

Preface

International relations books targeted at popular or professional readers are not in short supply. Every year, hundreds of titles examining the subject from different angles are turned out by the publishing houses. Complementing books on the theory, history, politics, and conduct of international relations are those focusing on specialized themes—like the law of the seas, nuclear proliferation and disarmament, climate change, globalization, international trade and finance, and terrorism. In light of this apparent glut in the book market, it is fair to ask, what is new that another text intends to share with the reader?

In the language of economics, this book's value-added lies in the attempt made to explore international relations from a new angle—that of states that are not as militarily powerful or economically prosperous as those running the world and thus not getting the attention of scholars. The book proceeds on the assumption that making the study of international relations genuinely *international* entails acknowledging the coexistence of the strong with the weak. Based on this assumption, it develops a conceptual framework which is likely to prove helpful in understanding the conflict and the harmony between and among the various classes of interests—be this the interest of the powerful or of the weak, the interest of the state or of nonstate actors.

In outlining a new theory—the interest contiguity theory—the book begins by identifying broadly three types of interests. The first is the interest of the individual over what concerns him/her and no other person. The second type, besides personal interest, is the interest of the state acting for and on behalf of a *society of individuals*. The third category of interests is that of the international community and/or of rival sovereign states. The book argues that the significance of each type of interest could not be fully comprehended unless and until the *distance or contiguity* between one type and another is analyzed.

To illustrate patterns in the emergence of the various types of interests, the book relies on legend, notably that of Adam, Eve, their offsprings as well as their descendants. It notes, in particular, that in the beginning, nothing mattered to Adam except himself. Before the arrival of Eve, he, by some accounts, had the Garden of Eden all to himself. He could roam the Garden's length and breadth as he pleased, and remove whatever got in his way. If he had foreknowledge of the serpent's plot to get him extradited to the accursed earth, nothing could have stopped him from cutting off the scheming reptile's head and living blissfully thereafter. Adam could

act without answering to anybody, except his conscience and possibly, God—if he really knew Who God is. Adam's simple, carefree life conferred upon him all the rights and no obligations—save the obligations to himself, and for his own survival and well-being.

The situation changed when Eve came on the scene. Instead of worrying about himself, Adam now had to care for, and accommodate the idiosyncrasies of, his new companion. His "theory of individual sovereignty"—if we may call it that—had to be slightly modified to account for the spouse variable. The constraints on Adam's unilateral actions grew as the original First Couple "increased and multiplied." Population growth necessitated the construction or enforcement of moral codes for the purpose of regulating interpersonal and intergroup relations, and balancing rights with obligations. Even then, and for several millennia, Adam's descendants jealously guarded their individual freedoms. Thus, when population increase in one territory threatened the typical cave man's freedom, he moved with his kinsfolk or "tribe" to another.

The wave of migration continued until almost every inch of space was taken, and there was nowhere else to go. This was the point at which forceful individuals with the power, the resources, and above all, the will to impose order stepped in to regulate the behavior of the embryonic communities.¹ From this early stage to the present, the organized community has had to grapple with questions like the morality of power, why the individual should restrain his natural inclination to be free and instead choose obedience to an external authority, what constitutes the limit of power, and how to respond to the basic human craving for justice.

While the modern state continues to wrestle with the questions, a new type of sovereign has emerged with its own set of demands not only on the state, but also on individuals who had hitherto been under the exclusive control of the state. One question that the book seeks to answer is whether the progression from anarchy or "state of nature," through the emergence of the nation-state, to internationalism, is a historical accident or an inescapable reality of human evolution. In other words, can Adam's journey toward internationalism be tracked along a predictable historical path, as is done with the deterministic sequences in physics? As argued in the book, Adam's journey from the state of nature through the Westphalia state to internationalism is best understood not as a unidirectional movement, but as a multised experience.

The interest contiguity theory holds that rather than turning out as a smooth, one-way cruise through history, the humankind's journey from the inception to the present has unveiled broadly three types of interests. The first is the individual interest which, strange as it may sound, tends to be internally contradictory—as reflected in the natural human tendency to vacillate between good and evil, right and wrong. The second is the society's (or "national") interest which, due to the clash of wills, is even more difficult to harmonize. The third is the interest espoused to justify the establishment and maintenance of supranational institutions.

Though conflicting, some interests are, due to their closeness, more easily reconcilable than others. This is theoretically the case with the interest of the individual vis-à-vis him-/herself, and relative to his/her immediate community. Other interests

are poles apart, and need extraordinary effort to be made mutually compatible. An example is the desire to colonize vis-à-vis the will to resist, or a typical state's (or its citizen's) interest and the "organization interest" pursued by distant international institutions.

In tracing the links between and among the three broad types of interests, this book begins with a brief philosophical excursion, paying particular attention to diverse perspectives on how individuals acquire the knowledge of right and wrong. It then proceeds in Chapter 2 to examine the implications of human knowledge for individual liberty. Against the backdrop to the epistemological and ontological questions raised in the earlier chapters, Chapter 3 examines the contending perspectives on the theory of the state, and in particular, the circumstances under which it is justified to place the interest of society over that of the individual. The focus of Chapter 4 is on the insertion of the supranational governance constant in the sovereignty equation, and on the conflict between idealist and realist explanations for the new order. The adequacy or otherwise of the conflicting explanations of the change (or is it "evolution"?) from anarchy to a "new world order" is the subject taken up in the succeeding chapters.

Besides proposing a new analytical tool for the consideration of and adoption by professionals in the field of international relations, the interest contiguity theory is likely to spark off popular debate on contemporary issues—notably, the role of the superpowers in the maintenance of order, the clash between hegemony and resistance, the scope and limit of the War on Terror, and the choices open to the world in attempts at curbing anarchy and promoting lasting peace. Hopefully, policy makers in different parts of the world would find the options outlined in the book sufficiently pragmatic and useful to be integrated into their global strategic visions.

I am particularly grateful to professional colleagues who offered useful comments on earlier drafts. I must also thank the anonymous reader for his/her favorable comments on the manuscript, but more important, for the helpful hints on changes that I needed to make in different parts of the book. I must, however, accept responsibility for any residual errors.

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Notes

1. Among the historic figures behind nations and empires are Hammurabi, the Pharaohs, Alexander the Great, Hannibal, Julius Caesar, Charlemagne, the Muslim Caliphs, Genghis Khan, the Ottoman sultans, and the Hapsburgs. See Talbot, Strobe, 2008, *The Great Experiment: The Story of Ancient Empires, Modern States, and the Quest for a Global Nation* (New York: Simon & Schuster). In Africa, the Mali, Shonghai, Benin and Oyo Empires, as well as the Zulu Kingdom and the Hausa States of Kebbi, Zazzau, and Gobir brought disparate groups under unified rule. The African state builders included Sonni Ali Ber, Askya Muhammadu Ture, Oduduwa, the Alafins, the Obas of Bini, the Jajas of Opobo, Chaka the Zulu, and the great Islamic scholar, Othman dan Fodiyo.

Hegemony and Sovereign Equality

The Interest Contiguity Theory in International Relations

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