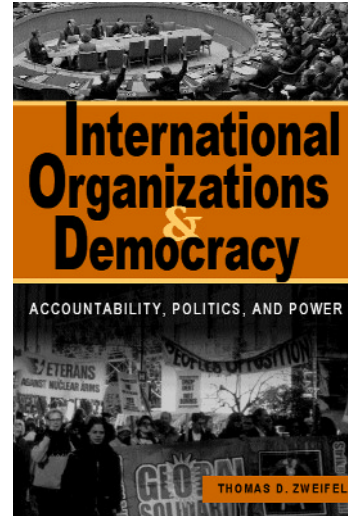


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**International Organizations
and Democracy:
Accountability, Politics, and Power**

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Introduction

When the morning of September 11, 2001, came, I'd been working on this book for several months. The sky was deep blue and I was sitting on the Promenade at 8:46 A.M.—alone except for a few runners and dog walkers. Then the first plane hit the World Trade Center. Smoke and millions of tiny metallic glitters were in the air; a light wind drove them toward me. The glitters turned out to be white papers, documents flying across the East River. One of them was a FedEx envelope with a contract that someone had just signed when the first plane hit.

At 9:03 A.M. I saw another plane—so close to me that I thought it would fly up the East River—but it banked like a fighter, suddenly ducked behind a skyscraper, and a moment later disappeared into the South Tower. By this time I and about a dozen others were watching from the Promenade, speechless. We stood there immobilized. I called as many people as I could on my cell phone, but got through only to my parents in Sydney. I saw one tower collapse, then the other, and I sat down and wept. It was hard to breathe.

That morning changed my relationship with this book. The suicide attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon made a glaring case for the need for global cooperation. To deal with terrorism and its root causes—and a host of other problems, from AIDS to the environment to trade and tsunamis—we need a global, multilateral response. Can international organizations represent the interests of humanity as a whole, rather than just those of a few? If they suffer from a democratic deficit,¹ how can they become more democratic? These are the questions this book asks.

Democracy is on the rise as a core value and the dominant governance principle worldwide. During the past generation, a “third wave” of democracy washed over many countries.² But international institutions have not necessarily followed suit; as states transfer more and more rulemaking powers to them, they suffer from a growing crisis of legitimacy. Surely, if a

national government gave its worst-off citizens no effective influence in its policies and laws but still ordered them to obey, we would call that government illegitimate.³ The debate about the lack of democracy of international organizations will only get louder as they integrate more deeply and gain more power. But virtually no scholars or practitioners have systematically analyzed transnational democracy, let alone offered solutions.

Neither traditional international relations theory nor traditional democratic theory alone is capable of providing answers to the complex issue of a transnational democratic deficit. The two subfields of political science have existed largely in splendid isolation,⁴ and have long ignored each other. Democratic theory has been concerned with making state power more accountable, while international relations has focused on interactions between states in a global system of anarchy and thus outside the reaches of political theory. In order to think about democracy at the international level, we must marry the two theoretical frameworks.

Students of the rational design of international institutions have begun this work of theoretical integration and asked why international institutions vary in their design. Other scholars have focused on international legalization to show how international law and politics are intertwined across a wide range of international institutions.⁵ But perhaps as a result of their theoretical lenses, students of international organization have focused on the bargains states strike to create or change them, and have paid very little attention to their day-to-day operations.⁶ This book aims to build on both literatures by exploring what I see as the missing link between institutional design and institutional performance: transnational democracy.

This book is *not* about the effects of international institutions on democracy *in* countries. It does not compare democracy, throughout the world or in any state now, to democracy before the founding of, say, the United Nations. Although questions about such issues as whether or not the World Bank has a democratizing effect on member states are no doubt worthy of further research, the book will not explain whether NATO helps democracy in Romania, nor whether the IMF does or does not alleviate poverty. In short, the book is not about the effectiveness of international organizations *per se*. But the core assumption of this book is that democracy is better for performance—that it leads to better policy outcomes than does dictatorship. For example, empirical studies, leaving everything else equal, have shown that democracies clearly outperform dictatorships in improving the quality of life.⁷ The legitimacy and performance of organizations are linked: institutions that lack legitimacy are seldom effective over the long run.⁸

The book's focus is to scrutinize the democracy of international organizations themselves: the extent to which they and their policymaking are governed by democratic rules, formal or informal. In the twenty-

first century, international institutions make more and more rules that affect our lives—from banking to the Internet, from trade to labor standards, from airline regulation to the environment—so this focus is of ever-increasing importance. The book is driven by another, unabashedly normative assumption: that institutions are not purely the result of path-dependence—they do not depend entirely on prior outcomes. Conscious design (and redesign) is not only possible, but also key in the development and change of international institutions.⁹ I hope that this book will make a contribution to building global, regional, and functional organizations that are truly democratic—in other words, organizations that represent the interests and aspirations of the peoples they have been founded to serve.

Overview

Chapter 1 asks how transnational democracy can be enhanced in a global society. In a case study of *Yahoo! Inc. v. France*, it examines regulation of the Internet as the quintessential global space. The chapter builds on theories of democracy and delegation to develop a methodology, including seven dimensions of transnational democracy, for assessing and rating international organizations systematically. Chapter 2 gives a brief history of international law and organization.

The remainder of the book applies this theory and history to three types of international organizations: global, functional, and regional. Chapter 3 examines the democracy of global organizations, above all the United Nations. It evaluates the UN's transnational democracy and reviews the oldest international organization still active (the International Labour Organization) and the newest (the International Criminal Court) as case studies. The topic of Chapters 4 to 6 is the democracy of functional organizations. Chapter 4 covers the World Bank, Chapter 5 the International Monetary Fund, and Chapter 6 the World Trade Organization.

Chapters 7 to 9 discuss the democracy of regional organizations. Chapter 7 covers the European Union, the most prominent regional bloc that has moved from an international organization to a “regulatory state.”¹⁰ Chapter 8 covers the Organization of African Unity and its successor, the African Union, in a bold experiment to adopt for Africa the lessons from the EU. Chapter 9 deals with other regional organizations; some have a single focus on economics (e.g., NAFTA) or defense (NATO), while others are multipurpose organizations aspiring to emulate the EU (e.g., ASEAN).

Chapter 10 concludes the book, draws together the main findings, offers recommendations for improving transnational democracy, and gives stories that point to a new, elusive concept: global citizenship.

4 Introduction

Notes

1. Williams 1991.
2. Huntington 1991. The wave started in southern Europe (Greece, Portugal, and Spain) in the 1970s and continued in the 1980s to Latin America (Brazil, Ecuador, Peru, Bolivia, Honduras, Argentina, Uruguay, El Salvador, Nicaragua, and Guatemala), Asia (Turkey, the Philippines, Korea, and Pakistan), and Africa (Uganda and Sudan, which later reverted to dictatorship). By the end of the decade, democracy had taken hold in much of eastern Europe (Poland, Hungary, Russia, East Germany, Czechoslovakia, Romania, and Bulgaria), Asia (Mongolia and Taiwan), Latin America (Panama and Chile), and Africa (Benin, Cape Verde, Zambia, Congo, Mali, Central African Republic, Madagascar, Niger, Malawi, South Africa, Sierra Leone). Of course, this statement is a sweeping generalization. To call some of these regimes democratic is a stretch; others, such as Sudan, Congo, or Pakistan, have since reverted to dictatorship.
3. Bohman 1999.
4. Wendt 1994.
5. See the special issues of *International Organization* 55(4) (Autumn 2001), on the rational design of international institutions, and 54(3) (Summer 2000), on international legalization.
6. Barnett and Finnemore 1999.
7. Zweifel and Navia 2000; Navia and Zweifel 2003.
8. Commission on Global Governance 1995: 66.
9. Koremenos, Lipson, and Snidal 2001.
10. Majone 1996.