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Donald W. Hanson

Hobbes and the Highway to Peace

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

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tion, Cornell University, or The MIT Press.

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 and at additional mailing offices.

International Organization is published quarterly, Winter, Spring, Summer, and Fall by The MIT Press.

Advertising: Please write to Advertising Manager, MIT Press Journals, 28 Carleton Street, Cambridge, MA

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International Organization

Volume 38, Number 2, Spring 1984

Symposium on the New Realism

- The poverty of neorealism *Richard K. Ashley* 225
- The richness of the tradition of political realism
Robert G. Gilpin 287
- Errors have their advantage *Friedrich Kratochwil* 305
- The domestic content of international desire *Bruce Andrews* 321

Articles

- Thomas Hobbes's "highway to peace" *Donald W. Hanson* 329
- The hegemon's dilemma: Great Britain, the United States, and
the international economic order *Arthur A. Stein* 355

Comment

- UNCTAD's failures: the rich get richer *Robert Ramsay* 387

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Abstracts

Thomas Hobbes's "highway to peace"

by Donald W. Hanson

It is widely agreed that the work of Thomas Hobbes established and continues to nourish the tradition of "realism" in international political theory. But this association is in many ways paradoxical, and above all because Hobbes's avowed purpose was to "show us the highway to peace." It is usually assumed that he aimed exclusively at internal peace while resigning himself to permanent rivalry among states, but there are a good many indications that this may not be an adequate interpretation. Hobbes devoted substantial effort to explicating several modifications of the inherited intellectual tradition, in both politics and education, that seem to have been intended to promote beneficial effects in interstate relations. When these substantive aims are taken into account, rather different lessons seem to emerge. One, in particular, is that it may be misleading to think of the Hobbesian tradition as one of realism.

The hegemon's dilemma: Great Britain, the United States, and the international economic order

by Arthur A. Stein

Liberal international trade regimes do not emerge from the policies of one state, even a hegemonic one. Trade liberalization among major trading states is, rather, the product of tariff bargains. Thus, hegemons need followers and must make concessions to obtain agreements. The liberal trade regimes that emerged in both the 19th and the 20th centuries were founded on asymmetric bargains that permitted discrimination, especially against the hegemon. The agreements that lowered tariff barriers led to freer trade not free trade; resulted in subsystemic rather than global orders; and legitimated mercantilistic and protectionist practices of exclusion and discrimination, and thus did not provide a collective good. Moreover, these trade agreements (and trade disputes as well) had inherently international political underpinnings and did not reflect economic interests alone. Trade liberalization also required a certain internal strength on the part of the government. Furthermore, only a complete political rupturing of relations, such as occurs in wartime, can destroy such a regime. A hegemon's decline cannot do so alone. These arguments are developed in a historical reassessment of the evolution of the international trading order since 1820. Eras commonly seen as liberal, such as the 1860s, are shown to have included a good deal of protection, and eras seen as protectionist, such as the 1880s, are shown to have been much more liberal than is usually believed.