

# WORLD POLITICS

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## THE CONTRIBUTORS

JOANNE GOWA is Associate Professor of Political Science at the University of Pennsylvania. She is currently working on a project examining the relationship between free trade and military alliances.

ANDREW C. JANOS is Professor of Political Science at the University of California, Berkeley. His recent studies include *The Politics of Backwardness in Hungary, 1825-1945* (1982) and *Politics and Paradigms* (1986). He is currently working on comparisons in the political economy of the European peripheries before and after 1945.

JOEL D. BARKAN is Professor of Political Science at the University of Iowa.

FRANK HOLMQUIST is Professor of Politics at Hampshire College.

AARON L. FRIEDBERG is Assistant Professor of Politics and International Affairs at Princeton University. He is the author of *The Weary Titan: Britain and the Experience of Relative Decline, 1895-1905* (1988), and is currently involved in research on the relationship between economics and strategy.

MICHAEL BRATTON is Associate Professor of Political Science and African Studies at Michigan State University. Among his publications is a book on *The Local Politics of Rural Development: Peasant and Party-State in Zambia* (1980).

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## ABSTRACTS

### RATIONAL HEGEMONS, EXCLUDABLE GOODS, AND SMALL GROUPS: AN EPITAPH FOR HEGEMONIC STABILITY THEORY?

By J. GOWA

In defining international free trade as a public good, "hegemonic stability theory" posited early in the 1970s that its reliable supply depended upon a distribution of international power analogous to that within a privileged group. More recently, however, critics have challenged three assumptions fundamental to hegemonic theory: its premises of free trade, public goods, and privileged groups. They have concluded that hegemony is not necessary for, and indeed may be antithetical to, a stable world economy based on market exchange.

The author argues that the critics overstate their case. The assumptions they attack allow hegemonic theory to represent analytically several critically important barriers to free trade among states. Among these are the existence of strategic interdependence among the actors and the prevalence of informational asymmetries. The most significant flaw in hegemonic theory is its neglect of the essence of the domain to which it applies: the politics of inter-state trade in an anarchic world.

### THE POLITICS OF BACKWARDNESS IN CONTINENTAL EUROPE, 1780-1945

By A. C. JANOS

Between the late eighteenth century and 1945, the economic and political differentiation of the European continent has followed a neatly regressive geographical pattern. The origin of this pattern goes back to the agricultural revolutions of the early modern age, and to the diffusion of agricultural technology along the Northwest-Southeast axis. It was subsequently reproduced by both market and political forces operating within the context of material aspirations, themselves the product of the economic revolutions of the Northwest. The experience suggests a potential model for peripheral societies in the Third World, though the relevance of the historical analogy may be limited by currently unfolding changes in the nature of technology and in the terms of exchange between core and peripheral regions in the contemporary world.

### PEASANT-STATE RELATIONS AND THE SOCIAL BASE OF SELF-HELP IN KENYA

By J. D. BARKAN and F. HOLMQUIST

Peasant-state relations in developing countries are often a function of the nature and extent of stratification in peasant populations. Where there is a rigid class structure, the prospects for cooperation by members of the peasantry are low, and large landowners tend to ally themselves with the state to exploit the rural poor. Where, on the other hand, the nature of rural stratification is ambiguous, "small" and "middle" peasants are able to organize themselves for collective action and to bargain effectively for state aid to their communities. The hypothesis is confirmed using survey data about the nature of peasant participation in the Harambee self-help development movement in rural Kenya. Effective peasant-state bargaining in Kenya has in turn contributed to the legitimacy of the Kenyan political system.

### THE POLITICAL ECONOMY OF AMERICAN STRATEGY

By A. L. FRIEDBERG

Recent discussions whether or not the United States is strategically "overextended" raise two important questions. First, to what extent can the fiscal and industrial difficulties of the last several decades be attributed to the comparatively high military budgets of the post-1945 period? Second, can the United States continue to maintain something resembling its postwar strategic posture without doing itself grievous economic harm? Although the issue remains open, defense spending would appear to bear only a small part of the responsibility for present

U.S. economic problems. As to the future, the question is not so much whether the burden of an extended posture *can* be borne as whether it *should* be borne, and *who*, precisely, should bear it. These are political issues: they are conditioned but not determined by economic factors.

## BEYOND THE STATE:

### CIVIL SOCIETY AND ASSOCIATIONAL LIFE IN AFRICA

By M. BRATTON

The current scholarly preoccupation with the state may obscure more than it reveals for students of politics in sub-Saharan Africa. The weakly formed state in Africa—beset by decline in economic production and political authority—is now retreating from overambitious attempts at social transformation. The time is therefore ripe for societal actors to play an enhanced role in political change. This article reviews the current literature on state-society relations in Africa with particular emphasis on the nature of African associational life and the extent to which it is taking on a politically organized form as an identifiable civil society. The author proposes a theoretical framework and research agenda that takes account of the capacity of either state or societal actors to exercise a range of options to engage or disengage.

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