows his own self-interest rationally and independently, but all end up in a worse situation than could be achieved.

But given the situation just described, could not *A* and *B* easily escape the dilemma by cooperating, that is by agreeing to a contract in which they

promise each other not to steal? Unfortunately the solution to the social dilemma cannot as easily be accomplished. For assume that *A* kept the contract but *B* did not. Then *B* would be better off again and get 70 instead of 50 units. It follows that both are motivated to break their agreement. Worse still, both have to expect that the other will renege on the contract. But if, say, *A* expects such a behaviour of *B* then it would be better for *A*, too, to break the agreement, since in this case he would get 40 instead of 30 units. Thus self-interest and (probably warranted) distrust would lead again to outcome (*s,s*).

What is needed, then, is a mechanism preventing the violation of the contract between *A* and *B*. Obviously, there exists such a solution to the social dilemma, namely the formation of a state guaranteeing with police and courts the punishment of violations of private contracts (Table 1.2). Let us assume, for our example, that it would take an amount of 10 units to keep up police and courts and that a violation of the contract between *A* and *B* would be punished with 25 units. Assume further that *A* and *B* had each to bear one half of the 10 units necessary for police and courts. Then the figures of Table 1.2 would result by deducting corresponding amounts from the figures of Table 1.1. E.g. if both choose *w*, then  $80-5 = 75$  and  $50-5 = 45$  units would be the resulting amounts. On the other hand, if only *B* would steal, he would have to pay the fine of 25 and 5 for police and courts thus leaving him  $70-30 = 40$  units. *A*, however, would only have to pay 5, keeping  $30-5 = 25$  units, etc. We realize at once that after these changes strategy *w* dominates *s* for both *A* and *B*, whatever the other does. As a consequence (*w,w*) will be the outcome, giving 75 units to *A* and 45 to *B*, which is much better than the 40 and 30 units they receive in outcome (*s,s*) in Table 1.1 without the existence of a state enforcing contracts. It follows that they both can accept the state and the chance of being punished in case of violation of contract, since this institution benefits them.

We should like to stress several points concerning our example. First, and least important, the penalty has to be big enough or the punishment would not work. Thus one observes at once that a penalty of 5 or even 10 units would not be sufficient to bring about (*w,w*) as an outcome. Secondly, we have assumed that a violation of contract will be detected and punished with certainty. If there are many people present this will not be true. But then the threatened punishment has to be more severe the smaller the probability that the violator of the contract or legal rule forbidding theft will be apprehended. Thirdly, the existence of the state and thus of the solution to the social dilemma is not costless. Outcome (*w,w*) leaves *A* and *B* with a total of 130 units without (Table 1.1), but only with 120 units with the state (Table 1.2).<sup>3</sup>



A fourth point remains to be made. In a small group (especially, of course, in one with only two people) the sanctions required to reach an outcome like  $(w,w)$  in Table 1.2 can obviously be brought about in an informal way and do not need the existence of a state. Social disapproval by relatives and friends, an education teaching children to respect adequate norms may be quite sufficient to prevent the violation of agreements.

Table 1.2

A	B	
	w	s
w	75, 45	25, 40
s	70, 15	10, 0

Moreover, the situation described in Table 1.1 will usually repeat itself, or at least be followed by similar situations. In game theoretic language, there will be an indefinite number of plays of the same or of similar games. To return to our example, *A* and *B* do not only live, work and possibly steal in the next week, but also during an indefinite number of later weeks. If this is the case, however, then they may be motivated to keep their agreements even if no outside sanctions exist. For assume that *B* would break the contract concluded for next week. In this case he could gain 20 units (see Table 1.1), but had to expect that *A* would as a consequence either not conclude or break an agreement in one or more of the following weeks. This would, taking into account his own response, lead to outcome  $(s,s)$ , bringing about a reduction of 20 units per week. It follows that *B* will be better off if he keeps the agreement in the first week, whenever he has to expect that *A* will be around during the weeks to come. But *A* is in a similar situation. Consequently both will be strongly motivated to keep their agreements, even if they only follow their narrow self-interest and if no outside sanctions exist.

Having discussed these additional factors we note that they are mainly valid for small groups. This is certainly true for the iterative game just mentioned. Even within a group of, say, 100 people it would be extremely difficult to detect the violator of a contract or a rule against theft without the help of a specialized agency, like the police. It follows that it would not be possible to punish a thief just by not concluding or by breaking an agreement with him the next week. But if this is true, then two problems arise. The motivation to steal would be present again. And since everybody could be the violator people would be more reluctant to make and to keep

agreements with others. Thus the outcome  $(w,w)$  would either not result or become more and more improbable in time.

In a large group, social disapproval and an education inculcating moral values would probably not be sufficient to secure an outcome like  $(w,w)$ . First, again, there is the difficulty of detecting the violators. Secondly, it is much less likely that the action is disapproved by all members of a large group, most of whom have not been hurt by the violation or have scarcely or not at all heard about it. Finally, people usually feel themselves the less bound by inculcated norms the greater the distance and the less they know the people with whom they have to deal. We conclude that informal internal sanctions of the kind mentioned become less reliable as the size of the group in question increases. Thus results the importance of the state, of laws, police and courts to secure personal and property rights against violations and to bring about outcomes like  $(w,w)$ , which can be preferred by all members of society.

The existence of states, however, unfortunately entails new problems. True, police and army should only be used to protect citizens against violence and against the violation of property rights. But it is also true that both can be misused by minorities or majorities to exploit and to oppress people within and without the state. Indeed, Marxism envisions the state mainly in this function, namely as an instrument of the ruling class to exploit the rest of the population and to maintain their own dominance.<sup>4</sup> It is because of this possibility that constitutional theories have tried to design adequate democratic constitutions safeguarding the rule of law, and providing adequate human and minority rights.<sup>5</sup>

Turning to the international system we are at once impressed by the fact that no international government, no international police or army exist to sanction the violation of international agreements. If national governments like those of the Soviet Union or the USA ponder to invade Afghanistan or to fight a war in Vietnam, they are certainly not influenced in their calculations by the possible sanctions on the part of a "World Government", its police or armed forces. The factors they take into account are the possible reactions of other national governments and perhaps their own populations. Thus, at least to a certain degree, the international system is still ruled by anarchy preventing outcomes like  $(w,w)$  in Table 1.2, and furthering outcomes like  $(s,s)$  in Table 1.1. Indeed, we can reinterpret  $A$  and  $B$  as states, and  $w$  and  $s$  as peaceful relations and war efforts, respectively, to describe the situation of a simplified international system with two actors. Then the example would at least show that the social dilemma has not been solved in this system.

To say that an international system composed of independent states is at least partly anarchic does not imply, however, that no international law,

no rules of conduct and no cooperation exist. First with even only two states we have to take into account that for many issues about which both are concerned cooperation may be rewarding. This may be true, indeed, in situations like those described in Table 1.1, if they are repetitive games played an indefinite number of times. But note that conquering another state once and for all is not a repetitive game.

Secondly, with more than two states it is often useful to form coalitions with one or more states against others either to attack them or to defend against them (see Chapter 2).

Finally, governments will usually be interested that their citizens keep contracts with foreigners and observe foreign law in other states if they are on friendly terms with them. It follows, then, that states may well agree to set up international organizations, to adhere to a certain body of international law and to set up international courts to adjudicate certain conflicts arising between them or between their citizens.<sup>6</sup>

But in spite of all this, each state remains free to decide for itself, when and to which degree to agree to and to keep international treaties, to follow international law, to keep peace or to go to war. The international system keeps its basically anarchical traits as long as no international government exists which can apply adequate sanctions against states. This fact has been sadly confirmed by the great number of wars and invasions which took place even since World War II, by the armaments race, the breach of international agreements, by threats and reprisals among states in spite of the existence of the United Nations and many other international organizations and courts.

We recall that modern states and the international system have emerged as human institutions, as artifacts. Nobody has planned or even predicted them and their consequences. These institutions and the system they compose have been successfully developed and survived in fierce competition with other organizations of society like the feudal or tribal system and with other states. But their survival does not mean that they are 'better' in the moral sense of the word. It is true that the nation state has brought a high measure of order and suppression of internal violence. But, as we have already pointed out, it can be used for purposes of internal and external exploitation and oppression. The international system composed of states is still largely anarchical, encourages overspending on armaments, leads to wars and other actions inimical to world developments. It has not solved the social dilemma on an international scale.

Furthermore, if we look around, we realize that oligarchies, dictatorships and military regimes abound, and that only a minority of states can be judged to be free democratic societies with constitutional safeguards for human and minority rights and the rule of law. As we will see later

(Chapter 3.4) it is quite possible that these societies may be outmanoeuvred and suppressed in time by non-democratic states because of the nature of the existing international system. If such a development should in fact happen, these states would have proved themselves as institutions better capable to survive, but we would certainly not believe them to be “better” from a moral point of view.

### 3. Nature of International Actors, of International Aims and Issues

We are interested in the workings of the international system in the past, the presence and future. In approaching this problem several questions come to mind, namely:

- (1) Who are the international actors?
- (2) What are the issues with which they are confronted and which they try to solve?
- (3) What are the aims of the international actors?

We do not intend to discuss questions (2) and (3) in this section in a substantive way. This will be done in Chapter 5. Similarly, the actors in the international system will be at the center of our interest throughout the book. At the moment, their nature, like that of issues and aims, will only concern us from a more general, formal and introductory point of view closely related to the discussion of the previous sections.

In a strict methodological sense, only human beings can be actors of the international system. Institutions and organizations like states, churches, multinational and international organizations are human artifacts, not organisms. They can have no aims, no issues can exist for them and they cannot act. On the other hand, human beings are confined and restricted in their behaviour by the institutional setting surrounding them. People would not have problems with the Internal Revenue Service, be drafted into the army and be forced to fight a war, or be obliged to send their children to school, if no state or no international system, no school and no Internal Revenue Service existed. The freedom of action of human beings is thus strongly limited or even determined by the kind of social system in which they live. In some cases people have scarcely any choice, since the institutional setting fully determines their actions. In such cases one might even argue that the relevant institutions and not the individuals concerned are acting.

In modern, well-ordered states it is especially the use of force which is strongly regulated by law. Individuals are not allowed to use force, or in many states even to possess weapons, save under highly restrictive conditions. In this sense the modern state or the people dominating it, have often successfully secured a monopoly of power. It is because of this that the state as an artifact plays a dominant role in the international system. Individuals can only play an important role in this system if they are influential in the state machinery so that they are able to use its agencies and, if necessary, its armed forces. For only then can they meet the threats or actual use of military power by other states, threaten themselves with military intervention, engage in war and enforce obedience domestically. It is in this sense that we may speak of states as the main international actors: individuals have to act through a state and have to take into account the reality of the existence of other states wielding a monopoly of power in their territories, if they want to be influential or important participants of the international system.

There is still another meaning in which organizations and especially states can be said metaphorically to have ends and to act. We all know that many people identify with 'their' church, 'their' nation, 'their' company and are prepared to sacrifice a lot, sometimes even their lives for these entities. The ideas with which they identify are handed down possibly from generation to generation and can usually only be slowly changed by the present membership. A single individual has only negligible influence on the heritage of ideas and rules of Islam, of Communism, of General Motors or of France. But if this is true, then the emerged tradition, the special cultural traits of an organization, an institution can in a sense 'dictate' aims to individuals who identify with it. Thus these human artifacts gain because of their dead-weight as it were, their own lives; they have aims and act with their traditions and rules through the acts of individuals educated in and restricted by their cultural heritage.

Given the complicated relationship between human beings and the artifacts which have emerged in history, it cannot be surprising that long and heated controversies have raged over the question of who are the relevant international actors, what are their aims and what issues do they confront. The so-called 'realist' school of the discipline concerned with international relations has always emphasized nation states as international actors. We are able to appreciate this view because states more or less monopolize the use of power and have been able, at least during the last two hundred years, to a surprising degree to attract the allegiance of their citizens. We shall see, moreover, that often the restrictions caused by a given international system are such that the leading politicians of a state do not have much of a choice if they want to secure the survival of their nation.

Since the late 1960s, another school of thought, the so-called 'globalists' have debated the 'realists' view of the international system and of its operation.<sup>7</sup> The position of the globalists has been expressed by Puchala and Fagan as follows:<sup>8</sup>

... national governments are but some actors among many on the international scene. Other prominent actors include international organizations and directorates, multinational corporations, functionally linked transnational groups such as regional political parties and international guerilla organizations, and subnational groups such as departments of agriculture, ministries of finance or major labor unions, business firms or philanthropic foundations – all formulating and executing their own foreign policies in quasi-autonomous fashion. (p. 40)

Concerning the issues the two authors point out that

... it would seem that many of today's most pressing international issues have little to do with the relative military security of states, with their relative coercive power, with their territoriality, or even with the ideology of their regimes. Governments today appear increasingly absorbed in enhancing the economic, social, and intellectual well-being of their citizens via their foreign policies and international interactions. (p. 39)

Marxists have always taken an even stronger position against the relevance of states as national or international actors. For them, states are only instruments of the dominating class in society. To quote Friedrich Engels:

Since the state has developed out of the need to restrain contradictions between classes, and since it has arisen at the same time amidst the conflict of these classes, it is regularly the state of the most powerful, economically dominating class. This class becomes with its help also the politically dominating class and gets thus with its help new means to keep down and to exploit the suppressed class . . . .<sup>9</sup>

It follows that classes are the real national and international actors in the Marxist's image of the world. Now, from our perspective classes as well as churches, international and multinational organizations, departments of agriculture and ministries of finance are only human organizations and cannot have aims or act in the strictest methodological interpretation. In this they are quite similar to the state. Moreover, there can be no doubt that the actions of human beings are restricted by the existence of these social artifacts and that the aims of individuals are influenced by the traditions and rules embodied in these organizations and their membership. As a consequence, if non-state organizations are able to gain the allegiance of people more than the state, then the aims of the state, the issues perceived by its members can also be changed in the direction of the traditions of these organizations. For aims and issues in collectivities like states are formed as an aggregation of the ends followed by different individuals with changing influence in the political process.

We are thus not surprised about the controversy concerning the relevant international actors, the nature of issues and aims. To get a complete theory one would have to start from all the individuals in the world, their aims or preferences and from the restrictions given by the existence of all kinds of organizations, institutions and rules, and then have to deduce their decisions, reactions and the ensuing consequences for the international system. But it is obvious that this is far too ambitious to ever be accomplished. It follows that the science of international politics has to simplify drastically, has to reduce the number of actors if it wants to gain some understanding of reality. This means, unfortunately, that it has to take collective actors into account and to work with them as if they had aims, were confronted by issues and could act.

Given these problems, one has to decide which collective actors to select. It is our conviction that judged from the problems specific to the international system — anarchy, no worldwide organization with the power to sanction the violation of international law, of treaties and contracts, and on the whole successful monopolization of power by the states — that judged from these problems, states have to be the main actors to be considered when one tries to find the most important characteristics of the international system.

Some people may contradict these views by pointing out the influence of multinational corporations on the formation of the policies of states, the importance of international organizations like the International Monetary Fund on the domestic policies of countries in need of credit, etc. Now, we are the last to deny the existence of such influences. It is true that the United States Fruit Company has been able in the past to influence Central American countries or even to topple their governments, that the International Monetary Fund has set in 1982/1983 strict credit conditions influencing domestic economic policies of, say, Mexico and Brazil and that interest groups like unions, churches, agricultural organizations and business firms can have influence on the formation of the national and international politics of industrialized nations. We grant these facts and take them into account up to a certain point.

But we assert that all these facts are not the most important ingredients of the international system, and that their influences are usually rather weak. For first, international organizations or their members are strongly dependent in their policies on their member governments. Their importance is vastly smaller than that of a council of ministers. For instance, the Commission of the European Market is no match to the European Council of Ministers. Secondly, even rather weak countries have been able to nationalize their oil or copper industries belonging to 'powerful' international firms. Customs duties and tariffs have been raised, prices of pharmaceuticals been controlled