

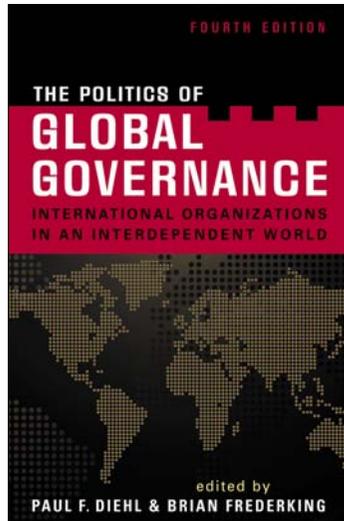
EXCERPTED FROM

The Politics of  
Global Governance:  
International Organizations  
in an Interdependent World

FOURTH EDITION

edited by  
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and Brian Frederking

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ISBN: 978-1-58826-711-5 pb



LYNNE RIENNER PUBLISHERS

1800 30th Street, Ste. 314

Boulder, CO 80301

USA

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fax 303.444.0824

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# Introduction

Paul F. Diehl and Brian Frederking

INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS ARE WORTH STUDYING because the most important issues in world politics today—poverty, terrorism, weapons proliferation, disease, regional conflict, economic stability, climate change, and many others—cannot be solved without multilateral cooperation. World politics is characterized by “security interdependence”: no one state, not even the most powerful state, can manage these problems alone. Today’s world requires both states and nonstate actors to coordinate action through international organizations to address these issues. Security interdependence, in short, requires global governance, and international organizations are a central component of global governance. This volume addresses the role of international organizations in contemporary global governance.

The chapters presented here provide a more nuanced view of international organizations than the two predominant views held among the general public. One is the realist notion that international organizations are relatively insignificant actors because they are unable to overcome the strong influences of conflict, national interests, and state sovereignty in world politics. The other is the idealist notion that international organizations are destined to solve common human problems. This book attempts to present a more balanced view, one that recognizes both the necessity of multilateral cooperation and the inherent limitations of international organizations. We hope to show that international organizations play an important role in world politics, but that their influence varies across issue areas.

In this introductory chapter we do not attempt to review the academic field of international organizations comprehensively.<sup>1</sup> Instead we provide a brief summary of both the history of international organizations and the academic study of those organizations from World War I to the contemporary world. We discuss the broad range of issues that constitute security interdependence in the post–Cold War world. We

emphasize the inherent tensions between a world of sovereign nation-states and the creation of international organizations that can enable states to address contemporary issues adequately. We conclude with an overview of the sections and individual chapters in this book.

## The Development of International Organizations

Early writings about the potential for international organizations to deal with common human problems include Jeremy Bentham's proposal for a "common legislature" and Immanuel Kant's advocacy of a "league of peace."<sup>2</sup> The academic study of international organizations began with the creation of the League of Nations after World War I, and was largely descriptive and legalistic. The League represented an attempt at international cooperation to prevent war. The breakdown of the League in the 1930s had many factors, including a lack of will by the major powers and the unwieldy requirements necessary for collective action. Although the League was unable to prevent World War II, it did provide a means of cooperation and consultation among states on a variety of issues beyond security matters.

World War II had a stimulating effect on the development of international organizations, and world leaders again sought to form another general international organization.<sup>3</sup> Much of the scholarship at the time was explicitly normative, calling for improvements to global institutions to promote world peace.<sup>4</sup> Perhaps surprisingly, the new United Nations had many similarities with the League.<sup>5</sup> The Security Council and the General Assembly of the United Nations had comparable predecessors in the League system. The UN was also predicated on the notion that continued cooperation among the victorious coalition in the previous war would ensure global stability.

With the emergence of the Cold War, it seemed quite possible that the United Nations might follow the path of the League. "Realist" scholars criticized earlier "idealists" and began to dominate the discipline of international relations. Realists emphasized the importance of state sovereignty, military power, and national interests in world politics and thus were less likely to expect states to delegate important powers to international organizations.<sup>6</sup> Realists argued that order could only be established by the enlightened use of diplomacy and force. The traditional route of alliances and the balance of power, not some potentially transformative international organizations, would maintain order.

Ultimately, the UN survived because it faced a radically different environment than the League. First, the Cold War bipolar alliance structure, while undoubtedly prohibiting superpower cooperation, also provided more stability than the rapid systemic upheavals that characterized the interwar period. Second, there was a greater recognition of a need for cooperation among states. The early stages of security interdependence occurred with the threat of global devastation from nuclear war or environmental disaster. Third, the UN acquired a symbolic importance and a legitimacy that the League of Nations lacked. States felt obligated to justify their actions before the UN even when they appeared contrary to UN Charter principles. The United States felt compelled to make its case to the UN at important times such as the Cuban Missile Crisis or prior to the invasion of Iraq because the UN can legitimize those actions.<sup>7</sup> Most important, a state does not even consider withdrawing its membership from the UN even when its actions appear contrary to its national interests. The loss of significant actors plagued the League during most of its existence.

The academic study of international organizations during the Cold War attempted to conceptualize what we now call global governance and tried to identify the role that IOs played in that process. Scholars began to study how IOs were part of larger patterns of world politics, particularly regarding conflict and peacekeeping.<sup>8</sup> A second approach was the neofunctionalist argument that the scope of international problems often overwhelmed the jurisdiction of both states and international organizations; this approach often advocated the emergence of political forms “beyond the nation state.”<sup>9</sup> A third area included a wide variety of critical, neo-Marxist, and poststructuralist arguments about international organizations.<sup>10</sup>

A final area focused on international regimes, defined as “governing arrangements constructed by states to coordinate their expectations and organize aspects of international behavior in various issue-areas.”<sup>11</sup> Regimes included principles, norms, rules, and decisionmaking procedures. Examples include the trade regime, the monetary regime, the oceans regime, and others. The concept of international regimes was the first systematic attempt to theorize “complex interdependence” and the existence of global governance without global government. It challenged the realist notion of a world dominated by nation-states, emphasizing that economic, energy, and environmental issues could not easily be understood by referring to states with a particular distribution of power.<sup>12</sup> It also emphasized the role of nongovernmental organizations

in influencing the beliefs, norms, rules, and procedures of evolving regimes. Realists incorporated this approach with “hegemonic stability theory,” arguing that any stability brought about by regimes is associated with a concentration or preponderance of power in one state. That “hegemon” achieved multilateral cooperation, according to this approach, through a combination of coercive threats and positive rewards.<sup>13</sup>

The end of the Cold War signaled a new era for the UN and international organizations in general as the superpower rivalry had established many of the barriers that had prevented UN action in the security area. The UN authorized the use of force against Iraq in the First Gulf War, the first such collective enforcement authorization since the Korean War. The UN also authorized far more peacekeeping operations in the two decades after the Cold War than in the forty-five years that preceded it. Those peacekeeping operations took on a wider scope of functions, including humanitarian assistance, nation building, and election supervision. Other international organizations also increased in scope. The European Union took further steps toward complete economic integration, and other regional economic blocs such as the Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation and the North American Free Trade Agreement took shape.

The Cold War’s demise thus brought about greater prospects for expanding the roles, functions, and powers of international organizations in global governance. Nevertheless, a series of events underscored the limitations of international organizations in the contemporary era. The greater number of peacekeeping operations did not necessarily translate into greater effectiveness in halting armed conflict or promoting conflict resolution. The UN was extremely slow to stop the fighting in Bosnia, could not produce a political settlement in Somalia, and did not prevent the genocide in Rwanda. With the United States under the Bush administration at best ambivalent about the UN, the organization played little or no role in the US invasion of Iraq, both during and afterward. Despite its successes, the European Union stumbled badly in its peace efforts toward Bosnia, and attempts at further integration and expanded membership have produced significant domestic and foreign controversies. The North Atlantic Treaty Organization has struggled with the redefinition of its role as the new environment significantly altered its original purposes. While international organizations continue to play a greater role than they ever have, state sovereignty and lack of political will continue to inhibit the long-term prospects of those organizations for creating effective structures of global governance.

The academic field of international organizations has more explicitly theorized “global governance” in the post–Cold War era.<sup>14</sup> The dominant trends of this era—particularly increased economic globalization and an emerging global civil society—suggest that the state is no longer the only source of authority for global governance. The rules of world politics are now generated through the interaction of international governmental organizations, nongovernmental organizations, norms, regimes, international law, and even private-public governance structures. Increasingly, the functions of governance—defining standards of behavior, allocating resources, monitoring compliance with rules, adjudicating disputes, enforcement measures—occur at a global level to deal with common security concerns and transnational issues.<sup>15</sup>

The dominant theoretical approaches in international relations explain these changes and the contemporary role of international organizations in different ways. Liberalism argues that international organizations provide an arena in which states can interact, develop shared norms, and cooperate to solve common problems. International organizations also coordinate action by providing information, monitoring behavior, punishing defectors, and facilitating transparency at a reduced cost to states.<sup>16</sup> They are also indispensable actors in the provision of public goods (for example, clean air and water) and protecting the “global commons” (for example, oceans and polar regions).<sup>17</sup> Liberals also continue to emphasize regime theory and apply that concept to an increasing number of issue areas.<sup>18</sup>

Realists continue to argue that international organizations have little power over states because states can always leave those organizations.<sup>19</sup> To the extent that international organizations are important, it is because they are used as tools by great powers to pursue their interests. They argue that deterrence systems, alliance mechanisms, and the overall balance of power are more effective at maintaining peace than international organizations. They caution against great powers like the United States relying on such institutions to further their own interests.<sup>20</sup> While realists generally dismiss the importance of nongovernmental organizations, international law, and transnational corporations to explain world politics, some aspects of the realist tradition (for example, hegemonic stability theory and alliances) continue to inform the study of international organizations.

A great variety of approaches to international organizations exists beyond the classic debate between liberals and realists. Critical theorists and neo-Marxists continue to argue that global governance is dominated

by the logic of industrial capitalism, which in turn generates opposition from environmental, feminist, and other social movements.<sup>21</sup> Other analysts emphasize rational design, organizational processes (including the study of social networks), organizational culture, and principal-agent interactions.<sup>22</sup> A more recent approach is social constructivism, which emphasizes the role of social structure—norms, identities, and beliefs—in world politics. Constructivists have analyzed the potential for international organizations to socialize policymakers and states to embrace certain norms, identities, and beliefs.<sup>23</sup>

### **Overview of the Book**

The chapters in this volume address a wide variety of issues regarding international organizations and global governance. Part 1 offers an overview of international organizations. In Chapter 1, Thomas Volgy and his colleagues attempt to define and identify international organizations to determine the extent to which a “new world order” is being created after the end of the Cold War. Using a variety of measures and comparing their results to others, they conclude that states have been less willing and/or able to create new organizations to meet post–Cold War challenges. In Chapter 2, Kenneth Abbott and Duncan Snidal provide the classic argument about why states create international organizations rather than pursue other approaches such as bilateral agreements. They argue that two characteristics of international organizations—centralization and independence—allow them to perform various functions more efficiently, including norm creation and the arbitration of disputes. Together these two chapters illustrate the overall argument that world politics is often not organized in a way that enables states to address contemporary issues effectively.

Part 2 details the decisionmaking processes of international organizations. The range of activities and the processes that are often hidden from public view or receive little media attention are revealed in these selections. Furthermore, proposals to change the most visible aspect of decisionmaking—voting—are considered.

From these first two parts, the reader will gain a broad view of the place of international organizations in the world system and the patterns of their activities. Armed with this understanding, the reader is directed to the actions of international organizations in three major issue areas: peace and security, economic, and social and humanitarian. In Parts 3

through 5, one can appreciate the number of organizations involved, the scope of activities undertaken, and the variation in effectiveness across organizations and issue areas. While the first two parts highlight common patterns in international organizations, the next three parts provide more details and reveal the diversity of these bodies.

Part 3 explores the effectiveness of peacekeeping operations and the prospects for humanitarian military intervention, but also considers the changes that the end of the Cold War has wrought. That series of events has led to a redefinition of security threats from traditional military attacks to include threats from nonstate actors including terrorists.

The economic issue area, addressed in Part 4, is one of great importance especially to many underdeveloped countries. Chapters on the World Trade Organization and the international monetary system illustrate how international institutions have played a role in creating the structure of international finance, trade, and development, how they have adapted (or not) to changing demands, and perhaps how they paradoxically might both enhance and mitigate the dependence of poorer countries on their wealthier counterparts.

Part 5, on social and humanitarian activities, shows the interface of many organizations in a variety of important concerns, including human rights, public health, genocide, and international crimes.

Part 6 returns to the more general concerns addressed at the outset of the book: What roles can international organizations play in global governance? The first chapter in this section addresses the kinds of reforms that might be possible in the UN system given its seemingly continuous focus on reform proposals and actual implementations that fall short. The collection concludes with a brief analysis of perhaps the most radical reform proposal in global governance—the creation of a world government.

## Notes

1. Few reviews of the field or international organizations exist. Two early reviews are John Gerard Ruggie and Friederich Kratochwil, "International Organization: A State of the Art on the Art of the State," *International Organization* 40 (1986): 753–775; and J. Martin Rochester, "The Rise and Fall of International Organizations as a Field of Study," *International Organization* 40 (1986): 777–813. See also Lisa Martin and Beth Simmons, "Theories and Empirical Studies of International Institutions," *International Organization* 52 (1998): 729–757.

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