EUI WORKING PAPERS IN POLITICAL AND SOCIAL SCIENCES

EUI Working Paper SPS No. 94/10

Class, State, and Global Structure: The Transformation of International Maritime Relations

ALAN CAFRUNY

European University Institute, Florence

EUROPEAN UNIVERSITY INSTITUTE, FLORENCE

DEPARTMENT OF POLITICAL AND SOCIAL SCIENCES

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BADIA FIESOLANA, SAN DOMENICO (FI)

Printed in Italy in July 1994
European University Institute
Badia Fiesolana
I – 50016 San Domenico (FI)
Italy

INTRODUCTION

Scholars of International Relations have generally presumed the existence of separate and analytically distinct "levels of analysis" (Waltz, 1959, 1979; Singer, 1961; Keohane, 1980; Krasner, 1976, 1991). Various theoretical approaches in the discipline can be defined in terms of assumptions about the influence of factors operating at the domestic and/or international level on state behavior. For realists and neo-realists, the state is considered to act more or less independently of domestic social forces, and explanation is sought primarily at the international systemic level, in terms of the imperatives of a given configuration of international power relations.

Other theoretical traditions have, of course, rejected the assumption of the causal primacy of international structure, and the corollary assumption of the analytical separation of state and society. Recently, attempts have been made to develop more comprehensive empirical analyses by including domestic and international variables (eg. Katzenstein, 1978, 1985; Gourevitch, 1986; Doyle,

1983; Haggard and Simmons, 1987; Moravscik, 1991, 1993), and to redefine the terms of the debate over the level of analysis (Yurdusev, 1993), or "agent and structure" (Wendt, 1991; Hollis and Smith, 1991). Nevertheless, for the most part "domestic structures" have been granted a status as second-order or supplementary explanatory variable, something to be "added on" to systemic considerations. This has been particularly evident in theory and research on cycles of free trade and mercantilism.

This article seeks to develop a more synthetic account of the relationship between class formation, state policy, and the global political economy by analyzing the relationship between the dominant or hegemonic power and the evolution of international shipping. The political economy of shipping is highly complex, involving sometimes arcane and idiosyncratic commercial and legal arrangements. Yet, despite its complexity, international maritime relations have displayed, in crystallized form, the more basic political, economic, and legal principles of a given era. The history of shipping, broadly speaking, is one of cyclical movement of openness (freedom of the seas) and closure (mercantilism), and these cycles have developed in tandem with more general cycles of free trade and protectionism. Most attempts to understand these general cyclical trends have focused on either the international political structure (eg. Krasner, 1976; Gilpin, 1981; Kindleberger, 1987) or the logic of world capitalism (eg. Wallerstein, 1980; Bousquet, 1978; Chase-Dunn, 1980), with much less attention

paid to the national arena. A few scholars have, on the contrary, sought to explain these trends primarily in terms of domestic politics (eg. O'Brien and Pigman, 1992). What is missing in these studies, I argue, is an account of the mutual interaction of class, state, and international system.

Class, State, and Structure in International Relations

The preference for systemic theory in International Relations undoubtedly owes much to influence of positivism on empirical research, especially in the United States (Hoffmann, 1977; Smith, 1992; Guzzini, 1992, 1993). The debate between advocates of a systemic approach and those who seek more inclusive accounts of domestic and international factors thus turns not simply on empirical claims, but also on methodological assumptions and, more generally, conceptions of the nature of social science itself. The epistemological assumptions of positivism have encouraged realist and neo-realists to seek to "uncover" invariate laws relating to systemic properties that transcend particular historical periods, cultures, and levels of economic development. Appealing to the canon of "parsimony," they have incorporated economic models of rational choice to buttress their claims for the superiority of systemic explanations (Waltz, 1979; Keohane, 1980; Snidal, 1985; Grieco, 1988; Krasner, 1991).

Yet a growing number of critics have questioned the underlying epistemological assumptions of realist and neo-realist theory (Smith, 1988;

Lapid, 1989). An exclusive or primary focus on the international system appeals to the desire for methodological rigor and parsimony. But it paints a stylized, one-dimensional, and ultimately unconvincing portrait of continuity across time and space. It offers no means of identifying dynamic social, technological, and economic factors which produce historical change (Ruggie, 1989, 1993). Central to much recent criticism of realism and neo-realism is a rejection of the traditional distinction between levels of analysis--and the priority given to the international system--not only because this type of methodological approach ignores variables that are decisive to historical change, but also because it leads to an idealized and static account of the state itself (Wendt, 1987, 1991; Palan, 1992).

One formidable challenge to the traditional consensus over levels of analysis emerged from outside the discipline, in world systems and dependency theory. Drawing from the fields of sociology and history, scholars have challenged the assertion that states can be considered as autonomous entities or that there is a purely power-political logic of international relations (eg.Wallerstein, 1980; Amin et al, 1982; Chase-Dunn, 1989). The imperatives of global capital accumulation shape the basic political contours of the international system, and determine the possibilities for social and economic development of the societies within it.

One of the distinctive accomplishments of world systems theory is its

emphasis on the evolutionary, dynamic character of the global political economy. Yet, world systems theory has neglected the importance of national politics, including class conflicts and domestic political and economic struggles that often decisively influence national and international outcomes. (Schwartzman, 1989; Skocpol, 1977). The emphasis on a more or less self-regulating global economy has meant that the state remains more or less untheorized and derivative, although now the logic is one of adaptation to the structure of the world market, rather than that of global power. Indeed, the problems with world systems theory have contributed to something of a renaissance of the concept of state autonomy (Skocpol, 1977; Evans, Rueschmeyer, and Skocpol, 1985; Nordlinger, 1981; Ikenberry et al., 1989; Krasner, 1978, 1992).

More recently, a number of scholars have offered theoretical and empirical accounts of state-society linkages that identify, in Robert Cox's words, "the continuities between social forces, the changing nature of the state, and global relations" (Cox, 1986:206). An emphasis on continuities, rather than discrete levels of analysis, might retain the important insights of world systems theorists while avoiding the twin pitfalls of economism and functionalism. Ronen Palan (1992) has cited the emergence of a "second structuralist" trend in scholarship which focuses on the mutual interaction of processes operating at the level of the nation-state and that of the international system. A common feature of

"second structuralist" scholarship is the rejection of the Weberian conception of the state as a directly given, atomized actor operating within a framework of anarchy in favor of an approach which considers the state to be constituted by a combination of domestic and international social forces.

Like world system theorists, scholars who have favored this approach have identified structural relationships at the level of the world political economy that, within certain limits, shape the choices and constraints of any given state (Strange, 1988). However, they also emphasize the causal role which societies and states together play in the formation and transformation of these structures. The state is thus conceptualized not as a "transmission belt" through which global forces--either political or economic--generate domestic changes, but rather as a "framework of social and political activities" (Palan, 1992:23) influenced by, but also capable of acting upon, global structures.

The "second structuralists" thus reject a strategy for research in which the state is viewed passively as an object more or less spontaneously adapting to the "logic of the world system." They do not attempt to develop international explanations for either global phenomena or national developments. Rather, they seek (Palan,1992:27)

> to explain the dynamics of international relationships in the context of groups and social classes residing in different societies ... identifying concrete relationships between various groups and individuals who reside in separate societies....They are primarily interested in the various routes by which international relationships

are related to the state and to the world economy.

The concept of conjuncture has been basic to this type of analysis. The conjuncture (Palan,1992:28):

> is a point in history wherein series of distinct processes interact to produce a given outcome... the conjuncture therefore suggests that any given historical event must ultimately be explained in its given historical context. There is a certain distance between theory and reality which can never be bridged.

Attention has focused on the rise of industrial capitalism in mid-19th century England and the corresponding development of global free trade (eg. Cox, 1987); the rise of American hegemony in the mid-20th century within a new Fordist or "corporate liberal" order (eg. Ferguson, 1984; van der Pijl, 1984; Rupert, 1990) and the crisis of "regulation" or "social structure of accumulation" that occurred in the early 1970s (eg. Aglietta, 1978; Lipietz, 1987; van der Pijl, 1989; Gill, 1990, 1993; Overbeek, 1993; Bowles, Gordon, and Weiskopf, 1990). Common to all of these studies has been the analysis of global transformation in terms of the mutual interaction of concrete political and economic struggles among classes and class fractions within the hegemonic power and the opportunities and constraints of a given international system. This type of analysis thus shares with world systems theory an emphasis on material factors, but it pays closer attention to domestic social and economic conflicts, and to the political coalitions which--acting through the state--respond actively to shape global structures of power and wealth.

Explaining International Maritime Evolution

International maritime history provides an especially rich and fertile area for an analysis of the "mutual causation" of domestic social forces and international factors. The specific commercial and political relations of international shipping have been shaped during three basic historical conjunctures. In the first half of the 17th century, the Netherlands established a free trading order in which the Dutch fleet served as the linchpin of its short-lived hegemony. England's challenge to Dutch hegemony in the mid-17th century gave rise to the Navigation Acts, which provided the legal basis for mercantilism. The repeal of these acts in the mid-19th century signified, alongside the abolition of the Corn Laws, the rise of British free-trade imperialism. The breakdown of the free trading system culminated in World War I; between World War I and World War II, international shipping was reorganized on a mercantilist basis. In the post-World War II era, however, the United States took the lead in re-establishing a modified system of free trade in shipping.

A satisfactory analysis of each of these conjunctures, it will be argued, requires an account of the mutual interaction of forces operating at the national and international levels. Cycles of free trade and protectionism have given rise to various specific commercial practices. These practices have fostered cooperation and global economic development, while simultaneously generating contradictions and conflicts among and within states. But there is no "global"

or "international systemic" logic that operates independently of national developments. A comprehensive explanation for events in each conjuncture--as well as the basic evolution of international shipping-- requires an account which relates both the origins and the outcome of class and factional struggles at the national level to the opportunities and constraints inherent in a given international environment.

I. THE NAVIGATION ACTS: BRITAIN'S CHALLENGE TO DUTCH HEGEMONY

Following its successful struggle for national liberation from Spain, the Netherlands enjoyed a short-lived international ascendancy until it was humbled by a series of wars with England in the mid-17th century. The half-century of Dutch supremacy witnessed the establishment of a new and qualitatively different type of international system, based not only on military prowess, but also on industrial strength and commercial superiority, especially in banking, shipping, and shipbuilding (Boxer, 1965; Wallerstein, 1980; Modelski, 1978; Bousquet, 1978; Israel, 1989). The Anglo-Dutch wars were fought in order to settle questions of merchant shipping, and their outcome led to a fundamental reorganization of the international political economy.

Dutch power was based on command of the seas. The States-General established the Dutch East Indies Company and granted it a monopoly of Far Eastern trade. A smaller Dutch West Indies Company was also formed to trade in the Caribbean. These trading companies, together with the massive Dutch fishing fleet, constituted the backbone of Dutch world power. In 1610 the Dutch merchant fleet totaled almost one million tons, a figure equivalent to almost one-quarter of the tonnage of the present-day Dutch merchant fleet and exceeding the size of the contemporary merchant fleets of all but a handful of less developed countries. (Gold, 1981:42; Kennedy, 1976: 51) The Dutch fleet dominated world seaborne trade. Heavily engaged in cross trades (third party carriage), by the mid-17th century it was threatening to monopolize international freight markets.

The idea of the "freedom of the seas" was strongly supported by the Dutch trading companies and large fishing fleet because they operated under conditions of limited military power (Smit, 1968; Boxer, 1965; Potter, 1924; Dumbauld, 1969). Against the fragmentation of markets and exclusive colonial spheres of influence that had been carved out by Spain and Portugal, the Dutch trading companies wanted to create a unified world market characterized by free access to ships and cargoes. The champion of the new international maritime order was Hugo Grotius, a lawyer for the Dutch East Indies Company. Grotius propounded the principle of non-aggression and developed his classic doctrine

of freedom of the seas. He attacked the exclusionary practices of all states, and ridiculed the notion that the high seas can be divided territorially by focusing on Portugal's alleged "occupation" of the waters of the East Indies.

Dutch imperialism, however, was on a collision course with the commercial revolution that was taking place in mid-17th century Britain. In some respects, particularly in shipping and shipbuilding technology, the Dutch economy was clearly superior to that of the British. However, the doctrine of Mare Liberum was a reflection of the Netherlands' vulnerability. As Jan Smits observed, "The Dutch had to bargain and beg for the international peace upon which their highly advanced trade system, but not that of other nations, depended." (Smits, 1968:28). Commercially predominant, the Dutch flourished under the freedom of the seas, but they were not strong enough to defend it.

Compared to the Netherlands, England was an incipient modern political economy geared to dynamic capitalist expansion. By the early 17th century the differences between the two economies, and the threat to Britain, was recognized by the most modern business factions in England, and seen to be reflected principally in the Netherlands's domination of world shipping. The Grotian doctrine of freedom of the seas frustrated the ambitions of many large British merchants (Farnell, 1964: 444-445). Even more ominously, the formidable Dutch fleet threatened foreign trade and colonial windfalls (Hobsbawm, 1967:53-6) that were fueling the commercial revolution. Further expansion of Dutch

shipping would endanger England's position in the Americas. In Europe, Dutch banking was supreme, and every increase in Dutch shipping and trade, using Amsterdam as an entrepot, strengthened Dutch financial and commercial interests. English ships were being pushed out of the Baltic while in the Indian Ocean Dutch warships were harassing English traders. In 1623 Dutch raiders attacked Amboyna, an English settlement, and massacred its inhabitants. Dutch shipping was gradually increasing its share of trade with the American colonies. Meanwhile, the Dutch fishing fleet was depleting the Scottish and English coastal regions. All of these activities were supported by the Dutch Navy. At the same time, the technologically superior Dutch shipbuilding industry was threatening the further maritime development in England. Given the weakness of British shipping, a liberal order posed a direct threat to England's national security and, more generally, to continued economic development (Jones, 1967:14; Kennedy, 1976: 45-48).

The English Response

Under James I the English government began to chip away at the legal foundations of Dutch maritime power. In 1609 it declared that fishing in English waters would be reserved for English vessels. Negotiations between the Netherlands and England that followed these actions were inconclusive, leading to a barrage of propaganda from both sides. John Selden's Mare Clausum,

advocating the territorial enclosure of the high seas, was the most consistent and scholarly defense of mercantilism and rebuttal to Grotian doctrine (Smit, 1968:28; Gold, 1981:48).

During the first half of the 17th century England gradually introduced new protectionist laws and began to enforce existing ones. This trend culminated in the Navigation Act of 1651, which expressed England's most forceful and dramatic response to what was now perceived to be a generalized maritime crisis. The Act decreed that all imports must be carried on English ships, or in the ships of trading partners. It eliminated the Dutch role as cross-trader in English and colonial routes, and weakened the position of Dutch ports as entrepots. The Act further stipulated that only English ships had the right to trade with English colonies. Finally, it decreed that all colonial exports must be shipped to England either as final destination or as point of transhipment. This act was the most extensive of a long series of measures designed to defend the merchant fleet and England's trade, and it was accompanied by other legislative measures, including subsidies to shipbuilding, and the granting of exclusive right of carriage to the crown (Harper, 1939; Davis, 1962:304-7;1975:28-36). However, given England's expanding role in world trade and the considerable interdependence of the Netherlands and England, the Navigation Act of 1651, in conjunction with related acts, constituted a grave provocation to the Dutch, showing that England was determined to curb the Netherlands as an economic

and military rival.

One year after the promulgation of the Act the first Anglo-Dutch war broke out. The war was fought entirely on the seas, ending in victory for England. Two additional wars (1665-7; 1672-4), both won by England, hastened the decline of Dutch power as England then further tightened the restrictions on open seas (Gold, 1981:50). As a result of these wars, England was able to reorganize its foreign trade on the basis of protectionism. Between 1660 and 1689 the size of the English fleet increased by a factor of three. As it would do so often in the course of history, England replenished its fleet with captured enemy prices; as a result, Dutch shipbuilding technology was copied and thus another pillar of Dutch power crumbled (Davis, 1962:50-52; 1975:32). Victory in war and the successes engineered by the Navigation Acts thus led to immediate tangible gains for British commerce. More generally, they facilitated a wholesale restructuring of the international political economy. This restructuring produced tangible gains for England by paving the way for rapid national economic development and foreign trade that could not have taken place under a free trading system, including the domination of transatlantic shipping with its implications for colonial expansion; a secure basis for shipbuilding expansion; access to the Baltic trades and ports; and the subordination of Britain's principal commercial rival. These basic changes ultimately provided England with the global power to resist subsequent

challenges from France and other powers, and so paved the way for the future expansion of British imperialism.

The World System and Domestic Class Formation

England's decision to challenge the Netherlands clearly can be seen to express a broader logic of the world system inasmuch as Dutch capitalism was probably not sufficiently modern and progressive to lay the basis for further global capitalist expansion yet served to frustrated English economic development. The Netherlands was, as Eric Hobsbawm notes, "a feudal business economy," geared to a role as commercial and financial intermediary, which meant that its ruling class was "sacrificing Dutch manufactures to the huge vested interests of trading and finance... (and) encouraging manufactures in feudal and semi-colonial areas where they were not strong enough to break out of the older social framework." (Hobsbawm, 1967: 45). However, the transformation of British policy can hardly be said to derive spontaneously from the necessities of capitalist development or an incipient change in the global configuration of power. The decision to go to war was predicated on revolutionary social and political upheavals in English society that reflected an internal dynamic. Prior to the English Revolution, the monopolist trading companies dominated commercial policy. Enjoying Royalist patronage, they favored policies which guaranteed them exclusive access to colonies and trades.

Their limited outlook and parasitic approach to commerce made them less aware of the long-range implications of Dutch hegemony for English economic development and, consequently, unwilling to devote the resources to maintain a strong Navy (Kennedy, 1976: 46-7; Farnell, 1964:446). In addition, these companies had forged close links to the Dutch. These factors served to limit the willingness of the pre-revolutionary state to issue a frontal challenge to the Netherlands.

Under Oliver Cromwell's leadership, the situation changed dramatically. Cromwell helped consolidated the power of the "mercantile interests," a new and rising segment of the emerging commercial bourgeoisie which favored a more modern approach to state-building and a more progressive and expansive definition of the national interest. The new government responded to the needs of a broader range of commercial interests, including those less tied to the monarchy. The result was "a general alliance between government and business, with the former ensuring that the latter could flourish, and gaining in return increased customs and excise receipts, and parliamentary votes of supply, to finance its policies of trade protection" (Kennedy, 1976: 47). This new alliance, strongly anti-Dutch, recognized that the Navigation Acts could simultaneously enhance English military power and the needs of English commerce.

Thus the Navigation Acts served not only to serve England's international economic interests, but also to consolidate the power of the more "progressive"

segment of the bourgeoisie. Cromwell's regime replaced the policy of granting exclusive spheres of interest with one "open to the whole merchant class" (Kennedy, 1976: 65), modernized the navy, and vigorously prosecuted the war with the Netherlands. Although many exporters and importers initially opposed mercantilism, recognizing that the need to rely on higher-priced British vessels would raise their costs (Barbour, 1954:233), the modernizing British state was responding to broader developmental needs. A liberal maritime policy might have been good for business in the short-term because it cheapened the cost of ocean transportation, but it was not desirable either from the point of view of the long-range development of British capitalism and Empire, or the desire to curb Dutch influence.

II. THE RETURN TO FREEDOM OF THE SEAS

The Navigation Acts served as the nucleus of the mercantilist system. Their longevity--almost two centuries--can be explained with reference to the general requirements of the mercantilist system, the particular needs of British imperialism, and Parliamentary politics. The more or less permanent, albeit limited, global warfare between France and England that followed the Anglo-Dutch wars focused on the regulation of shipping and the control of colonies.

In contrast to the previous period, conflict did not center around the nature of the system itself (mercantilist or liberal) but rather on expansion within the given system.

Repeal of the Navigation Acts

In 1849 the British Parliament unilaterally abrogated the Navigation Acts in favor of a liberal system of free access to ships and cargoes (Williams, 1972; Halevy, 1961; Palmer, 1991). In abandoning the old order, Britain repealed a dense thicket of protectionist laws designed to protect its shipowners and signalled its intention to trading partners to accept principles of competition. The main features of the new order included the abolition of preferential treatment for the national-flag fleet, guarantees for shipowners of equal access to cargoes, and guarantees for shippers of equal access to vessels of all states.

The abolition of the Navigation Acts symbolized the strategic decision of the British state to transform its foreign economic policy from one of mercantilism to liberalism. The politics of repeal of the Acts are intricately woven into the fabric of general political and economic events of the period: the Reform Bill of 1832, which augmented the political power of the industrialists; the abolition of the Corn Laws, a further reflection of the decline of the landed gentry; dramatic financial reforms initiated by Prime Minister Robert Peel, who later presided over the abolition of the Navigation Acts; and the Anglo-French

commercial treaty of 1860 and subsequent trade agreements and unilateral actions by which Britain lowered tariff barriers. Although the restoration of the freedom of the seas regime received widespread support from Britain's trading partners, it also depended on the consolidation of state power of Britain's industrial bourgeoisie, the ability of the state (at least initially) to act independently of shipowners as an interest group, and the acquisition of an enormous comparative advantage in steel and steam technology. In the case of both the Netherlands and Britain (although not, as we shall see, the United States), the liberal system also supported, for a short period of time, the virtual monopoly of the one nation's shipowners. Between 1849 and 1900 British shipping was largely unchallenged. After 1900, however, other core states including France, Japan, and, especially, Germany began to challenge the monopoly of British shipping.

The mid-19th century transition from mercantilism to free trade has received a great deal of attention within the context of the "theory of hegemonic stability." Proponents of the theory have explained British policy in terms of international systemic factors and Britain's economic and military supremacy, while devoting less attention to the domestic politics of liberalization, or the specific mechanisms whereby systemic change was linked to domestic policy (Kindleberger, 1975; Krasner, 1976; Wallerstein, 1979). Yet, there is a broad consensus among historians that British power reached its apogee in 1815 (eg.

Kennedy, 1976: 157-163; Webster, 1963), so the correlation between hegemony and liberalism is highly problematic. The "balance of power" alone does not explain the transformation of British commercial policy (McKeown, 1986). As O'Brien and Pigman note (1992: 94),

> In terms of military and economic resources Britain emerged as arguably the 'greatest power' to sign the Treaty of Vienna in 1815. But neither Castlereigh nor other members of Liverpool's administration showed any disposition to use the occasion of a European settlement following the defeat of Napoleonic France to foster or pressure for a more liberal trading regime...tangible manifestations of a potential for the exercise of British hegemony (including the relative strength of its economy and fiscal system, supremacy at sea and a position of primacy in the Congresses and Councils of European powers) produced very little change in the practice, form or results achieved by British economic diplomacy for more than three decades after Wellington's victory at Waterloo.

One solution to this problem is to analyze British policy by treating domestic and international variables in isolation from each other. In the case of British policy, there is ample evidence that internal developments including the problems of industrialization, constitutional issues, and the changing center of gravity within the bourgeoisie itself provided strong impulses towards liberalization. Following this approach, O'Brien and Pigman conclude that the politics of free trade in England "represented a major political and constitutional episode in domestic politics only tangentially related to broader (and less controversial) debates over free trade and tariff reform." (1992: 96). The political elite and ruling class "were blissfully ignorant" of the global implications of their policies (O'Brien and Pigman, 1992: 97).

The specific analysis of shipping, however, suggests the need to adopt a more nuanced view of the relationship between domestic change in Britain and global development of free trade. To be sure, maritime liberalization cannot be derived straightforwardly from the "global power shift," which had occurred decades before its realization. Moreover, there is little evidence to suggest that the political elite were as aware of their "hegemonic responsibilities," as their 20th century American counterparts. At the same time, however, it is clear that these elites were well aware that liberalization would simultaneously enhance Britain's maritime power and appeal to the interests of trading partners.

Robert Peel himself cited four specific reasons for abandoning mercantilism, all of which dealt with the international situation. First, the colonies were growing increasingly dissatisfied with privileges granted to British shipowners. Both the colonies and the newly independent countries of South America were diversifying their trade, and rules mandating the use of British vessels were increasingly viewed as inefficient and expensive. Second, the other core powers also had many grievances against the mercantilist system, and many had favored a more open system since the beginning of the 19th century. Third, Peel mentioned the "mutilated and shattered state"(Halevy, 1961:275) of the laws, which had been amended piecemeal over the years, and particularly during the 1820s under Huskisson. Finally, the great complexity of the reciprocity treaties antagonized trading partners and ran counter to the universal aims of free traders

(Clapham, 1962:169-70).

The great clamor from England's trading partners for abolition of the Navigation Acts attests to the support which Britain enjoyed from a broad coalition of core states in favor of liberal policies. Clearly, the re-establishment of freedom of the seas could facilitate the consolidation of British leadership, even if all of the implications of this leadership were not perceived by British elites. The system greatly favored British trading and shipping interests, but it also responded to the desires of major trading partners.

Protectionism had limited British access to foreign ports and trade; it proscribed cross-trading which, as the British state but not the timid and recalcitrant shipowners recognized, Britain was poised to dominate. Mercantilism's chief antagonists were the Manchester industrialists and messianic free traders. Britain's economic and commercial predominance created strong incentives to build a liberal trading order in which it was poised to reap the largest gains. As a British governmental report (Booth Committee Report, 1918:71) later observed:

> In view of its great size, the British merchant marine stood to gain more from free access to foreign countries than foreign flags stood to gain from free access to British ports; and conversely a policy of mutual restriction would for the same reason have caused more harm to British than to foreign shipping.

Britain's industrial leadership was so overwhelming that most trading partners, heavily engaged in domestic economic development and uninterested in colonial

expansion, had no desire to compete with Britain's merchant fleet. Throughout the 19th century they preferred the benefits of free competition for cargoes and vessels to the costs of establishing their own national merchant fleets. In the case of both the Netherlands and Britain (although not, as we shall see, the United States), the liberal system also supported the virtual monopoly of one nation's shipowners. Between 1849 and 1900 British shipping was largely unchallenged.

The World System and Domestic Class Formation

In abolishing the Navigation Acts, the British state thus responded favorably to a changing set of external demands while simultaneously establishing a system that was highly beneficial for the expansion of British commerce. Its actions were, however, greatly dependent on the domestic transformation of class forces. In particular, state policy was directly responsible for the defeat of backward sections of the English bourgeoisie, including the large and powerful shipping lobby. These forces were united around preservation of the old order, and demanded continuing protection for agriculture as well as shipping. On the one hand, most shipowners were ardent protectionists. On the other hand, British capital as a whole was reluctant to invest in new shipbuilding technology, and this gave further impetus to the forces of the old order arrayed behind the Navigation Acts. The government, however, strongly supported the

steamship--primarily by granting mail subsidies to steamship owners, a common pre-World War I subsidy. According to one observer, the British Admiralty was the "premier founder of the steamship lines..." (Otterson, 1945: 19-20).

Just as Cromwell's revolution had set the stage for the Navigation Acts by curbing the power of Royalist merchants, so the social and political upheavals associated with the rise of the industrial bourgeoisie was a condition of their repeal. Indeed, the substantial period of time between the emergence of international demands and the Parliament's repeal shows that England's social and political transformation was a decisive factor in moving to a free trade system and that "major revisions to the kingdom's tariff and navigation policies that occurred from 1842-9 were prompted by an promoted for almost purely domestic political reasons." (O'Brien and Pigman, 1992: 111).

Ironically, most British shipowners lobbied aggressively in support of the Navigation Acts (Palmer, 1991). They lamented the lower cost of labor aboard foreign (eg. Scandinavian, American) vessels, and warned that free trade in shipping would pose a grave danger to national security (Clapham, 1962:175-176). The question of repeal was closely linked to a larger set of social problems attendant with the rise of industrial capitalism. Free traders proposed the abolition of the Acts as the solution to labor and manning problems; defenders of the old order claimed the opposite. In any case, the shipowners were unable to perceive as clearly as their state that they, too, would benefit

from free trade. By 1849, the center of gravity in Parliament had decisively shifted in favor of industrial interests and the shipowner's lobby was overwhelmed. Thus, in the 17th century the state intervened on behalf of shipowners; in the 19th century, acting within a very different international and domestic context, it ignored their demands for protection, rejecting their narrow interests in favor of a broader view of the interests of industrial capital as a whole.

The restoration of liberalism helped to consolidate the position of British imperialism and also reinforced the position of London as the premier financial, commercial, and insurance center. Despite the alarmist views of the shipowners, "the monopoly of British carriers more and more nearly approached being one of the carrying trade of the world." (Otterson, 1945: 49) Shipping strengthened banking by establishing London as the major entrepot, conferring many attendant sources of profit on the City. The abandonment of the Navigation Acts made it possible for the state eventually to retreat from the affairs of the shipowners. By 1880 British steam tonnage exceeded that of the rest of the world by a factor of three (Booth Committee Report, 1918).

III. U.S. MARITIME POLICY: FROM NATIONALISM TO HEGEMONY

The steamship fostered a dramatic expansion of world trade and opened opportunities to trade in a range of new agricultural commodities. However, political and economic forces that were called into play by the dynamism of the liberal system developed in the last two decades of the nineteenth century, ultimately destroyed free trade and inaugurated a new phase of international political economy. This phase may be described in terms of related political and economic trends: first, the intensification of international rivalry, marked by expansionist colonial policies and the struggle against British dominance; and second, the increasing concentration and centralization of capital, both nationally and transnationally, in conjunction with a greatly enlarged role of the state in economic affairs.

World Shipping in the Age of Imperialism

These two trends were reflected with great clarity in shipping. Between 1880 and 1900 the liberal system was transformed into one dominated by cartels and guided, directly or indirectly, by state intervention. The trends towards concentration of ownership and international rivalry were mutually reinforcing, and had immediate repercussions on shipping. Politically, growing Anglo-German maritime rivalry stimulated governmental measures designed to establish

economies of scale, especially in Germany, and the development of closer relations between exporters and shipowners. The German government encouraged these trends by facilitating mergers to strengthen national shipping and directly or indirectly implementing cargo reservation schemes, including the reservation of human cargo (Booth Committee Report, 1918: 230-232).

The prime expression of the new economic and political trends was the international liner conference or cartel. The liner conference represents, in part, an idiosyncratic institution specific to international shipping (Marx, 1953; Deakin, 1973; Cafruny, 1985, 1987). However, the development of conferences depended on political as well as economic forces. Conferences made it possible to rationalize freight markets and provided the means by which the leading shipowners, still predominantly British, could protect their markets from the predations of new competitors. Prior to the development of the steamship, regular services were not generally possible due to the vagaries of wind propulsion. Once the steamship provided the technical means whereby regular services could be provided, liner firms sought to protect their market shares from the incursions of "outsiders" who might destabilize freight markets by "creaming off" lucrative cargoes without providing regular services. By the turn of the century most of the world's trading routes were organized by conferences, with English shipowners assuming organizational leadership. Conferences thus became the primary unit of power in liner shipping. They vividly exemplified

the general tendency towards concentration of capital, and their significance was recognized by Lenin (1939: 19,73) as well as Hobson. (1916: 175-6).

Although they did not formally abrogate the principle of free trade, liner conferences were the most obvious form of restraint on competition. Their monopolistic and anti-competitive nature was masked not only by the lack of overt state involvement in the affairs of conferences, but also because cartels could be defended, not implausibly, as being necessary to the functioning of a stable market. However, many other anti-competitive practices began to flourish by the turn of the century. These included shipper-shipowner collusion, flag discrimination as state policy, and various forms of subsidies and promotional measures designed to assist national-flag shipping.

During the interwar period shipping nationalism intensified as all governments intervened on behalf of their maritime industries. Attempts to reduce the level of intervention by international agreement failed. After World War II, however, the United States exerted strong leadership in order to restore a modified form of a shipping liberalism. The comparison of U.S. policy during and immediately after each world war illustrates a shows how interrelated processes of domestic and international structural change combined to re-establish shipping liberalism.

World War I and the Development of U.S. Protectionism

America's participation in World War I led to a great expansion of its maritime sector with the aid of massive subsidies. At the same time, a legislative phase was inaugurated that had great international repercussions. Under the pressure of freight rate increases, two protectionist laws, the U.S. Shipping Act of 1916 and the Jones Act of 1920 were passed. The U.S Shipping Act outlawed the use of the deferred rebate, the means by which shipping cartels enforced the loyalty of shippers, blunting the power of liner conferences and antagonizing European shipping firms. The Jones Act reserved a substantial amount of cargo to U.S.-flag vessels.

American maritime policy in the inter-war period thus greatly encouraged the development of mercantilism. The growth of U.S.-flag merchant shipping constituted a grave threat to Britain, and was perceived as such on both sides of the Atlantic. It made wartime collaboration difficult, and contributed to serious Anglo-American tensions during the 1920s. The expansion of tonnage represented more than simply a contribution to the Allied war effort. During the period of American neutrality, shipping was a means by which the United States attempted to penetrate foreign markets vacated by the combatants. The question of how this tonnage would be employed after the war preoccupied shipowners and governments of all the major powers. Edward Hurley, Chairman of the U.S. shipping Board, voiced a typical American view (Safford, 1981:267):

> My whole thought is to get a fleet of large-sized ships ... so that we may be able to compete with Germany and England after the war ... Instead of being associated with England in the fight against Germany [the United States should] watch England to prevent her from gaining commercial advantage at the present time, and particularly after the war.

Hurley's successors, John Barton Payne and Admiral Benson, were even more rabidly nationalistic and Anglophobic. In 1919 they were "bent on eliminating [Britain] from competition by driving it into bankruptcy." (Safford, 1981: 268). Benson, according to the Secretary of War, dreamed of a "fierce and final competition" between British and American shipping (Safford, 1981: 268). Anglo-American confrontation reflected the larger inability of the core states, lacking central leadership, to resolve fundamental problems of shipping shares.

After World War I the range of interventionist practices increased substantially as most governments were drawn more closely into the affairs of the maritime industries. In the United States, a massive shipping and shipbuilding sector had been created largely through government aid. However, as a result of international competition and gross inefficiency, it declined rapidly, and in 1935 it narrowly escaped nationalization. The Axis powers sought to organize shipping as a central element of national military and economic policy. Even in most of the traditionally liberal shipping nations, the scope and degree of state intervention increased substantially.

World War II and the Restoration of Liberalism

The sharp antagonism that prevailed among shipowners on each side of the Atlantic did not entirely abate either during World War II or immediately afterward, despite the experience of wartime collaboration. Shipowners on both sides of the Atlantic remained acutely aware of their economic rivalry and the implications of wartime developments for postwar commercial plans; the frictions of World War I and the interwar years were not completely forgotten. In 1943 Lord Rotherwick, Chairman of Clan Line, expressed the typical British view in urging that the British merchant fleet should rapidly be increased after the war to prewar tonnage levels through the transfer of enemy shipping and the construction of vessels for British owners in enemy shipyards. American owners countered by reiterating their historical grievances against European owners and advocating wholesale protectionism.

World War II thus interrupted but did not completely eradicate traditional maritime rivalries. However, the comparison of Allied shipping collaboration during both wars vividly illustrates the development of a new, more conciliatory approach to shipping questions on the part of the United States. As Safford (1981: 269) has observed,

> In the great conflict of 1914-18, and directly beyond, Anglo-American maritime tensions were fraught with extraordinary rivalries, suspicions, and enmity. While corresponding patterns seemed possible for the Second World War, a similar tack was spurned successfully on the part of a small number of high-minded

men determined to mend the ways of the past.

Hostility between shipowners on each side of the Atlantic thus remained but, in contrast to World War I, did not resonate in governmental or leading corporate circles. The government actively intervened to establish a more open, cooperative system, largely resisting the desire of its shipowners to return to maritime nationalism.

In contrast to their World War I predecessors, the leading War Shipping Administrators were committed to "shipping liberalism" which meant, in practical terms, a pro- European stance. Lewis Douglas, Chairman of the War Shipping Administration and protege of Cordell Hull, headed "the most potent pro-British team in the United States War Administration" (Safford, 1981: 269). In contrast to the narrow nationalism displayed during World War I, the United States actually agreed to provide ships for British owners to maintain their services in southern Pacific markets on a caretaker basis(Safford, 1981: 275). During and after World War I, Britain was unable to deliver coal to Italy, a traditional market for British exports, because of industrial militancy. The United States eagerly stepped into the breach, despite British protest, with Colonel House observing that the United States was "hitting at two [of England's] most lucrative industries." During World War II a similar situation arose due to shortages of coal in Britain. This time, however, Lewis Douglas steadfastly refused to exploit the situation by exporting American coal or even

by committing American vessels to carry British coal to Italy(Safford, 1981: 275).

The nature of allied shipping collaboration after World War II foreshadowed the shape of the postwar maritime order, just as it had during World War I. Despite its mercantilist tradition and the still-virulent protectionist outlook of shipowners, Washington adopted a liberal postwar attitude that was consistent with its general economic philosophy as well as the maritime strategies of other core powers. Policymakers sought to organize a regime based on free trade principles. In their view, an open world freight market would further the expansion of world trade by establishing a rational division of labor. The law of comparative advantage would enable the most efficient shipowners to expand their operations, causing a secular decline in ocean freight rates. Specialization of countries and regions with a comparative advantage--notably Britain, Scandinavia, and Greece--would be an integrative force discouraging the use of subsidies which promoted conflict during the interwar years.

This approach, which reflected the desire to accommodate Western Europe, thus represented an unprecedented and dramatic change in American policy. Now the United States recognized the economic importance of shipping to Western and Northern Europe, for whom shipping was "the nerve center of their national life,"(Safford, 1981: 276). and worked to restore these nations to their traditional positions. At the same time, concessions were made to shipowners

in the form of limited subsidies and cargo-protection. Although these concessions elicited deep hostility from Europe, they were in fact very limited, and helped to guarantee the essential liberality of the new liberal order.

The post-war organization of shipping entailed a general opening or unification of the market. It did not, however, result in a purely laissez-faire system in the classical sense because shipping cartels, largely dominated by the Europeans, remained central to the new order. Conferences were allowed to operate largely beyond the practical sway of the U.S. government, despite its considerable body of regulatory legislation. The cartels were granted basic decisionmaking functions, including the determination of freight rates and the distribution of shipping shares among firms. Of course, the system was not without contradictions, and would eventually set in motion conflict and instability. In bulk shipping, an area which was strategically important to multinational oil and other extractive firms, the United States was unwilling to make concessions and established its domination through the use of flags of convenience. As its industrial competitiveness diminished and the size of its liner fleet shrank during the 1960s and 1970s, the United States grew less tolerant of the concessions it had made and sought to limit the power of shipping cartels (Cafruny, 1985, 1987).

The governments and shipowners of the other core powers readily supported America's post-war design. The wartime mobilization of America's maritime

industries meant that the United States had the power unilaterally to write the rules. Had the United States chosen to exercise all of its power, and had the shipowners been permitted to preserved their influence over maritime policy, then the ensuing regime would undoubtedly been cast in a highly protectionist or "national capitalist" mold, resulting in an accentuation of the trend of the interwar period. Developing in a climate of Anglo-American hostility, American shipowners, unlike their banker and manufacturer compatriots, had not had their protectionist sentiments softened by the successful but limited pre-World War I expansion into world trade. On the contrary, the drive for foreign markets had actually confirmed and enhanced their nationalist instincts as the inefficient shipowners had entered an environment already carved up and monopolized by the Europeans. In contrast to most other sectors of the international economy, the most ardent nationalists were American, while the liberals were European.

The World System and Domestic Class Formation

Overcoming the legacy of maritime nationalism represented a serious challenge to the architects of the post-war order. The importance of shipping to the Europeans meant that generalized protection would conflict with the needs of European reconstruction. Moreover, as during the 1840s, a nationalistic regime was incompatible with a generally liberal order, not only because it would raise the cost of transportation but also because it would clash with the

principle of free trade. Internationally, American planners needed to reconcile the interests of two antagonistic shipping blocs. Domestically, they had to contend with the nationalism of shipowners and maritime unions, groups which had gained prestige in the course of the war, and had powerful backers in Congress. Finally, American planners had to balance the interests of Europe with the strategic requirement of the United States to maintain a substantial merchant marine.

Given these obstacles, the establishment of a relatively open, stable system was a major diplomatic and political accomplishment. The concept of hegemony is useful in characterizing the nature of power relations in the new order (Gramsci, 1971; Cox, 1981; Cafruny, 1990; Gill, 1993), and particularly the interrelationship between changes in the American political economy and the international system in the aftermath of the war. As Antonio Gramsci writes (Gramsci, 1971:161),

> The fact of hegemony presupposes that account be taken of the interests and tendencies of the groups over which hegemony is to be exercised, and that a certain compromise equilibrium should be formed--in other words, that the leading group should make sacrifices of an economic-corporate kind. But there is no doubt that such sacrifices and such compromises cannot touch the essential; for though hegemony is ethical-political, it must also be based on the decisive function exercised by the leading group in the decisive nucleus of economic activity.

Although Gramsci applied the concept of hegemony to national society, he observed that changes in domestic society were "organically" related to basic

changes in international society, thus emphasizing the continuities between societies, states, and international systems (Cox, 1981).

America's changing attitude towards international shipping questions, as evidenced in the contrast between pre- and post-war policy, provides a vivid example of the social transformation that occurred during the 1930s and 1940s. The Great Depression propelled a bloc of "multinational liberals" into power (Ferguson, 1984; van der Pijl, 1984; Frieden, 1988). This coalition represented a new center of gravity in American capitalism, based on export-oriented, high technology industries, international banks, and multinational oil. The influence of internationalists derived from their political ascendancy over protectionist forces which either lacked a sophisticated understanding of hegemonic duties and possibilities, or represented particular interests that were destined to lose out in the post-war order. Their power was cemented as America emerged to a position of clear preponderance.

The political clout of American shipowners as an interest group, so noticeable American policy during World War I and the inter-war period, reflected these structural changes in American society. American shipowners were strongly dependent on cheap and relatively unskilled labor to compete favorably in international markets (Cafruny, 1987), and were closely aligned with isolationists and other business protectionists with whom they shared an intense nationalism and Anglophobia. Because they were unable to reorganize

labor relations on the basis of a "politics of productivity" (Maier, 1978; Ferguson, 1984; Frieden, 1988), they strongly opposed free trade. Yet, the most important architects of American shipping policy in the post-war period--William Clayton, Undersecretary of State for Economic Affairs, Edward Stettinius, former Secretary of State and founder of the Liberian -flag registry, and Lewis Douglas--decisively rejected a return to pre-war nationalism, and recognized that this would inevitably circumscribe America's post-war role in shipping. Their commitment to an "Atlantic Liberal" conception of the world economy, which was reflected in the Executive Branch as well as in Congress, led them to make significant concessions to trading partners, and to resist the nationalist demands of American shipowners and their congressional backers. Perhaps the most tangible results of this commitment were the decision to sell American vessels en masse to European owners through the Ship Sales Act of 1946 (Sturmey, 1962: 155-6), and the limitation of the powers of the Federal Maritime Board, the shipowners main base of support within the government.

The reconstruction of liberalism after the intense nationalism of the interwar period thus indicates the interplay between domestic and international structures. America's conversion to maritime liberalism reflected not only its rise to global power, which in purely relational terms had existed since 1917 (Kennedy, 1976; Krasner, 1976), but also domestic transformations of the 1930s and 1940s.

America's post-World War II policy bears comparison with Britain's abolition of the Navigation Acts. In both cases, state intervention was necessary to overcome the resistance of domestic class fractions to a new policy of free trade. Whereas British policy reflected little more than calculations of narrow self-interest, American policy was more self-consciously hegemonic in the sense that it partially sacrificed the interests of its own shipowners to ensure a stable international division of labor.

IV. CONCLUSION

This account of international maritime development has assumed the existence of identifiable continuities in social structure, the state, and the international system. While recognizing that the international environment establishes specific constraints and opportunities for states, it rejects a rigid distinction between "levels of analysis" in favor an approach which situates domestic class formation and resulting state interest within a specific global context, thereby emphasizing the mutual determination of domestic and international forces.

As realists have shown, the international power configuration greatly influences the behavior of states in predictable ways. At a broad level of aggregation, the leading or hegemonic powers have had to devise a maritime

policy that guarantees security. Yet, the imperatives of global structures considered in isolation from domestic social and political forces do not adequately explain for state behavior. The passage of the Navigation Acts in the 17th century, their abolition in the 19th, and the restoration of liberalism in the 20th centuries each coincided with basic transformations in the politics of the dominant power. In each case, "archaic" class fractions were tied to the old international order, while more modern fractions actively sought to establish a new order that conformed to a their own broader national and international interest. The English trading companies pursued narrow and exclusionary aims and neglected the navy, thereby permitting Dutch power to limit England's economic development. By contrast, the more modern commercial interests represented in Cromwell's revolution favored mercantilism, leading them to declare war on the Netherlands. The abolition of the Navigation Acts was a function not only of Britain's rise to global hegemony, but also of the decisive political conquest of Manchester over the landed gentry. In the 20th century, the inability of internationalists to break the strategic hold of isolationists over American foreign policy underlay the strident shipping nationalism of World War I and the interwar period. The establishment of a liberal system after World War II directly reflected the ascendance of a "multinational liberal" coalition in the United States.

Although the concept of state autonomy is not very helpful in analyzing

these conjunctures, this does not mean that the state served as a passive instrument of interest groups. Indeed, in no case did the shipowners themselves prevail in the making of maritime policy. Rather, the state formulated and carried out a general maritime strategy that conformed to a broader conception of "national interest." This interest was defined by an internally dominant or hegemonic class fraction whose power base was strengthened by new international rules and practices.

The implications of this analysis for International Relations theory might be summed up in a plea for greater modesty coupled with an emphasis on concrete historical research. While recognizing the importance of cyclical tendencies, this study does not claim to uncover abstract laws and rhythms of the international political economy that operate across historical periods and independently of domestic social, economic, and political forces. International systemic interpretations of cycles of free trade and protectionism have had only limited success; both authors and their critics have often concluded with a recommendation to integrate domestic factors into the analysis (eg. McKeown, 1986; O'Brien and Pigman, 1992; Krasner, 1976; Keohane, 1984). Moreover, systemic approaches lack depth because they provide no statements about the specific practices and dynamics within a given historical period that have been or are likely to produce instability, conflict, and change. Although the focus on the continuities between societies, states, and international system allows for

more limited generalizations about the historically contingent strategies of classes and states, it provides a deeper and more comprehensive explanation for events.

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