TRANSGOVERNMENTAL RELATIONS AND
INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS

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"REALIST" analyses of world politics have generally assumed that
states are the only significant actors; that they act as units; and
that their military security objectives dominate their other goals.¹ On
the basis of these assumptions it is easy to conclude that international
organizations—defined as intergovernmental organizations—are merely
instruments of governments, and therefore unimportant in their own
right. Compared with the hopes and dreams of world federalists, the
Realist position reflects reality: international organizations in the con-
temporary world are not powerful independent actors, and relatively
universal organizations such as the United Nations find it extraordi-
narily difficult to reach agreement on significant issues. It is therefore
not surprising that students of world politics have paid relatively slight
attention to these entities, particularly after hopes for a major United
Nations peacekeeping role were dashed in the early 1960's.

The Realist model on which the above conclusions about international
organizations are based is now being called into question. Faced with a
growing complexity of actors and issues, a number of analysts have
begun to pay more attention to transnational relations. In this article
we will contend that if critiques of Realist models of world politics are
taken seriously, they not only call into question state-centric concep-
tions of "the international system," but also throw doubt upon prevail-
ing notions about international organizations. If one relaxes the Realist
assumptions, one can visualize more significant roles for international
organizations in world politics.

In an important recent contribution to the literature on transnational

* We have profited from discussions of the subject with Hayward Alker, Graham
Allison, Robert Dickerman, Samuel Huntington, Alex Inkeles, Peter J. Katzenstein,
Stephen Krasner, John Ruggie, Robert Russell, Harrison Wagner, and other members
of the Transnational Relations Study Group at the Harvard Center for International
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¹ For a general discussion, see Robert O. Keohane and Joseph S. Nye, Jr., eds., Trans-
national Relations and World Politics (Cambridge, Mass. 1972). For documentation
of the point based on a survey of the literature, see John R. Handelman, John A. Vas-
quez, Michael K. O'Leary, and William D. Coplin, "Color it Morgenthau: A Data-Based
Assessment of Quantitative International Relations Research," paper delivered to the
relations, Samuel P. Huntington argues explicitly that international organizations are relatively insignificant in contemporary world politics:

. . . internationalism involves agreement among nation-states.

. . . every international organization at some points finds itself limited by the very principle which gives it being.

The international organization requires accord among nations; the transnational organization requires access to nations. . . . International organizations embody the principle of nationality; transnational organizations try to ignore it.

While national representatives and delegations engage in endless debate at UN conferences and councils, however, the agents of the transnational organizations are busily deployed across the continents, spinning the webs that link the world together.

Internationalism is a dead end.²

Like Huntington, we begin with the proposition that transnational relations are increasingly significant in world politics. But we reach very different conclusions about the roles of international organizations.

Before making that argument systematically in the remainder of this paper, we must briefly deal with the issue of how transnational relations should be defined. Huntington defines "transnational organizations" as organizations sharing three characteristics: they are large bureaucracies; they perform specialized functions; and they do so across international boundaries. He explicitly includes governmental entities, such as the United States Agency for International Development (AID) or the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) and intergovernmental entities such as the World Bank, along with nongovernmental organizations such as multinational enterprises, the Ford Foundation, and the Roman Catholic Church. Although this definition has the virtue of pointing out similarities between governmental and nongovernmental bureaucracies operating across national boundaries, it obscures the differences. Some of Huntington's observations are clearly meant to apply only to nongovernmental organizations. He argues, for instance, that "The operations of transnational organizations . . . usually do not have political motivations in the sense of being designed to affect the balance of power within the local society."³ But this hardly applies to the Agency for International Development or the Central Intelligence Agency, both of which he designates as "transnational." He contends,

³ Ibid., 358.
on the basis of literature about multinational enterprises, that personnel arrangements of transnational organizations move toward dispersed nationality patterns, in which country subdivisions are primarily managed by local personnel; yet no evidence is presented that this is true for AID or the CIA, much less for the Strategic Air Command—another "transnational" organization by Huntington's definition. Furthermore, the trends over time seem to diverge, and when Huntington discusses these trends, he finds himself distinguishing between "U.S. Government-controlled transnational organizations" and private groups.\(^4\)

The anomalies into which Huntington is led convince us that for most purposes it is useful to retain the governmental-nongovernmental distinction, thus facilitating the task of examining both the differences between patterns of governmental and nongovernmental activity and the effects of each on the other. Only if one were to use organization theory in a sustained way to explain behavior of large bureaucracies that operate across international boundaries would it seem wise to adopt Huntington's definition.

The argument leads us also to reconsider some of our own past usage. In this article we will restrict the term "transnational" to nongovernmental actors, and the term "transgovernmental" to refer to sub-units of governments on those occasions when they act relatively autonomously from higher authority in international politics.\(^5\) In other words, "transnational" applies when we relax the assumption that states are the only actors, and "transgovernmental" applies when we relax the assumption that states act as units.

Our choice of definition is not a matter of semantics but is related directly to the argument of this paper. Transnational activity makes societies more sensitive to one another, which may lead governments to increase their efforts to control this nongovernmental behavior. Such efforts, if pursued by more than one government, make governmental policies sensitive to one another: since one government may deliberately or inadvertently thwart the other's purposes, governments must design their own policies with the policies of others in mind. The re-

\(^4\) Ibid., 348-49.

\(^5\) This is a slight modification of our usage in the volume cited above. We used the term "transnational interactions" to refer to "interactions in which one actor was nongovernmental," and the term "transgovernmental relations" as a generic category that included both "transnational and transgovernmental interactions." We have become convinced that this was unnecessarily confusing. For a stimulating critique of our language as well as our ideas, see R. Harrison Wagner, "Dissolving the State: Three Recent Perspectives on International Relations," International Organization, xxviii (Spring 1974).
sult of this may well be attempts at policy coordination, which will increase direct bureaucratic contacts among governmental sub-units, and which may, particularly in a multilateral context, create opportunities for international organizations to play significant roles in world politics.

In the argument that follows we will first elaborate our concept of transgovernmental relations. In succeeding sections we will discuss the role of international organizations in facilitating or promoting various types of transgovernmental relations and the utility of international organizations as points of policy intervention in transnational systems. In our conclusions we will return to the question of the complexity of the connection among transnational relations, transgovernmental relations, and international organizations over time.

I. Transgovernmental Relations

During the last century, governments have become increasingly involved in attempting to regulate the economic and social lives of the societies they govern. As a result, they have become more sensitive to external disturbances that may affect developments within their own societies. For instance, integration of money markets internationally, in the context of governmental responsibility for national economies, has made government policy sensitive both to changes in interest rates by other governments and central banks, and to movements of funds by nongovernmental speculators. These sensitivities are heightened further by the expanding decision domains of transnational organizations such as multinational business firms and banks, reinforced by decreases in the cost of transnational communications.

As the agenda broadens, bureaucracies find that to cope effectively at acceptable cost with many of the problems that arise, they must deal with each other directly rather than indirectly through foreign offices. Communications among governments increase. International conferences and organizations facilitate direct contacts among officials of what were once considered primarily domestic government agencies. In the words of a former White House official, "it is a central fact of foreign relations that business is carried on by the separate departments with their counterpart bureaucracies abroad, through a variety of informal as well as formal connections. (That is especially true in

Karl Kaiser has been a pioneer in developing arguments about what he calls "multi-bureaucratic politics." See in particular his "Transnational Politics: Toward a Theory of Multinational Politics," *International Organization*, xxv (Autumn 1971), and "Transnational Relations as a Threat to the Democratic Process," in Keohane and Nye (fn. 1).
alliance politics. But to a point, it also applies elsewhere.)" There have always been such contacts. What seems to be new is the order of magnitude of transgovernmental relations, as bureaucracies become more complex and communications and travel costs decrease.\(^8\)

We define transgovernmental relations as sets of direct interactions among sub-units of different governments that are not controlled or closely guided by the policies of the cabinets or chief executives of those governments. Thus we take the policies of top leaders as our benchmarks of "official government policy." Lack of control of sub-unit behavior by top leadership is obviously a matter of degree, and in practice by no means free of ambiguity. The policy of the central executive is often unclear, particularly on details, and policy means different things at different organizational levels. "One man's policy is another man's tactics."\(^9\) As one observer has put it, "Central policy is always waffled; actors latch on to the waffled parts and form coalitions to shift policy at their level."\(^10\) Nonetheless, to treat all actors as equal and to ignore the existence of a political hierarchy charged with "course-setting" and maintaining some hierarchy of goals is to misrepresent both constitutional and political reality.\(^11\) It is precisely because this central policy task has become more difficult in the face of greater complexity that both the opportunities and the importance of transgovernmental interactions may be expected to have increased.

It is quite conceivable that executives entrusted with responsibility for central foreign policy, such as presidents and prime ministers, will themselves attempt to collaborate with one another in ways that conflict with the behavior of their respective bureaucracies. Yet we will regard only the relatively autonomous activities of the lower-level bureaucracies, as opposed to those of top leadership, as being transgovernmental. Otherwise, we would find ourselves in the anomalous position of regarding a head-of-state meeting, at which new initiatives that deviate from established policy are taken, as an example of "trans-


\(^10\) M. S. Hochmuth, comments at Transnational Relations Study Group Seminar, Center for International Affairs, Harvard University, February 8, 1972.

governmental politics” when indeed it is almost the paradigm case for the state-centric model whose inadequacies we are criticizing. The point of our terminology is to focus attention on bureaucratic contacts that take place below the apex of the organizational hierarchy—rather than merely to apply a new label to behavior that is easily subsumed by traditional models.

In view of our interest in the opportunities that transgovernmental relations may create for international organizations, we will concentrate in this essay on cooperative behavior among governmental sub-units. It should be recognized, however, that conflict is not excluded from transgovernmental relations any more than from other aspects of world politics. Occasionally, direct contacts among sub-units may themselves be conflictual. A case in point is “close surveillance” of each other’s activities by the American and Soviet navies in the 1960’s, which higher-level officials sought with some difficulty to control. Our emphasis on cooperative direct contacts does not, therefore, exclude the possibility of transgovernmental clashes of interests.

We will distinguish two major types of essentially cooperative transgovernmental behavior. Transgovernmental policy coordination refers to activity designed to facilitate smooth implementation or adjustment of policy, in the absence of detailed higher policy directives. Another process, transgovernmental coalition building, takes place when sub-units build coalitions with like-minded agencies from other governments against elements of their own administrative structures. At that point, the unity of the state as a foreign policy actor breaks down. Although transgovernmental policy coordination and transgovernmental coalition building are analytically distinct processes, they merge into one another at the margin. While bearing in mind that the distinction is in some sense an artificial convenience, we will look at the two processes in turn.

TRANSGOVERNMENTAL POLICY COORDINATION

The most basic and diffuse form of transgovernmental policy coordination is simply informal communication among working-level officials of different bureaucracies. Such communication does not necessarily contradict the conventional conceptualization of states as coherent coalitions vis-à-vis the outside world, although it may have side effects that influence policy. Face-to-face communications often convey more information (intended or unintended) than indirect communications, and this additional information can affect policy expectations and preferences. It is well known that international organizations frequently
provide suitable contexts for such transgovernmental communication. As one official said of INTERPOL, "What's really important here are the meetings on a social level—the official agenda is only for show."

Where patterns of policy coordination are regularized, it becomes misleading to think of governments as closed decision-making units. It has been argued, for example, that in the 1960's Canadian officials in Washington were "often able to inject their views into the decision-making process at various stages, almost as if they were American, and to actually participate, particularly in the economic sector, in the formulation of American policy." In the Skybolt affair of 1962, British complacency about American planning, before cancellation was announced, was reinforced by "a steady stream of reassurances [that] flowed back and forth between the Air Forces. The USAF saw a staunch ally in Her Majesty's Government, and vice versa."

From regularized coordination over a period of time, changes in attitudes may result. When the same officials meet recurrently, they sometimes develop a sense of collegiality, which may be reinforced by their membership in a common profession, such as economics, physics, or meteorology. Individual officials may even define their roles partly in relation to their transnational reference group rather than in purely national terms. Thus, in discussing trade discrimination in the 1950's, Gardner Patterson argued that "an important cost of discrimination was the necessity of reporting on it and defending it periodically in semi-public forums. . . . It was costly not just in terms of time and effort, but perhaps more important, in terms of the embarrassment of having many members of the 'club'—professional colleagues—charge that another member was not living up to some of its international commitments. . . ."

Regularized patterns of policy coordination can therefore create attitudes and relationships that will at least marginally change policy or affect its implementation. This has been evident particularly in relations among close allies or associates, for instance between the United States and Canada or among countries of the British Commonwealth. Even in relations among countries that are politically more distant

from one another, policy coordination between bureaucracies with similar interests may occasionally take place. According to press reports, at any rate, United States and Soviet space officials who were engaged in technical talks on space cooperation in 1971 went considerably further than the National Security Council had authorized at that time. 17

Patterns of regularized policy coordination have a significance that is not limited to the examples we have cited. As such practices become widespread, transgovernmental elite networks are created, linking officials in various governments to one another by ties of common interest, professional orientation, and personal friendship. 18 Even where attitudes are not fundamentally affected and no major deviations from central policy positions occur, the existence of a sense of collegiality may permit the development of flexible bargaining behavior in which concessions need not be required issue by issue or during each period. James Coleman has suggested that the development of "political bank accounts," where a mental reckoning of political credits and debits relaxes the need for all payoffs to be immediate, is dependent on the existence of small-group collegiality. 19 When such behavior—once the prerogative of monarchs and diplomats—spreads throughout governments, the policy structure becomes more complex and decentralized. Some of the clearest examples of such behavior have been reported by students of the political processes of common markets, such as the European Community or the Central American Common Market, where the development of a sense of collegiality enabled officials and ministers in many instances to press policy coordination beyond what would otherwise have been the case. 20

TRANSGOVERNMENTAL COALITION BUILDING

Transgovernmental policy coordination shades over into transgovernmental coalition building when sub-units of different governments (and/or intergovernmental institutions) jointly use resources to influ-

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18 Our thinking on the subject of elite networks was stimulated by our friend and valued colleague, the late Ivan Vallier, who was undertaking systematic research on elite networks in Latin America until his death in January 1974.
ence governmental decisions.\textsuperscript{21} To improve their chances of success, governmental sub-units attempt to bring actors from other governments into their own decision-making processes as allies. When such coalitions are successful, the outcomes are different than they would be if each coalition partner were limited to his own nationality. The politics of such situations are more subtle and the rules less clear than in the classical coalition theorists' cases of electoral coalitions where resources are directly transferable into influence through a set of generally accepted rules, or national bureaucratic coalitions in which players hold formal positions that legitimize their rights to participate.

Transgovernmental coalitions may be employed by sub-units of powerful states such as the United States as means by which to penetrate weaker governments. U.S. aid agencies in the 1950's and 1960's frequently played a large role in writing requests for aid from the U.S. on behalf of potential recipients, and on occasion even served a liaison function among several ministries of a foreign government.\textsuperscript{22} In Turkey, where the Planning Office and the Finance Ministry had equal authority but contradictory views on a U.S. aid project to bring local officials together, a de facto coalition developed between AID officials and Finance Ministry officials.\textsuperscript{23} The Chilean military under Allende was willing to bear possible domestic opprobrium in order to receive American military aid. To some observers, the American strategy appeared to be an attempt to use transgovernmental politics to keep the Chilean Government divided.\textsuperscript{24}

Transgovernmental coalitions, however, can also help agencies of other governments penetrate the U.S. bureaucracy. In 1961, when the U.S. Weather Bureau disagreed with the State Department's position at the United Nations on the control of the World Weather Watch, the Director of the U.S. Weather Bureau telephoned his Canadian counterpart and they discussed the common interests of their respective weather bureaus. The position of the two weather bureaus became the official Canadian position, which led in turn to defeat of the State Department's proposals.\textsuperscript{25} In the late 1960's, a U.S. Defense Department official, worried that delay in returning Okinawa to Japanese control might

\textsuperscript{21} This definition is based on the article by William A. Gamson on “Coalitions,” in the International Encyclopedia of Social Science.

\textsuperscript{22} Theodore Geiger and Roger Hansen, “The Role of Information in Decision Making on Foreign Aid,” in Bauer and Gergen (fn. 9).

\textsuperscript{23} Based on conversations with a participant (1973).

\textsuperscript{24} New York Times, December 9, 1972.

\textsuperscript{25} Edward Miles, “Transnationalism in Space: Inner and Outer,” in Keohane and Nye (fn. 1).
harm United States-Japanese relations, worked out with a Japanese counterpart how to phrase Japanese messages to ensure that they would enter the right channels and trigger the desired response in the U.S. bureaucracy.\textsuperscript{26} In 1968, an Air Force general, to whom the responsibility for negotiating with Spain about military bases had been delegated, conferred secretly with his Spanish counterparts without informing civilian officials of the progress of his negotiations, and agreed to a negotiating paper that proved to be unacceptable to the Department of State. As this last case indicates, transgovernmental coalitions are not always successful: the agreement reached, which would have been favorable to the Spanish Government, was disowned by the United States, and a negative reaction against Spain took place in the Senate.\textsuperscript{27}

It is obviously a necessary condition for explicit transgovernmental coalitions that sub-units of government have broad and intensive contacts with one another. In some sense, a degree of transgovernmental policy coordination is probably a precondition for such explicit transnational coalitions. A second set of necessary conditions has to do with conflict of interest among sub-units and the degree of central control by top executive leaders. For a transgovernmental coalition to take place, a sub-unit of one government must perceive a greater common interest with another government, or sub-units of another government, than with at least one pertinent agency in its own country; and central executive control must be loose enough to permit this perception to be translated into direct contacts with the foreign governments or agencies in question. Figure 1 illustrates four types of political situations based on these two dimensions.

Sub-units in a governmental system of Type I are most likely to seek, or be amenable to, transgovernmental coalitions. High conflict of interest among sub-units of the government suggests that there may be sub-units of other governments with which advantageous coalitions can be made; low executive power indicates that the central officials' ability

\textsuperscript{26} Based on conversations with a participant (1972).

\textsuperscript{27} In the cases of the weather bureau and the Spanish bases, the United States Government was divided while the smaller state apparently had a relatively unified policy. In terms of coherence, these relationships were asymmetrical in favor of Canada and Spain, respectively. Spain, Nationalist China, Israel, and Canada are among the countries that have taken advantage of the size and diversity of the United States Government to create asymmetries of coherence in their favor to counter asymmetries of power in favor of the United States. See Robert O. Keohane, "The Big Influence of Small Allies," \textit{Foreign Policy}, 11 (Spring 1971). For Canadian cases, see Roger Swanson, "The United States Canadian Constellation I: Washington, D. C.," \textit{International Journal}, xxvii (Spring 1972), 185-218; Holsti (fn. 18); and J. S. Nye, "Transnational Relations and Interstate Conflict: An Empirical Analysis," \textit{International Organization}, xxviii (Autumn 1974).
to deter such coalitions is relatively small. In the other three types, by contrast, the conventional assumption of unitary actors is more likely to be valid for external affairs, although for different reasons. In Type 2, conflict is contained by a strong executive; sub-units may perceive potentially advantageous transgovernmental coalitions, but they do not dare attempt to consummate them directly. In Type 3, low conflict of interest among domestic governmental sub-units ensures that the option of national coalition generally seems more attractive than the transgovernmental alternative, even in the absence of strong central control. Type 4, of course, exemplifies the traditional situation: national coalition reinforced by effective hierarchy.

Relatively frequent contacts among governmental sub-units, looseness of governmental hierarchies (low executive control), and relatively high conflict of interest within governments are all necessary conditions for the development of explicit transgovernmental coalitions. But they are not in themselves sufficient. In the first place, for coalitions to be feasible, actors with common interests must be able to combine their resources effectively. That means that political resources (such as funds, prestige, information, and consent—where required, for instance, by the rules of an international organization) of actors outside a government must be valuable to at least some actors within it. This requires a political context that is relatively open and free of xenophobia, since in a xenophobic society foreign resources are heavily devalued, or regarded negatively, by virtue of their origin. Even in democratic societies, the borderline between legitimate transgovernmental behavior and treason may be unclear.
The need for resources that can be aggregated suggests that transgovernmental behavior may be particularly important in issue areas in which functionally defined international organizations operate. The procedures of the organization itself, for reaching agreement among its members, insure that the resources of one actor—at least its votes—may be useful to another; insofar as the organization has a specialized, functional orientation, the activities of national representatives may not be closely supervised by top leaders or their agents. More generally, the greater the natural sensitivity of governmental policies and the wider the acceptance of joint decision making on issues that cross national lines, the greater the legitimacy of transgovernmental bargaining is likely to be. An international organization, by symbolizing governments’ beliefs in the need for joint decision making, tends to strengthen the legitimacy of this activity.

II. INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS AND POTENTIAL COALITIONS

Recurrent international conferences and other activities of international organizations help to increase transgovernmental contacts and thus create opportunities for the development of transgovernmental coalitions. The number of intergovernmental organizations more than tripled between 1945 and 1965. Nongovernmental organizations have grown even more rapidly.\(^{28}\) In Europe, the Commission of the European Communities has played a major role in the growth of such contacts, with the result that “there is a steady flow of national economic and administrative elites to the seat of Community decision-making.”\(^{29}\) These elites are drawn from many sectors of national bureaucracies, by no means entirely from foreign offices. The pattern is not confined to Europe: In 1962, of some 2,786 people who represented the United States at international conferences, more came from other departments of the government than from the State Department.\(^{30}\)

Governments must organize themselves to cope with the fact that the flow of business, including such conferences, is often transacted under the auspices of international organizations. The organizations’ definitions of which issues cluster together and which should be considered separately may help to determine the nature of interdepartmental committees and other arrangements within governments. In


\(^{29}\) Lindberg and Scheingold (fn. 20), 80.

\(^{30}\) Arnold Beichman, The “Other” State Department (New York 1967), 92.
the long run, therefore, international organizations will affect how government officials define "issue areas." The existence of the International Monetary Fund and the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade, for example, helps to focus governmental activity in the monetary and trade fields, in contrast to the area of private direct investment, in which no comparable international organization exists.

The fact that international organizations bring officials together should alert us to their effect in activating potential coalitions in world politics. Many sub-units of governments, which do not as a matter of course come into contact with each other, may have common or complementary interests. Indeed, we may speak of some potential coalitions as de facto "tacit coalitions" if the independent actions of one member seem to serve the interests of others and vice versa. One of the important but seldom-noted roles of international organizations in world politics is to provide the arena for sub-units of governments to turn potential or tacit coalitions into explicit coalitions characterized by direct communication among the partners. In this particular bit of political alchemy, the organization provides physical proximity, an agenda of issues on which interaction is to take place, and an aura of legitimacy. Informal discussions occur naturally in meetings of international organizations, and it is difficult, given the milieu, for other sub-units of one's own government to object to these contacts.

It is intriguing to ask specifically why some potential coalitions become active while others remain merely potential. It is easy to see why the parallel interests of the American and Soviet armed forces (in large military budgets) are not reflected in transgovernmental coalitions between military officers in the superpowers; but it may be more difficult to determine whether the common interests of central bankers in a stable currency system have been implemented as fully by transgovernmental contacts as they might have been. To take another example, the natural allies of the American farmer—and therefore of the Department of Agriculture—in seeking access to European markets are the European urban dwellers and European finance- and consumer-oriented ministers, rather than the European farmers and agriculture ministers. However, this kind of potential coalition between agriculture officials in the United States and non-agriculture officials in Europe is difficult to organize, since regular contacts have not been established. The contrast between the difficulty involved here and the close ties existing among European agriculture ministries is instructive. Where analogous agencies with close patterns of working relationships have common interests and participate in the same international or-
ganizations, it is likely to be much easier to create coalitions on the basis of those common interests than where the potential coalitions include a variety of actors that are not used to working closely with one another.

Even without an active secretariat, therefore, international organizations are of considerable relevance in many issue areas of world politics because they help to transform potential or tacit coalitions into explicit ones. When issues are linked or dealt with in institutional arenas with broad mandates, heterogeneous coalitions can be formed. Narrow institutional mandates discriminate against such coalitions. Thus, by defining the issues to be considered together, and by excluding others, international organizations may significantly affect political processes and outcomes in world politics, quite apart from active lobbying by their secretariats.

The second important role for international organizations, however, is the active one. Most intergovernmental organizations have secretariats, and like all bureaucracies they have their own interests and goals that are defined through an interplay of staff and clientele. International secretariats can be viewed both as catalysts and as potential members of coalitions; their distinctive resources tend to be information and an aura of international legitimacy. As Robert Cox has put it, "the executive head needs to fortify his position by alliance with domestic pressure groups. He must not limit himself to 'foreign' politics but know how to make domestic politics work in favor of his policies."  

To the extent that the conditions enumerated in Part I of this article permit sub-units of governments to engage in transgovernmental coalitions, we would expect international secretariats or components of secretariats to form explicit or implicit coalitions with sub-units of governments as well as with nongovernmental organizations having similar interests.

Examples of alliances between parts of secretariats and governments are not hard to find. Many organizations have divisions that are regarded as fiefdoms of particular governments.  

In a number of cases, lower-level officials of a secretariat have lobbied with governments in efforts to thwart the declared policy of their secretaries-general.  


83 James Magee discusses a situation in which FAO bureaucrats conspired with African governments to thwart the director's decision to relocate two offices. "ECA and
representatives of UN specialized agencies in developing countries often strengthen old-line ministries against their rivals in central planning offices.\textsuperscript{34} Chilean conservatives have used IMF missions to bolster their political positions.\textsuperscript{35} With reference to the World Health Organization (WHO), Harold Jacobson argues that "many government representatives to WHO almost can be viewed as the director-general's agents or lobbyists within country sub-systems."\textsuperscript{36} In some cases, international organizations initiate the formation of transgovernmental coalitions; in others, they or their own sub-units are recruited to the coalitions by sub-units of governments.

It must be recognized, however, that this activist, coalition-building role of international organizations is usually closely circumscribed. By no means is it a sure recipe for success. Yet the alternatives of passivity or of frontally challenging traditional notions of national sovereignty are usually less attractive. Secretariat officials often find the only feasible alternative to be to help governments, or sectors of governments, to perceive problems differently and to use their own resources in innovative ways. For example, as Ruggie points out, the World Weather Watch is not a supra-national operation but a set of national activities that the World Meteorological Organization (perceived as an ally by most weather bureaus) helps to coordinate, and the distribution of whose results it encourages.\textsuperscript{37} Similarly, Maurice Strong has defined the role of the UN Environmental Office as one of stimulating the creation of new environmental units in member states, serving as an ally providing information and prestige for them, and thus encouraging a redefinition of "national interests."\textsuperscript{38}

Coalition building shades down into transgovernmental policy coordination in this example, as is frequently the case. On a long-term and somewhat diffuse basis, the communications that take place as a

\textsuperscript{34} See Leon Gordenker, "Multilateral Aid and Influence on Government Policies," in Robert W. Cox, ed., International Organization: World Politics (London 1969). A related example is provided by the Jackson Report, which indicated that its investigations "revealed example after example where Departmental Ministers have advocated policies in the governing bodies of the particular agency which concerned them (e.g., a Minister of Agriculture in FAO, or a Minister of Education in UNESCO) which were in direct conflict with his government's policies toward the UN system as a whole." United Nations, A Study of the Capacity of the United Nations Development System, Vol. I (Geneva 1969), v.

\textsuperscript{35} See Albert Hirschman, Journeys Toward Progress (New York 1965), 291 ff.

\textsuperscript{36} Harold K. Jacobson, "WHO: Medicine, Regionalism, and Managed Politics," in Cox and Jacobson (fn. 32), 214.


\textsuperscript{38} Based on conversations with Strong during 1972.
result of policy coordination and conferences may be as important as the coalitions that form on particular issues. As we have seen earlier, international organizations facilitate face-to-face meetings among officials in "domestic" agencies of different governments who would have little to do with each other in traditional interstate politics. Strategically-minded secretariats of international organizations could very well plan meetings with a view toward this transgovernmental communications function. Recurrent interactions can change officials' perceptions of their activities and interests. As Bauer, Pool, and Dexter have pointed out in their discussion of the United States politics of foreign trade, concentrating only on pressures of various interests for decisions leads to an overly mechanistic view of a continuous process and neglects the important role of communications in slowly changing perceptions of "self-interest."  

CONDITIONS FOR THE INVOLVEMENT OF INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS

To the extent that transgovernmental relations are common in a given issue area, under what conditions should we expect international organizations, in the sense of intergovernmental organizations, to be involved in them? One set of cases is obvious: where the international organization itself has created the network of elites. Thus, both the International Labor Organization (ILO) and the World Health Organization (WHO), as described by Cox and Jacobson, are characterized by extensive "participant subsystems" that link national trade unions, employers, and government officials to the ILO secretariat, and health-care professionals to WHO's bureaucracy.

More generally, however, we would expect international organizations to become involved in transgovernmental politics on issues requiring some central point or agency for coordination. This implies that international organizations are likely to be most extensively involved on complex, multilateral issues in which major actors perceive a need for information and for communication with other actors, in addition to the traditional functions, as listed by Skolnikoff, of "1) provision of services, 2) norm creation and allocation, 3) rule observance and settlement of disputes, and 4) operation." Insofar as patterns

of politics follow the transgovernmental mode, increasing the number of actors will tend to create greater demands for communication with other actors (often of different types), as well as for information about both technical and political conditions. International secretariats staffed with knowledgeable individuals, even without traditional sources of power, have the opportunity to place themselves at the center of crucial communications networks, and thereby acquire influence as brokers, facilitators, and suggestors of new approaches. They will continue to be dependent on governments for funds and legal powers; but the relevant agencies of governments may be dependent on them for information and for the policy coordination, by a legitimate system-wide actor, which is required to achieve their own objectives.

III. INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS AND INTERVENTION IN TRANSNATIONAL SYSTEMS

Thus far we have discussed two ways in which international organizations are relevant in world politics—as arenas and as members of transgovernmental coalitions. They may also be important as points of potential governmental intervention in predominantly nongovernmental transactional systems.

Analysts of world politics have begun to talk less about the international system, and to realize that there are significant variations among systems in different issue areas.\(^{42}\) There are differences in degree of interdependence of units, in hierarchy among units, and in clarity of the demarcation of the systems' boundaries.\(^{48}\) There are also differences in degree of governmental participation. In many issue systems, nongovernmental actors account for a major portion of activities that cross national boundaries. To the extent that this is the case, we can refer to the issue system as a transnational one. The more transnational a system, the more likely it is that nongovernmental actors constitute the basic initiating and compelling forces in it. That does not imply that governments are absent from these systems. On the contrary, they may be very important actors. But their actions will be largely focused on regulation and control of transnational activities.

Governments frequently attempt to use international organizations


\(^{48}\) For a discussion of the conditions of existence for a system, see the article by Anatol Rapoport on "Systems," in the International Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences, p. 452.
to achieve this regulation. Secretariats of international organizations may themselves perceive problems in the operation of these systems, as well as opportunities for their organizations to act effectively. The same is true of nongovernmental actors or sub-units of governments that may have interests at stake. Thus, the control of important transnational systems is and will remain a significant political focus for the activity of international organizations.

Analysis of this struggle for control, and the implications it has for international organizations, may be facilitated by thinking of transnational systems as having five key points of policy intervention insofar as any two states are concerned, with correspondingly more as additional states are included:

1. internal measures in country $A$;
2. border measures by country $A$;
3. international or transnational organizational measures;
4. border measures by country $B$;
5. internal measures in country $B$.

As a simple example, consider the following hypothetical incident in a transnational system based on a free market for skilled labor. Filipino doctors leave their native country to work in American hospitals for much higher salaries, with the consequence that a Filipino peasant dies from a simple disease because his village has no doctor, while there is a relative abundance of Filipino doctors in some American hospitals.

Figure 2 illustrates the five points at which policy can affect this transnational system: two (1 and 5) are generally considered purely "domestic"; two (2 and 4) are "border controls" where the interdependence of states is recognized but jurisdiction lies with only one state; and one (3) is an operating intergovernmental bureaucracy. Similar diagrams could be drawn for other transnational systems, including those involving monetary relations, trade, environmental pollution, and international investment. In all these cases, movements of people, funds, goods, or pollutants across national boundaries can be affected at any of these five points of intervention, insofar as two countries are concerned. As the two examples labeled "counter" in Figure 2 indicate, state policies may tend to thwart as well as to complement one another.\textsuperscript{44}

In principle, domestic measures, border controls, and international organizations can complement, countervail, or substitute for each other.

\textsuperscript{44} Where a larger number of countries is involved, problems of effectiveness become much more complex, and interdependence is likely to be more intricate.
**Figure 2**

A Transnational System of "Brain Drain"

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>POINTS OF POLICY INTERVENTION, WITH POSSIBLE STRATEGIES TO REDUCE &quot;BRAIN DRAIN&quot; OR COUNTER-STRATEGIES TENDING TO FACILITATE IT:</th>
<th>VILLAGE IN PHILIPPINES</th>
<th>MANILA (PORT OF EXIT)</th>
<th>BOSTON (PORT OF ENTRY)</th>
<th>U.S. HOSPITAL STAFFED BY FOREIGNERS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Phil. Internal</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Phil. Border</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>I.O.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(persuade doctors to stay through financial or other incentives)</td>
<td>(deny exit visas or impose exit levies)</td>
<td>(WHO sends doctors to Philippines)</td>
<td>(restrict entry visas)</td>
<td>(discriminate against foreign doctors)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(counter: encourage entry of skilled personnel)</td>
<td>(counter: recruit foreign doctors)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

From a system-wide point of view, therefore, the policy problem in the abstract is merely one of finding the most efficient point or combination of points of intervention. For the monetary system, an economist may ask which combination of fiscal and monetary policy changes, exchange controls and/or trade barriers, and changes in IMF or GATT rules will produce the desired equilibrium. In practice, however, different groups generally have different interests and different degrees of influence at various points of policy intervention. Although there may be more or less common interest in system management, there are also likely to be conflicts. The holders of certain sets of interests may prefer that only certain potential points of policy intervention be used, and only in particular ways. Others may be opposed to all controls on transnational systems from which they benefit. Thus the choice of points of intervention is itself an important policy decision that imposes constraints on subsequent action. Insofar as control over an international organization confers influence over a transnational system, or a means to discourage intervention at some other policy point in the system, the organization can be an important stake in political conflict.

**ACTORS’ STRATEGIES AND THE USES OF INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS**

If transnational relations are important in a set of issues, an explanation of outcomes made simply in terms of “sovereignty” and “national
interests” will be insufficient. There is also, however, a distributional question. Some actors may believe that they are adversely affected by transnational activities and will seek strategies to cope with these perceived problems.

The most obvious response by disadvantaged groups is to use the weapons of sovereignty against the transnational adversary. Insofar as national regulation can be effective, groups with national political strength can redress the balance. In the field of international trade, tariff and non-tariff barriers are familiar strategies. To curb direct investment, nationally oriented groups may resort to expropriation, strict regulation, or bans on the flow of capital or technology. For example, the AFL-CIO in the United States supported the restrictive Burke-Hartke bill as a means of legislating relief from problems of “runaway plants” and the “export of jobs.”

The chief difficulty with national solutions in the context of interdependence is that they may not only be ineffective, but may lead to policy conflicts among states, as governments attempt to counter the adverse effects of other governments’ actions. This is the familiar “beggar-thy-neighbor” problem, applicable to a wide variety of issues in which interdependence is high. National actions to reduce the adverse effects of societal interdependence may have the paradoxical effect of increasing policy interdependence: that is, such measures may increase the extent to which governments depend on the actions of other governments for the achievement of their own goals.

In such a situation of policy interdependence, sub-units of governments are likely to resort to transgovernmental policy coordination or transgovernmental coalition building, as discussed above, making use of existing international organizations to facilitate these relationships. Yet in the context of intense transnational activity by nongovernmental actors, this may lead not merely to transgovernmental coalitions but to mixed coalitions including nongovernmental as well as governmental agents. According to one description of a preparatory session for the Conference on the Law of the Sea, for instance, officials of the United States Department of the Interior and representatives of certain multinational enterprises (both of which favored a definition of a wide continental shelf) lobbied with representatives of foreign governments against the declared U.S. policy (preferred by the Departments of State and Defense) of a narrow shelf.45

Such a strategy is inappropriate for actors whose political resources

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45 This situation was described to us by two government officials. See also Ann Holling, “Seabeds make Strange Politics,” Foreign Policy, ix (Winter 1972-73).
are predominantly domestic. Having perceived that national self-encapsulation is a futile strategy, or having tried such a strategy unsuccessfully, actors may seek to politicize (i.e., increase the controversy over) an issue. By increasing controversy, they would hope to raise the level in the government at which the issue is considered—in order to reduce the scope for transgovernmental and transnational political strategies. Central political officials—responsible directly to the public in one way or another—would then negotiate internationally in the interests of nationally based groups. This could be called a national-assertion strategy (represented by the Nixon-Connally policies of 1971), as distinguished from a national protection strategy (illustrated by the Burke-Hartke bill). Thus, as Robert Russell has shown, transgovernmental coalitions among central bankers and working-level officials were increasingly constrained even before the events of 1971, as monetary issues became more controversial.46 Such a strategy may well lead to the decline of international organizations which were established on different premises. In some cases, however, issues may be politicized partly by using international organizations to bring them to the attention of higher-level officials. The point is illustrated by the examples of UNCTAD in the trade field, and by UN investigations into operations of multinational firms.

Issues are unlikely, in general, to remain indefinitely at the top level of governmental attention. Politicization may facilitate the resolution of issues, or at least the establishment of new structures and new assumptions within which particular questions can be settled at lower levels of the governmental hierarchy. International organizations may also be important at this “depoliticization” stage, in once again facilitating transgovernmental coalitions. But the important point here is that if substantial restructuring has taken place, the coalitions that form will be different than they were before. Potential coalitions that could not be actualized in earlier periods may become possible now, and different groups may benefit. Thus, an international monetary organization set up to monitor floating exchange rates would look quite different from the IMF of the 1960's which was premised on fixed but adjustable rates. An international organization established to keep non-tariff barriers within stated limits might give more leeway to coalitions of protectionist groups than GATT, with its prohibition on quantitative restrictions.

It is therefore too simple to contend, as is often done, that the basic

strategic choice is between national encapsulation and internationalism. Internationalism has many dimensions, with very different implications for group interests as well as for normative values. International strategies by interested groups, as we have indicated, may take any of three forms: (1) exploitation of transgovernmental or mixed transnational-transgovernmental coalitions within an established framework of policy, and through established international organizations; (2) politicization of issues to remove them from transgovernmental bargaining, reemphasizing the role of responsible top officials of governments; and (3) restructuring of issues, as a result of a period of politicization, so that new transgovernmental and mixed coalitions can become effective, perhaps under the aegis of new or substantially altered international organizations. The second and third strategies, in particular, are not mutually exclusive but may reflect different phases in a cycle. When internationalization as a strategy for dealing with transnational issues is considered, distinctions such as these should be made.

IV. Conclusions

It should be clear from the examples we have chosen that we do not regard the involvement of international organizations in transnational and transgovernmental coalitions as necessarily contributing to global welfare or equity. Like other political institutions, international organizations reflect the interests as well as the attitudes of actors that are powerful in them. Opportunities for impact by international organizations by no means assure their autonomy or their dedication to the commonweal. Increased opportunities for certain international organizations may in some cases lead to the fragmentation of an international effort, which Sir Robert Jackson criticized, or to the pursuit of the interests of well-placed groups at the expense of the interests of less fortunate but larger sectors of the population. The effects of transgovernmental politics on the efficacy of democratic control may be very serious. In some circumstances, an expansion of the influence of international organizations in ways such as we have suggested here may be undesirable. There is no magic wand that makes it unnecessary to undertake detailed, case-by-case normative analyses of the actions of international organizations.

With respect to empirical projections, our prognosis differs from that of the international functionalists and others who see transnational systems and societal interdependence as making national governments

47 See Kaiser in Keohane and Nye (fn. 6).
obsolete. While there are some valid elements in the functionalist scenario, we suggest the following alternative view as somewhat more plausible.

The development of transgovernmental relations, as well as the involvement of international organizations in them, is generally stimulated by the activities of elites trying to cope with increased societal interdependence. Dynamic nongovernmental forces frequently provoke increased governmental efforts at control. However, as a side effect of increasing interchange among elites, transgovernmental politics and the activities of international organizations are likely to increase policy interdependence. That is, the policies of relevant actors—central foreign policy organs of governments, other governmental agencies, transnational actors, or secretariats of international organizations—will increasingly depend for their success on actions and reactions of other actors. Succumbing to one form of interdependence may be the price one pays for avoiding another. Efforts to cope with policy interdependence will in turn further broaden the scope of interstate agendas, involve more bureaucracies (national, international, and transnational), and thus provide more occasions for transgovernmental relations. For top leaders this leads to the further problem of losing effective control of their own sprawling and transgovernmentally active bureaucracies. A continuing struggle between groups favoring transgovernmental policy patterns and those supporting a return to strategies of national assertion or national protection is likely to ensue. Figure 3 provides a highly simplified sketch of some of the causal relations that may contribute to political struggles of this type.

This is not an argument for the superiority of international or transnational as opposed to national solutions, nor does it suggest a general view of the merits of international institutions. We have simply sought to establish the political significance of international organizations in certain issue areas—as arenas and members of transgovernmental coalitions, and as potential points of intervention in transnational systems. International organizations are not necessarily weak “because they are inherently the arenas for national actors,” or because they require “accord among nations.” Which bureaucracies represent the nation? Who defines the “national interest,” and how does it change over time? Is there transgovernmental coordination? Are there mixed coalitions

48 See, for example, Angell (fn. 28); and David Mitrany, *A Working Peace System* (Chicago 1966).
49 Huntington (fn. 2), 338.
of transgovernmental, transnational, and international actors? Viewed from the perspective of these questions, it is not always—or only—the transnational organizations that are “busily deployed across the continents spinning the webs that link the world together.”

A major policy task for those who create and manage international institutions is to ask themselves whether there are areas of activity in which international organizations could make an impact by aligning their activities with sub-units of governments. As Ruggie points out, traditional images of interstate politics and international organizations as entities “above” states unduly constrain institutional imagination. Understanding the transnational and transgovernmental politics of an issue as well as the technical, economic, or military nature of the problem may permit a wider choice of organizational strategy and structure, and in some cases more constructive outcomes.

International organizations are rarely optimally efficient, and they are frequently quite unsatisfactory. Some improvements are possible, but many government officials will always find them hard to live with. For the foreseeable future, however, it seems that they will be impossible to live without. And if that is true, their political role and impact on various issues in world politics deserve both more and a new type of attention.

50 Ibid., 339.