

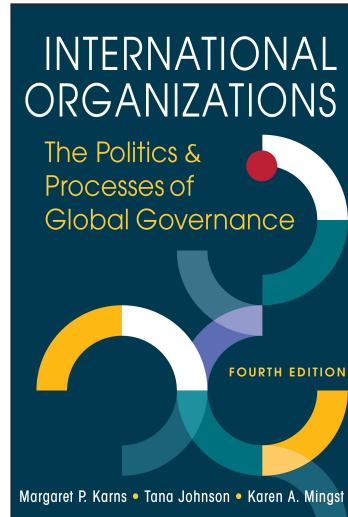
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**International  
Organizations:**  
The Politics and Processes  
of Global Governance

FOURTH EDITION

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# Contents

<i>List of Illustrations</i>	xi
<i>Preface</i>	xiii
<b>1 Why Global Governance?</b>	<b>1</b>
What Is Global Governance? 2	
Why the Growing Need for Global Governance? 4	
Actors in Global Governance 9	
Processes of Global Governance: Multilateralism Matters 21	
The Varieties of Global Governance 27	
The Politics and Effectiveness of Global Governance 38	
<b>2 Theories of Global Governance</b>	<b>45</b>
Liberalism 46	
Realism 55	
Social Constructivism 59	
Critical Theories 61	
Theories of Organizational Interactions 67	
IR Theory and Global Governance 71	
<b>3 International Organizations and the Foundations of Global Governance</b>	<b>73</b>
The State System and Its Weaknesses:	
The Process of International Organization 73	
Early Governance Innovations:	
The Legacy of the Nineteenth Century 75	
The UN System 85	
The Expansion of Functional and Specialized Organizations 86	
International Courts for Adjudication and Dispute Settlement 104	

<b>4</b>	<b>The United Nations: Centerpiece of Global Governance</b>	<b>109</b>
	The UN Charter and Key Principles	110
	The Principal Organs of the United Nations	112
	Persistent Organizational Problems and the Need for Reform	150
	The UN's Relationship to Regional Organizations	160
<b>5</b>	<b>Regional Organizations</b>	<b>163</b>
	The Roots and Dynamics of Regionalism	164
	Europe's Regional Organizations	172
	Regional Organizations in the Americas	197
	Asia's Regional Organizations	207
	Africa's Regional Organizations	219
	Regional Organizations in the Middle East	227
	Regionalism in the Arctic	235
	Assessing the Consequences of Regionalism	238
	Moving Beyond Regionalism: Transregional Organizations	239
<b>6</b>	<b>The Critical Role of Nonstate Actors</b>	<b>241</b>
	The Range of Nonstate Actors	241
	The Growth of NSAs	251
	NSAs and Policymaking	257
	Issues with NSAs	262
<b>7</b>	<b>Seeking Peace and Security</b>	<b>269</b>
	Case Study: Somalia, the Continuing Challenge	269
	Wars as the Genesis for Security Governance	273
	Mechanisms for the Peaceful Settlement of Disputes	283
	Collective Security, Enforcement, and Sanctions	289
	Peace Operations	304
	Arms Control and Disarmament	332
	Countering Terrorism as a Threat to Global Peace and Security	347
	The Challenges of Human Security	357
<b>8</b>	<b>Pursuing Economic Well-Being</b>	<b>359</b>
	Case Study: Okonjo-Iweala as Director-General of the World Trade Organization	359
	Global Economic Governance: Key Ideas and Events	361
	Governance of Trade	373
	Governance of Finance	386
	Governance of Development	398
	Multinational Corporations: From Regulation to Partnering	418
	The Challenges of Economic Governance	422

<b>9</b>	<b>Protecting Human Rights</b>	<b>423</b>
	Case Study: Documenting War Crimes in Ukraine	423
	The Roots of Human Rights and Humanitarian Norms	425
	The Key Role of States: Protectors and Abusers of Human Rights	430
	International Human Rights Institutions and Mechanisms	431
	The Processes of Human Rights Governance	442
	Global Human Rights and Humanitarian Governance in Action	467
	The Globalization of Human Rights and the Role of the United States	478
<b>10</b>	<b>Preserving the Environment</b>	<b>481</b>
	Case Study: Climate Change and the Youth Movement for Climate Justice	481
	The Evolution of Climate Science	482
	General Challenges in Environmental Governance	489
	UN Environmental Conferences, Commissions, and Summits	491
	Components of Global Environmental Governance	496
	Regional Environmental Governance	513
	Global Environmental Governance and Issues of Compliance and Effectiveness	520
<b>11</b>	<b>Promoting Human Security</b>	<b>527</b>
	The Concept of Human Security: An Expanded View of Security	528
	Human Security and the Governance of Health	529
	Global Governance, International Organizations, and Food Security	543
	International Organizations and the Global Refugee and Migration Crisis	551
	The Challenges of Protecting Human Security	565
<b>12</b>	<b>Challenges in Global Governance</b>	<b>567</b>
	Why Global Governance Is Difficult	567
	Contributions of Global Governance Actors	569
	Activities That Are Difficult for Global Governance Actors	574
	Challenges for the Future: Beyond Effectiveness	578
	The Need for Global Governance	585
	<i>List of Acronyms</i>	587
	<i>References</i>	595
	<i>Index</i>	641
	<i>About the Book</i>	671

# 1

## Why Global Governance?

**THE GROWING EVIDENCE OF CLIMATE CHANGE, THE DISRUPTIONS CAUSED** by the global Covid-19 pandemic, the increasing challenges of migration in several parts of the world, the rapid emergence of China as a superpower, and the shock of Russia’s 2022 invasion of Ukraine have brought home to people around the world the urgency and complexity of the global governance challenges we face today. Against this backdrop remain the persistent issues of nuclear weapons proliferation, large-scale humanitarian crises affecting global food supply, deep poverty and economic inequality in many parts of the world, and continuing threats to basic human rights and human security. Confronting these seemingly intractable challenges are a variety of international actors, institutions, and processes that over more than a century now have come to form what we call global governance.

None of these problems can be solved by sovereign states acting alone. All require cooperation of some sort among states and the growing number of nonstate actors; many require the active participation of ordinary citizens; some demand the establishment of new international mechanisms for monitoring or negotiating new international rules; and most require the refinement of means for securing states’ and other actors’ compliance. Many contemporary problems also call for new types of partnerships—some between existing organizations such as the United Nations (UN) and the African Union (AU) in the Sahel; others involve public–private partnerships such as the one between the UN and the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation to address various international health issues. In short, there is a wide variety of cross-border issues and problems that require governance. Sometimes the need is truly global in scope, as with pandemics and climate change. In other cases, the governance problem is specific to a region or group of countries, as with the need to manage an international river or regional migration surge. Sometimes, a problem cannot be neatly classified,

as with the Arctic, where the nexus of issues posed by climate change affects not just states, species, and peoples but significant parts of the whole world. As Bruce Jentleson (2012: 145) has noted, “The need for global governance is not an if question. It is a how question.” But what do we mean by global governance?

### **What Is Global Governance?**

In 2005, two international relations scholars noted that the idea of global governance had attained “near-celebrity status” (Barnett and Duvall 2005:1), but almost two decades later its meaning is still contested. Sometimes the term *global governance* has been used as a synonym for international organizations. More often, it is used to capture the complexity and dynamism of the collective efforts by states and an increasing variety of nonstate actors to identify, understand, and address various issues and problems in today’s turbulent world. In 1995, the Commission on Global Governance, an independent group of prominent international figures, published a report on what reforms in modes of international cooperation were called for by global changes after the end of the Cold War. The commission defined governance as “the sum of the many ways individuals and institutions, public and private, manage their common affairs. It is a continuing process through which conflicting or diverse interests may be accommodated and cooperative action may be taken. It includes formal . . . as well as informal arrangements that people and institutions have agreed to or perceive to be in their interest” (Commission on Global Governance 1995: 2).

But what is the relationship between governance and government? While clearly related, the two concepts are not identical. As James Rosenau (1992: 4) put it:

Both refer to purposive behavior, to goal-oriented activities, to systems of rule; but government suggests activities that are backed by formal authority, by police powers to insure the implementation of duly constituted policies, whereas governance refers to activities backed by shared goals that may or may not derive from legal and formally prescribed responsibilities and that do not necessarily rely on police powers to overcome defiance and attain compliance. Governance, in other words, is a more encompassing phenomenon than government. It embraces governmental institutions, but it also subsumes informal, nongovernmental mechanisms whereby those persons and organizations within its purview move ahead, satisfy their needs, and fulfill their wants.

Thus, global governance is not global government; it is not a single world order; there is no top-down, hierarchical structure of authority, but power and authority in global governance are both present in varying ways and to varying degrees. Reviewing the evolution of the concept, Thomas Weiss

and Rorden Wilkinson (2014: 211) conclude, “We understand global governance as the sum of the informal and formal ideas, values, norms, procedures, and institutions that help all actors—states, IGOs, civil society, and TNCs [transnational corporations]—identify, understand, and address transboundary problems.” It therefore encompasses international law and international organizations created by states, but goes well beyond them. It is “the collective effort by sovereign states, international organizations, and other nonstate actors to address common challenges and seize opportunities that transcend national frontiers. . . . [It is] an ungainly patchwork of formal and informal institutions” (Patrick 2014: 59).

To some, global governance is only linked to the post–Cold War international order; others speak of patterns of governance in different historical orders; still others conceive of it as an evolving set of institutions, rules, patterns of interaction, actors, and processes. For some scholars, global governance only includes institutions, processes, and policies that are truly global in scope. Others, most notably Amitav Acharya (2016a) argue that global governance includes not only formal and informal global intergovernmental institutions and policies, but also regional and multistakeholder ones with local and domestic politics in states often playing a key role in influencing states’ willingness and ability to commit.

Analyzing the varieties of global governance and the actors in the politics and processes that have shaped them is the central purpose of this book. We show why, if one wants to understand collective global efforts to solve those “problems without passports,” it is no longer enough to look just at international organizations created by states. Although states retain their sovereignty and still exercise coercive power, global governance increasingly rests on other bases of authority. Thus, the study of this phenomenon requires exploring not only the forms it can take, the politics and processes by which it has developed, the actors who play various roles, and the relationships among them but also the forms and patterns of both power and authority. As the title of one book conveys, “Who governs the globe?” is an essential question to answer, as are the questions of “who gets what?,” “who benefits?,” and with what consequences (Avant, Finnemore, and Sell 2010b).

Part of the value, then, of the concept “global governance” is how it enables us to look at the long-term process of organizing collective efforts to deal with shared problems—that is, the process of international organization—past, present, and future (Claude 1964: 4).

Global governance is incredibly complex, and no single book can cover it all. For the sake of manageability, we focus primarily on interstate varieties of global governance, particularly on global and regional intergovernmental organizations (IGOs), while also showing where and how various types of nonstate actors (NSAs) play important roles. We introduce networks, forms of private governance, and public–private partnerships, but leave these

largely to others to elaborate. Because global governance is dynamic, we identify changes in governance needs and approaches over time.

### **Why the Growing Need for Global Governance?**

The emergence of the concept of global governance in the 1990s accompanied the growing awareness of a number of systemic changes happening in the world, the rapid proliferation of new issues and actors, and the inadequacy of existing international organizations (particularly the United Nations) to address many problems. These changes have included globalization, technological advances, the growth of transnationalism, changing relations among the great powers, the growing awareness of global environmental problems, and the proliferation of NSAs. Separately and collectively, they have fundamentally altered global politics and contributed to the increased need for global governance.

#### *Globalization*

In the 1990s, what initially appeared to be simply growing interdependence among states and peoples became something much more fundamental—a complex multidimensional process of economic, cultural, and social change. Particularly noticeable was the rapid pace of change, the compression of time and space, and the scale and scope of interconnectedness. There are many definitions of *globalization*. Some focus on political, societal, and cultural integration, whereas others point more specifically to the economic integration of markets through trade, capital flows, and flows of technology and workers. By the early 2000s, most observers agreed that globalization had become unprecedented in the degree to which markets, cultures, peoples, and states had become linked, thanks to changes in technology, transportation, and communications that sped up the movement of ideas, goods, news, capital, technology, and people.

Globalization has spurred proliferating networks of nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) and financial markets, linking like-minded people and investors, as well as the unwelcome, often illegal actors—terrorists and drug traffickers. It has contributed to the homogenization of culture with the global spread of ideas and popular culture.

Globalization has also led to the reassertion of ethnicity and nationalism in many parts of the world. The ways global events can have local consequences and local events can have global consequences mean that crises in one region can affect jobs, production, personal savings, and investment elsewhere. Civil wars and conflicts in some of the world's poorest regions, such as Yemen, Afghanistan, and Mali, ripple outward through the flows of asylum seekers and migrants to richer countries.

The effects of globalization change the significance of borders of states and the very nature of world politics. They mean that states no longer have



a monopoly on power and authority. They increase the recognition of transnational problems that require global regulation in some form. The consequence has been a huge growth in transnational, regional, and global forms of public and private rulemaking and regulation since the early 1990s. This includes expanded jurisdiction of existing IGOs like the International Maritime Organization; networks of cooperation among government agencies, such as the Financial Action Task Force, that link government experts on money laundering; and private standard-setting initiatives such as that by the Forest Stewardship Council.

Although globalization affects all spheres of human activity, not all are equally affected. It has deepened global inequality between the haves and have-nots, especially those living on less than \$1.90 a day—the UN’s 2022 benchmark for extreme poverty. It has created winners and losers between countries and within countries. As UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan noted in 2000, “The central challenge . . . is to ensure that globalization becomes a positive force for all the world’s people, instead of leaving billions of them behind in squalor” (2000: 6).

Increasing globalization is not inevitable, however. In the 2020s, there is growing discussion of the possibility of decreasing globalization or even deglobalization. In some areas, populism has risen in response to globalization with a rejection of traditional elites, a turn toward authoritarianism, and decreased support for international cooperation. During the Covid-19 pandemic, people in many parts of the world became aware of how globalization had created complex global supply chains between producers of various goods in different parts of the world, the manufacturers dependent on those goods, and consumers. When those supply chains were disrupted by the closing of national borders, the health of people and nations was jeopardized. Russia’s invasion of Ukraine in 2022 severed many economic and other links between that country and the rest of the world, showing that country’s vulnerability as a result of its integration in the global economy. The war in Ukraine also revealed the high global dependence on grain and fertilizer from Russia and Ukraine and, hence, the war’s severe effects on food security.

Although globalization now appears to be evolving in unpredictable ways, it is closely linked to the revolution in global communications and transport which owes much to technological changes.

### *Technological Changes*

Globalization would not have been possible without major technological changes in transport and communications that allow the movement of people and goods rapidly over great distances and move information, images, written words, and sound by telephone, Internet, television networks, and various forms of social media. Today’s container ships and tankers carry many times the tonnage faster and at lower cost than ever before. The ease and lower cost of contemporary jet travel have contributed to the flow of

international tourists. In 2012, the number of tourists worldwide passed the 1 billion mark for the first time; it reached 1.5 billion in 2019 according to the World Tourism Organization. The figure was just 25 million in 1952.

Technological advances in communication from the mid-nineteenth-century development of the telegraph to the telephone, radio, film, television, photocopying, satellite communications, faxing, cell phones, the internet, email, and social media have had an enormous impact on global politics and governance. In 2021, the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) reported that an estimated 63 percent of the world's population was using the internet—an increase of 17 percent since 2019. The number of cell or mobile phone subscriptions in the world reached 8 billion in 2021, and the ITU noted that no technology had ever spread this rapidly, especially among the rural poor. Transnational communications allow citizens all over the world to exchange ideas and information and to mobilize like-minded people in support of a particular cause in real time. The cascade of events from Tunisia to Egypt to Yemen, Jordan, Bahrain, Morocco, Libya, and Syria during the Arab Spring uprisings in 2011 owed much to people's use of social media and the inability of authoritarian governments to block the flow of images and information. A similar cascade of events and worldwide mobilization occurred in 2019 with the Black Lives Matter protests that started in the United States. Both the transportation and communications revolutions have aided the formation of transnational networks and social movements.

### *Expanding Transnationalism*

Among the effects of globalization across issues and technological changes is the growth of transnationalism—the networks and connections through which individuals and various types of nonstate actors work together across state borders. It is exhibited in the activities of global civil society, international NGOs, transnational advocacy networks, and transnational social movements.

Beginning in the late 1980s and 1990s, the spread of democracy bolstered the growth of civil society in countries where restrictions on citizens' groups were lifted. Civil society groups created coalitions from the local to the global across a wide range of issues, including the environment, human rights, economic development, and security. The result has been a dramatic rise in transnational activities and corresponding demands for representation in processes of global governance. Various types of transnational groups are discussed further in Chapter 6, but it is important to note that the democratization trend was reversed in the second decade of the twenty-first century, and the consequences for transnationalism remain to be seen as of this writing.

### *Changing Great Power Relations*

Finally, transformations in the international political system, most notably changing great power relationships, are responsible for the increased need

for global governance. Beginning with the collapse of Soviet-supported communist governments in Central Europe in 1989 and 1990 and the disintegration of the Soviet Union itself in 1991 into fifteen separate, independent states, the end of the Cold War marked the beginning of a new era. The international system shifted from a bipolar structure to a post–Cold War structure that was simultaneously unipolar, dominated by a single superpower (the United States) and a nonpolar, networked system of a globalizing world. For a brief period of time, US hegemony reasserted itself. But that period also saw the end of superpower support for many weak states in Asia and Africa, unleashing a string of deadly conflicts and related humanitarian crises in the former Yugoslavia, Somalia, Afghanistan, and elsewhere. These produced increased demands for new forms of conflict resolution, including UN peacekeeping and postconflict peacebuilding. The system changes opened new political space for states and NSAs—space for pursuing new types of cooperation in ending those conflicts, expanding the scope and reach of human rights norms, pursuing ambitious goals for development, and governing growing trade and investment flows. In short, it produced a series of new governance challenges and possibilities for developing new forms of governance.

Thirty years after the Cold War’s end, the world has a new global superpower that is challenging the dominance of the United States. The rise of China is nothing short of remarkable, including its dramatic economic growth to become the world’s second largest economy and its expanded investment in its military capabilities. With its greater self-confidence under the leadership of President Xi Jinping since 2012, China has played a much more assertive international role, competing with the United States for influence and global leadership more broadly. Through its Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), China is supporting major infrastructure projects in many countries and regions. It also created the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB), which is seen as a rival to the World Bank, and it has become far more active within the UN system, seeking top positions in a number of UN agencies and other international organizations. China sees itself as a model for many developing countries, but also wants to assume a greater role in international organizations and become not just a “rules-taker” but a “rules-maker” (Economy 2022: 172). In various ways, China has been using both soft and hard power to follow through on Xi Jinping’s pledge for China “to lead in the reform of the global governance system” while continuing to assert the primacy of the sovereignty and noninterference norms that allow all countries to determine their political and economic paths. While arguing the need for change—especially to give China and other emerging economies more say in international institutions and norms—China is mindful that it owes much to the US-led systems of international norms, rules, and institutions for its own rise (Economy 2022: 172).

The growing competition between the United States and China has major implications for the future of global governance. Complicating the picture, however, is Russia—the former superpower—which shares China’s antipathy for the United States and whose 2022 invasion of Ukraine violated one of the fundamental rules of the post–World War II US-led international order: the rule against using military force to change borders. Whether these geopolitical shifts portend something like a new Cold War or renewal of the original one (some asserted it never fully ended) or something else again will undoubtedly influence the future shape of global governance. The need for governance that can manage these geopolitical shifts and competition is significant, and the Russian invasion of Ukraine, for example, has triggered new demands to address the fundamental inadequacy and unrepresentativeness of the UN Security Council. The makeup of the council and the provision for five permanent members with veto power was realistic in 1945 as the only way to ensure that both the United States and Soviet Union accepted the creation of the United Nations. The makeup of the Security Council has long been unrepresentative of the UN’s full membership and demands for change, especially from countries in the Global South, are hardly new, as is discussed in Chapter 4.

Other needs for global governance arise in relation to specific issues and problems, such as growing numbers of humanitarian crises and complex intrastate conflicts like in Yemen and the Sahel; demands to address gender inequality and gender-based violence; surges in numbers of refugees, displaced persons, and migrants in many areas of the world; an epidemic (Ebola in West Africa in 2014) and a global pandemic (Covid-19) within six years of each other; and the existential challenge of climate change. As Acharya (2016a: 4–5) argues, “Global governance institutions and processes are what their demanders make of them. New areas of demand . . . explain not only the creation of new norms and institutions, but also add diversity to the overall architecture of global governance.” He further asserts that there is a relationship between demand and the design of elements of global governance, including membership, scope, mandate, and decision-making rules.

The six issue area chapters of this book examine the changing nature of each issue area, the relevant key global and regional IGOs, and other types of governance structures, the roles of state and nonstate actors, and the evolution of key aspects of governance. The increased need and demand for global governance magnify the importance of multilateralism as a core process and the importance of leadership and different strategies used by states and nonstate actors. One key way multilateralism has changed is with the expansion of the number and kinds of actors participating. As Deborah Avant, Martha Finnemore, and Susan Sell (2010c: 7) note, “knowing global needs is rarely enough to explain how and why a particular governance out-

come was chosen.” Yet the expansion in the numbers and types of actors, along with the number of different governance structures and the varying agendas of different actors can make the complexity of global governance difficult to sort out.

### **Actors in Global Governance**

The complexity of global governance is a function not only of its many forms but also of its many actors. To be sure, states are central actors in IGOs and in many other forms of global governance, but IGO bureaucracies, treaty secretariats, NGOs, multinational corporations (MNCs), scientific experts, civil society groups, international credit-rating agencies, think tanks, major foundations, networks, public–private partnerships, private military and security companies, as well as transnational criminal and drug-trafficking networks are among the many NSAs (see Figure 1.1). As Dingwerth and Pattberg (2006: 191) put it, “In essence, global governance implies a multi-actor perspective on world politics.” Still, “the novelty is not simply the increase in numbers but also the ability of nonstate actors to take part in steering the political system” (Biermann and Pattberg 2012: 6). Thus, studying actors in global governance means examining the nature and degree of various actors’ participation in different issue areas, their relative power and authority, and in some cases their domestic politics and institutions.

#### **States**

States continue to be key actors in global governance. States alone have sovereignty, which has historically given them authority over their own territory and people and over the powers delegated to international institutions. To be sure, today’s reality is that sovereignty is compromised by the weakness of many states; by globalization, the Internet, and social media; by conditionality on international aid; and by the influences of international norms and NSAs such as banks, global financial markets, and NGOs. Traditionally, states have been the primary sources of IGOs’ funding and military capabilities for multilateral peace-keeping and peace enforcement. They create international law and norms and determine their effectiveness through their compliance or failure to comply. States are still also a primary locus of many people’s identities.

Because the more than 190 states in the international system vary so

#### **Figure 1.1 Actors in Global Governance**

- States and their subnational and local jurisdictions
- IGOs and their bureaucracies
- NGOs and civil society groups
- Experts and epistemic communities
- Networks and partnerships
- Multinational corporations
- Private foundations

dramatically, however, their relative importance in global governance varies. Large, powerful states are more likely to play greater roles than are smaller, less powerful states. Yet small states and middle powers can also be sources of important global governance initiatives, the classic case being Malta, whose permanent representative to the UN in 1967, Arvid Pardo, made his tiny island nation's mark by getting the General Assembly to adopt the norm of the seabed and other global commons areas as "the common heritage of mankind." With significant shifts in the relative power of major states now under way, patterns that have prevailed in the past are changing, making the future difficult to predict.

Historically, the United States used its dominant position after World War II to shape much of the structure and rules of the postwar international system, including the liberal international economic order. Because it used its hard material power and its soft power of attraction and persuasion to promote the principles of multilateralism and compromise and to promote liberal ideas, scholars refer to US hegemony in characterizing the US role. IGOs offered a way to create structures compatible with American notions of political order and through which to promote US political and economic interests as well as ideas and values. Although domestic support for such institutions was not necessarily ensured, governmental and public commitment have generally been strong in the United States and many other countries. The predominance of Americans in many IGO secretariats and the relatively large share of operating and program funding contributed by the United States has reinforced US influence over the policies and programs of many IGOs.

Nonetheless, the history of the United States and international commitments is a mixed one, as shown by the US rejection of membership in the League of Nations in 1921, of the proposed International Trade Organization in 1948, of the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea in 1982, and of the International Criminal Court (ICC) and the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty in 1998. Since 1972, the United States has used its veto in the UN Security Council more than any of the other four permanent members. The US Congress withheld full payment of dues to the UN from 1985 to 2000 and held up reform of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) between 2010 and 2015.

To be sure, US hegemony was challenged throughout the Cold War by the Soviet Union and its allies and by the rise of nationalism among states in Africa, Asia, and the Caribbean that gained their independence from European colonial rule in the 1950s and 1960s. It has also been challenged by the country's own quasi-imperial overstretch and wars in Vietnam, Iraq, Afghanistan, and the global war on terror, which have drained resources and cost the United States legitimacy among friends and allies. Still, the international order that US hegemony created persists.

Yet today, the United States cannot shape global governance alone. As one journalist commented in 2011: “The United States still has formidable strengths. . . . But America will never again experience the global dominance it enjoyed in the 17 years between the Soviet Union’s collapse in 1991 and the financial crisis of 2008. Those days are over” (Rachman 2011: 63). Under the administration of President Donald J. Trump, the United States severely undermined its power and influence in global governance with open criticisms of the UN, withdrawal from the 2015 Paris Climate Agreement, the Iran Nuclear Agreement, the UN Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), and even the World Health Organization (WHO) during the Covid-19 pandemic, and the president’s personal disdain for multilateralism. Although the administration of President Joseph Biden signaled renewed support for the UN, the Paris Climate Agreement, the WHO, and multilateralism in general, others’ faith in US credibility and reliability remains severely damaged.

One of the most extraordinary shifts in world politics in recent years is the rise of China. It is a shift that became more marked with the 2020 pandemic when China moved quickly to position itself as a global leader in pandemic response. With the rapid growth of its economic importance in the world and greater self-confidence under the leadership of President Xi Jinping since 2012, China is now actively challenging the United States and Western dominance in many global institutions. In the UN, for example, China has rapidly increased the number of its nationals serving in various posts and, as of 2021, there were four UN specialized agencies headed by Chinese nationals—more than by any other of the five permanent members of the Security Council (P-5). As the second largest economy since 2013; a major donor to the World Bank; a major investor in Asia, Latin America, and Africa through its Belt and Road Initiative; the second largest contributor to the UN regular budget and peacekeeping expenses; and the world’s largest emitter of carbon dioxide, China is a key actor in global governance.

Before 2022, Russia also sought to restore its position as a major player thirty years after the Soviet Union’s dissolution and the collapse of Russia’s economy in the 1990s, which diminished its power. What type of player it will be depends in part on the outcome of the war in Ukraine. India and Brazil are assertive emerging powers. Together with China, they blocked continuation of the World Trade Organization (WTO) Doha negotiations in 2008 on the issue of the right of developing countries to resist liberalization of trade in agricultural products. Brazil and India are active contenders for permanent seats on the UN Security Council. India has long refused to participate in treaties such as the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty that it regards as discriminating against newer nuclear weapon states. Likewise, Brazil resisted US efforts to create the Free Trade Area of the Americas.

Middle-power states have traditionally played a particularly important role in international institutions, often acting in concert in the UN and other IGOs, taking initiatives on arms control, human rights, and other issues. Argentina, Australia, Canada, the Netherlands, Nigeria, Norway, and Sweden are known for their commitment to multilateralism, ability to forge compromises, and support for reform in the international system. The Nordic countries (Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway, and Sweden), together with the Netherlands have traditionally been major contributors to UN peacekeeping operations; they have met or exceeded development assistance targets; and they have provided about 10 percent of all UN leadership positions. Although they have exemplified Western values, “their effectiveness and reputation within the UN have rested on a perception . . . as being *different* from the rest of the West (or North)” (Laatikainen 2006: 77). The essence of the role of middle powers lies in the importance of secondary players both as followers and leaders in international politics. In a time when power and influence in the world are shifting, fostering cooperation in the future is likely to require leadership based not only on military capability and economic strength but also on diplomatic skill and policy initiatives—strengths that middle and emerging powers as well as small and developing states can contribute.

For the large number of less developed, small, and weak states, power and influence generally come only insofar as they are able to form coalitions that enlarge their voices and offer opportunities to set global agendas and link issues of importance to them. IGOs provide valuable arenas for this and for international recognition and legitimacy. By forming and working through various coalitions, small and developing countries have endeavored to shape the agendas, priorities, and programs of many IGOs with varying degrees of success. The Group of 77 (G-77) has been a major vehicle for developing countries to push their development and trade-related interests since the mid-1960s. Similarly, the thirty-nine-member Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS) has been an important voice on the issue of global climate change. Small and less powerful states also often pick and choose the issues of greatest priority around which to focus their limited resources. Given the large number of IGOs, they may seek to take an issue of particular interest to the body most favorable to their interests—a phenomenon known as forum shopping. By analyzing the roles of small states in global governance, one can discover how skillful use of multilateral diplomacy, coalitions, and networks can alter the power equation, leading to outcomes that serve the interests of people, groups, and states that are not generally considered powerful.

Although states are still regarded as central to maintaining order in the world, since 1990 a number of countries have been sources of disorder due to their inability to perform most basic functions. Hence, problems emanat-



ing from weak, failing, and failed states have become global governance challenges. They include spillover in the form of refugees from civil wars, famine, and conflicts; terrorist groups such as al-Qaeda in the Maghreb that exploit the weakness of states surrounding the Sahara; weak states such as the Democratic Republic of Congo, South Sudan, and Mali that are unable to protect their citizens and rely on UN peacekeeping operations to provide some measure of security. State capability also includes the ability to comply with international rules; track infectious diseases; take effective measures to reduce carbon dioxide emissions; limit trafficking in sex, organs, drugs, and arms; and promote human well-being so that people do not feel compelled to migrate elsewhere in search of a better life.

States, however, may not act with one voice in global governance. Increasingly, provincial, state, and local governments, especially in democratic countries with federal forms of government, are involved in international economic negotiations and in implementing environmental regulations and human rights initiatives, acting independently and occasionally at odds with their national governments. Mayors of large cities now meet periodically at global conferences, becoming subnational actors in global governance. Similarly, transgovernmental networks of government officials—police investigators, financial regulators, judges, and legislators—provide a means of exchanging information, tracking money laundering and terrorist financing, coordinating cross-border law enforcement, expanding the reach of environmental and food safety regulations, and providing training programs and technical assistance to counterparts (Slaughter 2004: 2–4). Such networks are part of the multilevel character of global governance. As Frank Biermann and Philipp Pattberg (2012: 13) put it, “Global standards need to be implemented and put into practice locally, and global norm setting requires local decision-making and implementation . . . with the potential of conflicts and synergies between different levels of regulatory activity.” Chapters 9 and 10 examine some examples.

### *Intergovernmental Organizations*

IGOs are organizations that include at least three states as members, have activities in several states, and are created through a formal intergovernmental agreement such as a treaty, charter, or statute. They also have headquarters, executive heads, bureaucracies, and budgets. Over 260 IGOs ranging in size from 3 members (the US-Mexico-Canada Agreement) to more than 190 members (the Universal Postal Union) exist. Members may come primarily from one geographic region (as in the case of the Organization of American States) or from all geographic regions (as in the case of the World Bank). Although some IGOs are designed to achieve a single purpose (such as the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries), others have been developed for multiple tasks (such as the UN and African

Union). The majority of IGOs are regional or subregional, with a commonality of interest motivating states to cooperate on issues directly affecting them. Among the universe of IGOs, most are small in membership and designed to address specific functions. Most have been formed since World War II, and Europe, among the different regions, has the densest concentration of IGOs (see Figure 1.2).

IGOs are recognized subjects of international law, with separate standing from their member states. In a 1949 advisory opinion, *Reparations for Injuries Suffered in the Service of the United Nations*, the International Court of Justice (ICJ) concluded: “The Organization [the United Nations] was intended to exercise and enjoy, and is in fact exercising and enjoying, functions and rights which can only be explained on the basis of international personality and the capacity to operate upon an international plane. It is at present the supreme type of international organization, and it could not carry out the intentions of its founders if it was devoid of international personality.”

International relations scholars have long viewed IGOs primarily as agents of their member states and focused on their structural attributes, decisionmaking processes, and programs. After all, IGOs are formed by states, and states grant IGOs responsibilities and authority to act. Yet increasingly, IGOs have also been seen as actors in their own right, because their secretariat members play key but often invisible roles in persuading member states to act, coordinating the efforts of different groups, providing the diplomatic skills to secure agreements, and ensuring the effectiveness of programs (Mathiason 2007). These include senior officials such as the UN

**Figure 1.2 Classifying Types of IGOs**

	Examples
<i>Geographic Scope</i>	
Global	United Nations, World Health Organization, World Trade Organization
Regional	Association of Southeast Asian Nations, African Union, European Union
Subregional	Economic Community of West African States, Gulf Cooperation Council
<i>Purpose</i>	
General	Organization of American States, United Nations
Specialized	International Labour Organization, World Health Organization, World Trade Organization

Secretary-General (UNSG) and their deputy, under- and assistant secretaries-general, and the UNSG's special representatives (SRSGs); the directors-general of organizations such as the WHO and WTO; the heads of UN funds and programs, such as the executive director of the World Food Programme (WFP) and the UN High Commissioners for Refugees and Human Rights (UNHCR and UNHCHR); the president of the World Bank; the executive director of the IMF; the secretary-general of the Organization of American States; and the president of the European Commission. These people "will generally possess an identity that is distinct from that of any other entity and an interest in promoting the well-being of the organization and its membership" (Duffield 2007: 13). Stories are legion about the roles secretariat officials have played in achieving international trade agreements, cease-fires in wars, governments' agreement to revise their development strategies to meet international guidelines, organizational reforms, and even the creation of new IGOs (Johnson 2014).

Like other bureaucracies, IGO secretariats often do much more than their member states may have intended. Because many (but not all) IGO bureaucrats are international civil servants rather than individuals seconded to a secretariat from national governments, they tend to take their responsibilities seriously and work hard "to promote what they see as 'good policy' or to protect it from states that have competing interests" (Barnett and Finnemore 2004: 5). IGO bureaucracies also tend to develop their own organizational cultures—sometimes based on the professional backgrounds of many staff members (e.g., public health, finance)—and this can influence how they define issues and what types of policy solutions they recommend. They must respond to new challenges and crises, provide policy options for member states, determine how to carry out vague mandates, reform themselves, and formulate new tasks and procedures. For example, the UN Secretariat created peacekeeping at the height of the Cold War and later devised postconflict peacebuilding operations that include a wide variety of tasks from electoral assistance to police and court reform. IGOs have resources, including money, food, weapons, and expertise. Many IGO bureaucracies play important roles in analyzing and interpreting information, giving it meaning that can prompt action. To some extent, IGOs "help determine the kind of world that is to be governed and set the agenda for global governance" (Barnett and Finnemore 2004: 7).

Thus, IGO bureaucracies are not just tools of states. They are also purposive actors that have power to influence world events. Their authority, and that of bureaucracies generally, "lies in their ability to present themselves as impersonal and neutral—as not exercising power but instead serving others" (Barnett and Finnemore 2004: 21). The need to be seen in this way is crucial for the credibility of the UN Secretariat or the EU Commission, for example. But there is also significant evidence of IGOs doing

something that “wasn’t specifically tasked to them . . . [and] outside any reasonable notion of delegated discretion” (Oestreich 2012: 11). This theory of IGO agency and its implications is discussed further in Chapter 2.

To be sure, not all IGOs are alike, as we shall examine in later chapters. Their authority and autonomy as actors in global governance vary significantly in kind and degree. Like domestic bureaucracies, international bureaucracies may use inaction as a way to avoid doing something they oppose. IGOs may also act against the interests and preferences of strong or weak states (and their secretaries-general may suffer retaliation as a result); they may form partnerships with nonstate actors, other IGOs, and select states to pursue or protect certain policies; and they may attempt to persuade states to change their behavior—for example, by reducing corruption, eliminating food subsidies, or turning over war criminals for prosecution by the International Criminal Court.

Not only do IGOs have secretariats, but so also do a large number of international treaties, particularly in global environmental governance where there is no strong, central IGO. The size of these secretariats varies; that of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change is quite large; others have just a few staff members. Their roles as autonomous actors include generating and disseminating knowledge, framing the definitions of problems and identifying solutions, influencing negotiations through their ideas and expertise, and helping states with treaty implementation (Biermann and Siebenhüner 2013: 149–152). The autonomous influence of the international secretariats of IGOs and treaty regimes varies widely, as it does with all bureaucracies. A major study of environmental bureaucracies has found that the type of problem is a key factor; people and procedures are two other important factors (Campe 2009: 149–152).

International courts are distinctive forms of international organization but are not necessarily seen as IGOs. They have proliferated in recent years, with the creation of nineteen since 1990, creating what one scholar refers to as the “judicialization” of international relations and global governance (Alter 2013). Their roles include dispute settlement, constitutional review, administrative review, enforcement, and providing advisory opinions to the UN in the case of the International Court of Justice (ICJ). Two courts—the Permanent Court of Arbitration and the International Centre for the Settlement of Investment Disputes in the World Bank system—are specifically arbitral bodies, that is, cases are decided by arbitration panels. As with IGOs, there are debates over whether international courts are agents of states or “trustees of the law” with legal and political authority as well as autonomy. Many newer courts provide access for nonstate actors, including NGOs.

### *Nongovernmental Organizations and Civil Society*

Like IGOs, NGOs are key actors in global governance, playing a number of roles. The growth of NGOs and NGO networks since the 1980s has been a

major factor in their increasing involvement in governance at all levels, from global to local. Increasingly, global governance is marked by various types of interactions between IGOs and NGOs.

NGOs are private voluntary organizations whose members are individuals or associations that come together to achieve a common purpose. Some are formed to advocate a particular cause, such as human rights, peace, or environmental protection. Others are established to provide services such as disaster relief, humanitarian aid in war-torn societies, or development assistance. Some are in reality government-organized groups (dubbed GONGOs). Scholars and analysts distinguish between not-for-profit groups (the vast majority) and for-profit corporations; it is also common to treat terrorist, criminal, and drug trafficking groups—the bad side of nonstate actors—separately, as discussed in Chapter 6.

NGOs along with civil society groups are increasingly active today at all levels of human society and governance, from local or grassroots communities to national and international politics. Many national-level groups, often called interest or pressure groups, are now linked to counterpart groups in other countries through networks or federations. International nongovernmental organizations (INGOs), like IGOs, may draw their members from more than one country, and they may have very specific functions or be multifunctional. The big INGOs, along with transnational advocacy networks (TANs) such as the Coalition to Ban Landmines, that bring together many smaller groups are among the most visible NGO actors in global governance. Their roles have been particularly important in expanding human rights and humanitarian and environmental law.

The estimates of numbers of NGOs vary enormously, although the majority—millions—are national-based organizations. In 2020, the UN recognized over 22,000 international NGOs with an international dimension in terms of membership or commitment to conduct activities in several states. Of those, more than 4,000 enjoy a consultative status within the UN. Many large INGOs are transnational federations involving formal, long-term links among national groups. Examples include the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, Oxfam, Médecins Sans Frontières (Doctors Without Borders), the World Wildlife Fund, Transparency International (the leading NGO fighting corruption worldwide), Human Rights Watch, and Amnesty International. The Union of International Associations (UIA) based in Brussels maintains the most comprehensive directory of all IOs, both NGOs and IGOs.

Most of the thousands of grassroots groups in countries around the world are not part of formal networks but may have informal links to large international human rights and development NGOs like Human Rights Watch and CARE, from which they obtain funding for local programs or training assistance. The links between grassroots groups and INGOs are key to activities such as promoting population control, women's empowerment, healthcare,

respect for human rights, and environmental protection. Because these relationships often involve large, Northern-dominated NGOs and Southern grassroots groups, there is a concern about the dependence they foster. Since the early 1990s, the internet, e-mail, fax, and various forms of social media have been valuable tools for NGO mobilization and autonomy, enabling them to access areas that governments and IGOs may be slow to reach.

NGOs are key sources of information and technical expertise on a wide variety of international issues, from the environment to human rights and corruption. They are frequently key actors in raising awareness of and helping frame issues. Thus, landmines came to be seen as a humanitarian rather than an arms control issue, for example (Thakur and Maley 1999). They lobby for policy changes by states, IGOs, and corporations; along with civil society groups, they mount mass demonstrations around major international meetings such as the 2021 UN conference on climate change in Glasgow. They contribute to international adjudication by submitting friend-of-the-court briefs to international criminal tribunals, such as those for the former Yugoslavia and Rwanda, and to trade and investment tribunals. Many NGOs have participated at least indirectly in UN-sponsored global conferences and international negotiations, raising issues and submitting documents. In some cases, they have contributed treaty language, such as with the UN Convention to Combat Desertification (1996) and the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court (2002). They also play important roles in monitoring states' and corporations' implementation of human rights norms and environmental regulations.

We explore the diversity and global governance activities of NGOs and other nonstate actors in Chapter 6, as well as in the issue chapters.

### *Experts and Epistemic Communities*

In a world whose problems seem to grow steadily more complex, knowledge and expertise are critical to governance efforts. There is a need to understand the science behind environmental problems such as climate change, ozone depletion, and declining fish stocks as a basis for considering policy options. Cost-effective alternatives must be developed for fuels that emit carbon dioxide if there is to be political support for making policy changes and new rules. Thus, experts from governmental agencies, research institutes, private industries, and universities around the world have increasingly been drawn into international efforts to deal with various issues. For example, in the UN's early years, statisticians and economists developed the System of National Accounts, which provides the basis for standardizing how countries calculate GDP and other core statistics that serve as a means of measuring economic performance (Jolly, Emmerij, and Weiss 2009: 42). The technical committees of the International Organization for Standardization (ISO), for example, are entirely composed of experts. Often experts

may be part of transnational networks and participate in international conferences and negotiations, laying out the state of scientific knowledge, framing issues for debate, and proposing possible solutions. Since 1988, hundreds of scientists from around the world have participated on the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, whose policy-neutral reports have provided key inputs for global climate change negotiations and sought to raise awareness of the rapid climate-related changes taking place and their likely future effects. Chapter 10 elaborates more on other examples of expert groups and networks in environmental politics—knowledge-based actors that scholars often refer to as “epistemic communities.”

### *Networks and Partnerships*

Networks have become ubiquitous since the 1970s, when Robert Keohane and Joseph Nye (1971) first pointed out the importance of regular interactions of governmental and nongovernmental actors across national boundaries. Subsequently, other scholars have explored the existence of various types of networks, and their power, roles, and policy inputs. For example, Anne-Marie Slaughter (2004) examined the importance of transgovernmental networks of police, judges, regulators, finance ministers, and legislators as central actors in many forms of global governance. Some scholars have focused primarily on networks and information sharing; others were focused on enforcement, such as with environmental regulations; and still others have looked at how networks have solved problems related to harmonization of regulations. Margaret Keck and Kathryn Sikkink (1998), among others, have looked at TANs.

Analytically, networks can be examined as both actors and structures. As actors, they may be defined as an organizational form consciously created by any set of actors that pursue “repeated, enduring exchange relations with one another . . . [yet] lack a legitimate organization authority to arbitrate and resolve disputes that may arise during the exchange” (quoted in Kahler 2009: 5). Networks are distinguished by their voluntary nature, the central role of information and learning, their ability to generate trust among participants, and their lack of hierarchy (Sikkink 2009: 230). Networks’ success depends on their ability to promote and sustain collective action, add new members, and adapt. Their effectiveness will also vary by issue area, their “centrality” to an issue, and the politics of a given issue, as Charli Carpenter’s work (2014) on “lost causes” has shown. As noted previously, TANs are a particular form of network active in global governance, for example, in setting and monitoring human rights standards. Illicit networks such as transnational criminal organizations are targets of governance efforts to control money laundering and other illegal activities; whereas transgovernmental networks allow government officials to share regulatory approaches, provide technical assistance, and harmonize approaches to problems.

Partnerships—particularly what are called public–private partnerships (PPPs) such as those between various UN agencies and private foundations or corporations—have also become increasingly common as actors and particularly as forms of global governance that Liliana Andonova (2017: 6) describes as “a specific new organizational form” transforming multilateralism in the twenty-first century. They bring together expertise and resources, combining the public mandates of IGOs with the market or norm-based steering mechanisms in what she sees as qualitatively different arrangements between states and NSAs. PPPs resemble networks in that they are voluntary arrangements and offer greater flexibility than legalized arrangements, can change rapidly, and are also not without problems. Some, such as the UN Global Compact and the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria have their own secretariats. Catia Gregoratti (2014: 311) notes how partnerships between the UN and businesses have “refashioned not only ideas of how development should be achieved and who should deliver it but also the institutional architecture of the UN itself.” Partnerships involving UN agencies and private corporations and foundations and have become widespread in areas of development, health, women, and children. Their functions range from advocacy, policy development, developing standards of conduct, and business development to providing information, funding, goods, and services. With the UN’s 2015 adoption of the Sustainable Development Goals, a variety of multistakeholder partnerships have been formed to carry out the ambitious agenda (Beisheim and Simon 2018). See Chapters 8 and 11 for further discussion of partnerships.

### *Multinational Corporations*

Multinational corporations or MNCs are a particular form of NSA organized to conduct for-profit business transactions and operations across the borders of three or more states. They are companies based in one state with affiliated branches or subsidiaries and activities in other states and can take many different forms, from Levi’s subcontracting jean production to Nepalese factories to Royal Dutch Shell’s operations in Nigeria and Goldman Sachs’s global operations. By choosing where to invest (or not to invest), MNCs shape the economic development opportunities of communities, countries, and entire regions such as Africa, where for a long time foreign investment lagged behind that of other regions.

Since the 1970s, MNCs have “profoundly altered the structure and functioning of the global economy” (Gilpin 2001: 290). They control resources far greater than those of many states and have taken an active and often direct role in influencing international environmental decisionmaking (Biermann and Pattberg 2012: 8). Globalization of markets and production in industries such as banking and automobiles has challenged corporate leaders and managers to govern these complex structures and posed prob-



lems for states and local governments losing their connection to and control of these larger corporate networks. Corporate choices about investment have also changed the landscape of development assistance. Far more funding for development today comes from private investment capital than from bilateral, government-to-government aid, or from multilateral aid through the UN and other IGOs.

In short, MNCs are important global governance actors. Today they number more than 60,000 depending on one's definition. They are involved in 50 percent of the world's trade and represent about 40 percent of the value in Western stock markets. About 10 percent of the largest MNCs generate 80 percent of the world's total profits. In 2020, the Fortune Global 500 list showed that for the first time China had the largest number with 124 MNCs, while the United States was home to 121 (Kennedy 2020). Given the economic power of MNCs, it is not surprising that their activities have long raised questions. How can they best be regulated—through new forms of international rules or codes of conduct, or through private, industry-developed mechanisms? How can they be mobilized for economic development in collaboration with international agencies and NGOs? How can less developed countries be assured that powerful MNCs will not interfere in their domestic affairs, challenge their sovereignty, destroy their resources and environment, and relegate them to permanent dependency? MNCs are particularly important actors in addressing trade, labor, and environmental issues such as ozone depletion and climate change. It was in recognition of the need to regulate corporate behavior and engage MNCs as positive contributors to global governance that UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan initiated the UN Global Compact on Corporate Responsibility in 1999, which now encompasses more than 21,000 companies in more than 160 countries, an innovation that is discussed further in Chapter 8.

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The various actors in global governance cannot be analyzed in isolation from one another. They play varying roles, with different degrees of power, authority, and effectiveness. Sometimes, they compete for scarce resources, international standing, and legitimacy. At other times, their activities complement one another. Increasingly, they are linked in complex networks and partnerships. Subsequent chapters explore these roles and relationships further.

### **Processes of Global Governance: Multilateralism Matters**

Understanding the nature of multilateral diplomacy is essential to understanding how IGOs and informal groupings of states function, how nonstate actors have become involved in governance processes, and how different

kinds of outcomes come about. Yet the practice of multilateral diplomacy has deep historical roots, as examined in Chapter 3. What matters here is that the Latin American states with support from the United States played key roles in expanding the scope of who could participate, gaining recognition of the equal status and votes of states large and small, and creating a norm of universal participation based on sovereign equality. They were also instrumental in introducing practices of voting, majority rule, regular meetings, and a secretariat to support them, which were all drawn from their experience with a series of inter-American conferences in the late nineteenth century (Finnemore and Jurkovich 2014).

Multilateralism generally refers to a group of states coordinating their relations according to certain principles, with the expectation that each will benefit in the long run (Ruggie 1993). For example, the principle of nondiscrimination governing the global trade system's most favored nation principle prohibits countries from discriminating against imports from other countries that produce the same product. In collective security arrangements, participants must respond to an attack on one country as if it were an attack on all. The process is one which in the words of Vincent Pouliot (2011: 19) involves an "inclusive, institutionalized and principled form of political dialogue" with inherent benefits. It is critical to global governance because it is how "things get done. Thus, it is not just the number and type of parties that matters. It is also the rules of conduct, openness of debate, and greater legitimacy that come from having more participants, including small states, marginalized groups, and all types of actors that can "help mitigate the discriminatory exercise of arbitrary power" (Pouliot 2011: 20). From his perspective, multilateralism is "a functional imperative" because of the transnational nature of contemporary problems and hence needs to include a "host" of actors.

The question whether the practice of multilateralism is linked with US hegemony after World War II is contentious. John Ruggie (1982), for one, has suggested that it is, while Amitav Acharya (2014: 54) suggests that weaker states have used multilateral approaches that are suited to their specific goals and identities and, in the process, either excluded stronger powers or socialized them into locally developed norms. It is noteworthy that China under President Xi Jinping has become a major proponent of multilateralism.

What makes multilateralism in the twenty-first century different from multilateralism in the nineteenth century and at the end of World War II is its complexity, numbers of participants, and diversity of voices. There are now literally scores of participants. States alone have almost quadrupled in number since 1945. The first sessions of the UN General Assembly now look like cozy, intimate gatherings. Other types of actors add to the complexity, as do various coalitions of states. As one observer notes: "Large numbers . . . introduce a qualitatively different kind of diplomacy in inter-

national politics. The hallmark of this diplomacy is that it occurs between groups or coalitions of state actors” (Hampson 1995: 4). In addition, a central issue for many IGOs today is how to do a better job of incorporating NGOs, civil society groups, and other NSAs into processes of global governing, since “securing agreement of government officials is not enough to permit the smooth running of these institutions” (O’Brien et al. 2000: 208). Diplomats—the representatives of states—need to engage in “network diplomacy” with this variety of players, not just with fellow diplomats, with diplomacy becoming an exercise in “complexity management” (Heine 2013: 62).

Greater numbers of players (and coalitions of players) mean multiple interests, with multiple rules, issues, and hierarchies that are constantly in flux. These all complicate the processes of multilateral diplomacy and negotiation—of finding common ground for reaching agreements on collective action, norms, or rules. Managing complexity has become a key challenge for diplomats and other participants in multilateral settings. For example, UN-sponsored conferences such as the 2021 Glasgow conference (discussed further in Chapter 10) have several thousand delegates from 193 member countries, speaking through interpreters in English, French, Russian, Chinese, Spanish, and Arabic. Hundreds of NGOs and numerous private citizens are interested in what happens and are active around the official sessions, trying to influence delegates.

Although the universe of multilateral diplomacy is complex, there is actually a high degree of similarity in the structures of most IGOs and in the types of decisionmaking processes used. We look here at key patterns in how decisions get made in multilateral bodies including IGOs.

### *How Do Decisions Get Made?*

Historically, because IGOs are created by states, the principle of sovereign equality has dictated one-state, one-vote decisionmaking. Indeed, until well into the twentieth century, all decisions had to be unanimous, as states would not accept the concept of majority decisionmaking. This is often cited as one of the sources of failure for the League of Nations.

An alternative principle accords greater weight to some states on the basis of population or wealth and results in weighted or qualified voting. In the IMF and World Bank, for example, votes are weighted according to financial contribution. In the EU’s Council of Ministers, qualified majority voting applies to issues where the EU has supranational authority over member states. The number of votes for each state is based on population; the number of votes required to pass legislation ensures that the largest states must have support of some smaller states; and neither the smaller states alone nor fewer than three large states can block action. Another form of qualified majority voting prevails in the UN Security Council, where the

five permanent members each have a veto and all must concur (or not object) for decisions to be made.

Since the 1980s, much of the decisionmaking in the UN General Assembly, Security Council, and other bodies, as well as in global conferences, the WTO, and many other multilateral settings has taken the form of consensus that does not require unanimity. It depends on states deciding not to block action, and it often means that outcomes represent the least common denominator—that is, more general wording and fewer tough demands on states to act. “Pressure toward consensus,” Courtney Smith (1999: 173) notes, “now dominates almost all multilateral efforts at global problem solving.” Key variables in achieving consensus among multiple actors with diverse interests are leadership; small, formal negotiating groups; issue characteristics (including issue salience to different actors); various actor attributes such as economic or military power or ability to serve as brokers; the amount and quality of informal contacts among actors; and personal attributes of participants such as intelligence, tolerance, patience, reputation, negotiating skills, creativity, and linguistic versatility. Let us look briefly at two of these: leadership and actor strategies.

### *Leadership*

Leadership in multilateral diplomacy can come from diverse sources: powerful and not-so-powerful states, a coalition of states, an NGO or coalition of NGOs, a skillful individual diplomat, or an IGO bureaucrat. Leadership can involve framing an issue in a way that garners strong support for action or coming up with a compromise that secures agreement on a new international trade agreement; it may involve the skill of negotiating a treaty text acceptable to industry, NGOs, and key governments. It may be the efforts of a coalition of NGOs and college students publicizing an issue such as sweatshops and pressuring companies to change their behavior. It may involve a government’s (or any other actor’s) willingness to act first—to commit monetary resources to a program or military forces for enforcement, change trade laws, or commit to significant carbon dioxide emissions reductions, as Presidents Barack Obama and Xi Jinping did ahead of the 2015 UN climate change conference in Paris. Leadership in multilateral diplomacy can also come from a prominent official such as the UNSG or the UN Environment Programme’s executive director who prods various actors to do something.

Increasingly, we see women among the leaders in global governance in senior official positions in governments and IGOs and as permanent representatives of their countries in the UN and other IGOs, but it has taken a major push for gender equality in IGOs and countries for this to occur. Although the numbers of women in official leadership positions have certainly increased, they remain relatively small but are complemented by

women exercising leadership through NGOs and social movements on various issues (Haack and Karns 2023).

Historically, the United States provided much of the leadership for multilateralism after World War II, using its position as the dominant, hegemonic power to shape the structure of the system, including establishing many IGOs, such as the UN, the Bretton Woods institutions, the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), and the liberal international trade regime centered first in the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade and later in the WTO. This enabled the United States to use IGOs as instruments of its national policies and to create institutions and rules compatible with its interests and values. The wisdom of this approach as then-US Senator Barack Obama put it in 2007 was to recognize that “instead of constraining our power, these institutions magnified it” (Obama 2007).

As geopolitical shifts are taking place, the United States has found itself stretched thin and less willing and able to lead at the same time. As a result, Bruce Jentleson (2012: 141) notes, “there is much less deference to US preferences and privileges.” Now, even more than in the past, leadership in global governance may come from disparate sources, including NSAs, or be absent altogether. Increasingly, China has sought to place its officials in senior IGO positions, as noted earlier. It has also worked to reframe established liberal norms on security and development particularly with regard to peacekeeping and peacebuilding, shifting as one scholar describes from being a “norms taker” to a “norms maker” (Alden and Large 2015). One measure of Russia’s loss of influence and potential for leadership following its 2022 invasion of Ukraine was the failure of its candidate for the governing board of the International Civil Aviation Organization to gain enough votes for reelection. Likewise, there are increasing challenges to the “lock” other major powers have long had on certain posts such as the United States has, for example, on the World Bank presidency. In an encouraging sign of greater diversity, in 2023, African women held a number of senior posts, including the executive directorships of the WTO, the UN Fund for Population Activities, and the UN Global Compact, and Deputy Secretary-General of the UN.

### *Actor Strategies*

The nature of multilateral arenas means that actors cannot just present their individual positions on an issue and then sit down. Delegates must actively engage in efforts to discern the flexibility or rigidity of others’ positions on particular issues. They must build personal relationships to establish the trust that is essential to working together. Some states, NGOs, and other actors will take a stronger interest in particular topics than others; some will come with specific proposals, push to get them on the agenda and then work to mobilize support; some will be represented by individuals with

greater expertise than others on a topic or more skill in drafting compromise language; some will be represented by people with little or no experience in multilateral diplomacy while others have long experience and great skill in negotiating across cultures, which is an inherent part of multilateral diplomacy. Some actors' positions will matter more than those of others, because of their relative power in the international system, in a specific region, or on a particular issue. The face-to-face interactions of the individuals representing participating states (and groups) are what caucusing is all about, even in an age of online communication. It may take place at the back of the UN General Assembly, in the delegates' dining room, at diplomatic receptions, in the restrooms, or in the corridors surrounding the official meeting place. In short, those actors that pursue well-thought-out strategies for taking advantage of multilateral arenas and diplomacy are more likely to be successful in securing their aims.

One actor strategy that is a hallmark of multilateral diplomacy is the formation of groups or coalitions of states. States can pool their votes, power, and resources to try to obtain a better outcome than they might by going it alone. Early in the UN's history, for example, regional groups formed to elect nonpermanent members of the Security Council and other bodies. The Cold War produced competing groups under the leadership of the Soviet Union and United States, plus the Non-Aligned Movement. Latin American, African, and Asian states formed the G-77 in 1964 to promote their shared interests as developing countries. In short, group diplomacy is pervasive throughout much of the UN system and in regional organizations and the WTO. Coalitions and groups are discussed further in Chapter 4.

Group members must negotiate among themselves to agree on a common position, maintain cohesion, prevent defections to rival coalitions, and choose representatives to bargain on their behalf. Small states or middle powers often play key roles in bridging the positions of different groups of states. For example, during the Uruguay Round of international trade negotiations in the early 1990s, a group of countries called the Cairns Group, led by Canada, Australia, and Argentina, helped resolve sharp disagreements between the United States and the EU over agricultural trade. A variation on coalition building, especially for nonstate actors, as discussed earlier, is the creation of networks to expand their reach and link various groups with shared concerns and awareness that common goals cannot be achieved on their own. Networking has been used extensively by TANs for a variety of issues and problems, from promoting the rights of women and stopping the construction of large dams to addressing the governance challenges of HIV/AIDS.

The proliferation of international forums means that states and nonstate actors can often "shop" for the forum best suited to take an issue. Although some issues logically belong only within the relevant specialized IGO, the

increasing interrelatedness of many issues makes the neat compartmentalization of these IGOs often outdated. For example, a labor issue could be raised in the International Labour Organization, the WTO, or the EU. Health issues could be raised in the WHO, the World Bank, the UN Joint Programme on HIV/AIDS, the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, or the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis, and Malaria. Despite consensus that African states should resolve regional conflicts in an African organization, such as the AU or the Economic Community of West African States, some African states have preferred to take disputes to the UN, where they hope to gain more support for their cause.

In reality, actor strategies in global governance bear strong resemblance to common governance and policymaking actions. These include framing an issue, agenda-setting, advocacy, and mobilizing support through coalition-building. There are rich global governance-related literatures on each of these topics that illumine the variety of actors in global governance and the roles they play in various institutions and processes through which some issues get attention and action and some do not, some policy options get on the table and some do not. They show how different governance problems are defined and potential solutions are identified and how support for and against issues and potential solutions are mobilized. For example, some of this work has been inspired by Keck and Sikkink's (1998) book on transnational advocacy networks followed more recently by Carpenter's (2014; Carpenter et al. 2014) work on advocacy, agenda-setting, gatekeepers, issue adoption, and lost causes. Examining these actor strategies in global governance means thinking about it in terms of policy processes, not institutional structures or elements of governance, such as law, rules, norms, and programs, important as these are. We discuss these processes further in Chapter 6.

### **The Varieties of Global Governance**

Global governance encompasses a variety of cooperative problem-solving arrangements and activities that states and other actors undertake in an effort to resolve conflicts, serve common purposes, and overcome inefficiencies in situations of interdependent choice. These forms include a wide variety of international organizations (IOs), both IGOs and NGOs; less formal groupings of states such as various "Gs", clubs, and friends groups; international rules, regulations, standards, and laws, as well as norms or "soft law"; international regimes in which the rules, norms, and structures in a specific issue area are linked together; ad hoc arrangements and conferences; private governance arrangements; and public-private partnerships such as the UN Global Compact and Partnerships for Sustainable Development (see Figure 1.3). The varieties have proliferated, complicating efforts

to create neat categories. Where scholars in the past identified international regimes governing issues such as nuclear nonproliferation, now there are a number of “regime complexes,” that is, “networks of three or more international regimes that relate to a common subject matter” such as food security (Orsini, Morin, and Young 2013: 29). Let us look briefly at these varieties of global governance.

### *Key Structures and Mechanisms: IGOs*

IGOs provide the central core of formal multilateral machinery that constitutes the “architecture of global governance” (Cooper and Thakur 2014: 265). Since the late nineteenth century, more and more IGOs have been created to perform more and more tasks. They serve many functions, including collecting information and monitoring trends (as in the case of the UNEP), delivering services and aid (UNHCR), and providing forums for intergovernmental bargaining (the EU) and adjudicating disputes (the ICJ and other courts). They have helped states form stable habits of cooperation through regular meetings, information-gathering and analysis, and dispute settlement, as well as operational activities (see Figure 1.4). They enhance individual and collective welfare. They have provided modes of governance in the evolution of the world economy since 1850 (Murphy 1994). They also “construct the social world in which cooperation and choice take place” and “help define the interests that states and other actors come to hold” (Barnett and Finnemore 2005: 162). A further function

of IGOs and particularly of the UN has been the development of key ideas and concepts about security (e.g., the concept of human security) and economic and social development (human and sustainable development). As the authors of the final volume of the United Nations Intellectual History Project conclude, ideas are among the most significant contributions the UN has made to the world and to human progress. The UN has generated ideas, provided a forum for debate, given ideas legitimacy, promoted their adoption for policy, generated resources for implementing and monitoring progress, and sometimes even buried ideas (Jolly, Emmerij, and Weiss 2009: 34–35).

**Figure 1.3**  
**Varieties of Global Governance**

- International structures and mechanisms (formal and informal) IGOs: global, regional, other; NGOs; networks, and partnerships
- International rules and laws, multilateral agreements; customary practices; judicial decisions, regulatory standards
- International norms or “soft law;” framework agreements; select UN resolutions
- International regimes and regime complexes
- Ad hoc groups, arrangements, and global conferences
- Private and hybrid public–private governance



How IGOs serve their various functions varies across organizations. IOs differ in membership. They vary by the scope of the subject and rules. They differ in the amount of resources available and by level and degree of bureaucratization as well as in their effectiveness.

Why do states join such organizations? Why do they choose to act and cooperate through formal IGOs? Kenneth Abbott and Duncan Snidal (1998: 4–5) suggest that IGOs “allow for the centralization of collective activities through a concrete and stable organizational structure and a supportive administrative apparatus. These increase the efficiency of collective activities and enhance the organization’s ability to affect the understand-

ings, environment, and interests of states.” Thus, states join to participate in a stable negotiating forum, permitting rapid reactions in times of crisis. They join IGOs to negotiate and implement agreements that reflect their own interests and those of the larger community. They participate to provide mechanisms for dispute resolution. They join to take advantage of centralized organization in implementing collective tasks. By participating, they seek a voice in international debates on important issues as well as a say on critical norms of behavior. They also frequently agree to delegate program implementation to international bureaucrats. Yet states maintain their sovereignty and varying degrees of independence of action.

IGOs not only create opportunities for their member states, they also exercise influence and impose constraints on their member states’ policies and processes. IGOs affect member states by setting international and national agendas, forcing governments to take positions on issues. They subject states’ behavior to surveillance through information-sharing and monitoring such as the Universal Periodic Review process created by the UN Human Rights Council in 2006 (discussed in Chapter 9). IGOs encourage states to develop specialized decisionmaking and implementation processes to facilitate and coordinate IGO participation. They embody or facilitate the creation of principles, norms, and rules of behavior with which states must align their policies if they wish to benefit from reciprocity. For example, as described in Chapter 8, China’s admission to the WTO required extensive governmental reforms.

#### **Figure 1.4** **IGO Functions**

- Informational: gathering, analyzing, and disseminating data
- Forum: providing place for exchange of views and decisionmaking
- Normative: defining standards of behavior
- Rule creation: drafting legally binding treaties
- Rule supervision: monitoring compliance with rules, adjudicating disputes, taking enforcement measures
- Operational: allocating resources, providing technical assistance and relief, deploying forces
- Idea generation

Most countries perceive that there are benefits to participating in IGOs even when it is costly. South Africa never withdrew from the UN over the long years when it was repeatedly condemned for its policies of apartheid. Iraq did not withdraw from the UN when it was subjected to more than a decade of stringent sanctions. China spent fourteen years negotiating the terms of its entry into the international trade system and undertaking changes in laws and policies required to comply with WTO rules. Twelve countries joined the EU between 2004 and 2007, despite the extensive and costly changes required. The United States is one of the very few countries that have withdrawn from IGOs to demonstrate their unhappiness with an organization's actions.

Although the earliest IGOs were established in the nineteenth century, there was a veritable explosion of IGOs in the twentieth century, as discussed in Chapter 3. Since the 1960s, there has also been a growing phenomenon of IGOs creating other IGOs. One study found that IGO birthrates “correlate positively with the number of states in the international system,” but found death rates of IGOs low (Cupitt, Whitlock, and Whitlock 1997: 16). A more recent study found that around 38 percent of IGOs have now become so-called zombies—they continue to act but have made no progress on achieving their mandates. Another 10 percent are essentially dead, existing in name but having no visible level of activity (Gray 2018).

### *NGOs*

The governance functions of NGOs parallel many functions provided by IGOs. In general, however, NGOs can be divided into service and advocacy groups. The latter provide processes at many levels to pressure or persuade individuals, governments, IGOs, corporations, and other actors to improve human rights, protect the environment, tackle corruption, ban landmines, or intervene in conflicts such as Syria's civil war. The Geneva Conventions delegate legal responsibility for humanitarian law to the International Committee of the Red Cross. Some IGOs, such as the ILO, the World Tourism Organization, and the UN Joint Programme on HIV/AIDS, provide for NGO roles in their governance. The Final Outcome of the 1992 UN Conference on the Environment and Development in Rio de Janeiro recommended that NGOs participate at all levels in implementation. As a result of global trends to privatize activities previously controlled by governments, services once provided by governments or IGOs are now often contracted out to NGOs, which have also become critical partners for UN and other IGO programs, funds, and agencies in delivering disaster relief, running refugee camps, administering development programs, delivering food aid to areas of famine, and working to protect the environment. They are important forms of global governance because of how they enable individuals to “act publicly” (Kaldor 2003: 585). Likewise, their “voluntary, local, and issue-

specific character . . . [and the networks they create] make them a useful link between the subnational community and national and international communities and institutions” (Ku and Diehl 2006: 171). In this sense, they function as transmission belts among multiple levels of governance.

*Rule-Based Governance:*

*International Rules, Standards, and Law*

The scope of what is generally known as public international law has expanded tremendously since the 1960s. Although the Statute of the ICJ recognizes five sources of international law (treaties or conventions, customary practice, the writings of legal scholars, judicial decisions, and general principles of law), much of the growth has been in treaty law. At the conclusion of the twentieth century, for example, there were a total of 82,000 publicized international agreements, including the Vienna Convention on Treaties; conventions on ozone, climate change, and whaling; law of the sea; humanitarian law (the Geneva Conventions); human rights law; trade law; and intellectual property law, as well as arms control agreements (Johnston 1997). By far the largest number of new multilateral agreements deals with economic issues. Treaty-based law is particularly valued, but customary practice persists as an important source of new law, particularly because of the long time it takes to negotiate and ratify agreements involving many states.

For purposes of global governance, one major limitation of public international law is that it applies only to states, except for war crimes and crimes against humanity. At present, only EU treaties can be used directly to bind individuals, MNCs, NGOs, paramilitary forces, terrorists, or international criminals. Treaties can, however, establish norms (sometimes referred to as soft law) that states are expected to observe and, where possible, enforce against NSAs.

Another problem in the eyes of many is the limited international enforcement mechanisms and the role of self-interest in shaping states’ decisions about whether to accept treaties and other forms of international rules. International law traditionally left it to states to use “self-help” to secure compliance. Both the UN Charter and EU treaties provide enforcement mechanisms, primarily in the form of sanctions, although the threat of sanctions is not necessarily a strong motivator for states to comply with international rules.

Even without enforcement mechanisms, as Louis Henkin (1979: 47) concluded, “Almost all nations observe almost all principles of international law and almost all of their obligations almost all of the time.” What explains this mostly compliant behavior? Legal experts cite different factors: coincidence with national interest and basic efficiency (Chayes and Chayes 1995), the value of preserving one’s reputation for law-abiding behavior (Brewster 2013), and the value of the benefits of reciprocity. Peer

pressure and persuasion from other states and domestic or transnational pressures from NGOs may also induce compliance (Ratner 2013).

Yet not all states comply with all international law. Noncompliance can be explained by the ambiguity of treaty language, for example (Chayes and Chayes 1995). For weaker and developing countries, failure to comply can be a consequence of inadequate local expertise, resources, or governmental capacity to do what is required for compliance. In many states, domestic politics may play a major role in determining their willingness or ability to comply with international law. That has certainly been a major factor for the United States in the failure of the Senate to ratify a number of treaties. Yet as Jana von Stein (2013) has noted, noncompliance is a spectrum not a dichotomy. And, as Beth Simmons (2009) has shown, compliance with international human rights treaties largely depends on the citizens of states since they have the most incentive to hold their governments to human rights commitments through domestic mechanisms. She also emphasizes that actual improvements in human rights are more important than technical, legal compliance with treaties.

Global and regional organizations incorporate different levels of legal commitments. The EU has its own legal system that lies between traditional national legal systems and international law, with the Court of Justice of the EU to interpret it and enforce judgments against member states. EU law is discussed more in Chapter 5, as the EU has a high level of legal obligation or legalization, relatively high levels of precision (rules tend to be clearly defined), and high levels of delegation (authority granted to third parties for implementation). Because of this, the EU has played a key role in setting legal standards across a variety of issue areas that are followed not only in the EU but around the world (Bradford 2020). Other IGOs and regional integration arrangements lie between the extremes of legalization, where actors combine and invoke varying degrees of obligation, precision, and delegation to create varying blends of politics and law (Abbott et al. 2000).

Beyond public international law and EU law is a wide range of international standard-setting and rulemaking, both public and private, that forms an important part of global governance. States, corporations, and standards-setting bodies such as the International Organization for Standardization, which is itself a network of standards-setting bodies and discussed further in Chapter 3, all contribute. In other examples, the WHO manages the International Health Regulations and the Food and Agriculture Organization oversees the Codex Alimentarius, both of which are sources of rules and standards. Even the UN Security Council contributes through its rulemaking on antiterrorism and nuclear nonproliferation.

The largest number of these rules and standards are outputs of private sector bodies that create international product standards on everything from the strength of steel and the specifications that enable nuts and bolts to con-

nect to the dimensions of cargo containers. Clearly, the major impetus for setting and complying with these standards are economics and market access for private companies (Büthe and Mattli 2011; Gadinis 2015). Since the creation of the WTO in 1995, an added stimulus has come from the WTO Agreement on Technical Barriers to Trade and the obligations of all WTO members to use international standards as the technical basis for domestic laws and regulations. Also important are what one scholar has called “informal rules” (Tieku 2019) and what others would call soft law or norms.

### *International Norms or “Soft Law”*

Since the late 1980s, scholars have increasingly recognized the importance of norms as another variety of global governance. Norms are shared expectations or understandings regarding standards of appropriate behavior for various actors, particularly states. They range from the norm that states are obligated to carry out treaties they ratify (*pacta sunt servanda*) to the expectation that combatants will not target civilians. Norms vary in strength and determining whether one exists involves ascertaining whether states perceive that a certain practice is obligatory or expected. Some norms are so internalized in states that they are difficult to recognize unless a violation occurs. Still others are weak, contested, or “emerging.” The importance of norms has emerged from early work on human rights and humanitarian norms, chemical and nuclear weapons taboos, and the “polluter pays” principle with regard to the environment. It was the work of Martha Finnemore and Kathryn Sikkink (1998) that first explored how norms emerge and spread through their articulation of the concepts of “norm life cycles” and “norm cascades,” as well as “norm entrepreneurs” and “norm internalization.” For Acharya (2004, 2014) norms take on a regional character, exploring the question of why some transnational ideas and norms find more acceptance in some locales than in others, providing important insights on norm diffusion. Two points bear emphasizing: first, norms are works in progress that can encompass different meanings and reflect power relations; second, how norms are framed can be critically important to whether and how they take hold and spread, how they are adopted in different parts of the world, how much they matter, and whether they erode over time.

Many norms are incorporated into international legal conventions and referred to as soft law. Examples include human rights and labor rights norms, the concept of the global commons applied to the high seas, outer space, and polar regions, and the concept of sustainable development. The debate over the status of the concept of “responsibility to protect” as a norm is discussed in Chapter 7. Other forms of soft law include codes of conduct, world conference declarations, and certain UN resolutions such as the 1970 General Assembly Resolution 2749 that recognized the high seas, outer space, and polar regions as forming the common heritage of mankind.

In environmental law, we can see the evolution of norms, soft law, and law over time. An initial framework convention often sets forth norms and principles that states agree on, but no concrete actions are mentioned. As scientific understanding of the problem improves, the political environment changes, and technology provides new possible solutions leading states, key corporations, and other interested actors may agree on specific, binding steps to be taken. Protocols are used to supplement the initial framework convention and form the “hard” law. Negotiations often follow to make explicit that hard law establishing state obligations to take urgently needed action to reduce emissions. Soft law is easier to negotiate and more flexible, and it leaves open the possibility of negotiating hard law in the future. Soft law can also be a means of linking international law to private entities, including individuals and MNCs, such as through codes of practice of corporate social responsibility.

### *International Regimes and Regime Complexes*

Since the 1980s, scholars have used the concept of international regimes to understand governance where principles, norms, rules, and decisionmaking procedures are linked in a particular issue area. Where international regimes exist, such as for nuclear weapons proliferation, whaling, health, and food aid, participating states and other international actors recognize the existence of certain obligations and feel compelled to honor them. Because this is “governance without government,” they comply based on an acceptance of the legitimacy of the rules and underlying norms and the validity of the decisionmaking procedures. They expect other states and actors also to comply and use relevant dispute settlement procedures to resolve conflicts.

International regimes encompass rules and norms, as well as the practices of actors that show how their expectations converge and their acceptance of and compliance with rules. IGO decisionmaking procedures, bureaucracies, budgets, headquarters, and legal personality may be part of a given issue area, but individual IGOs, by themselves, do not constitute a regime. Some issues, such as nuclear accidents that trigger widespread nuclear fallout (e.g., the 1986 Chernobyl disaster), do not need a formal organization that functions regardless of whether there is an accident. Ad hoc arrangements for decisionmaking and taking action when an accident occurs can be coupled with existing rules and norms. The regime for nuclear weapons proliferation, however, includes the inspection machinery and safeguard systems of the International Atomic Energy Agency, the export controls of the Nuclear Suppliers Group, and the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (which is observed even though it is not yet fully in effect), the UN Security Council’s enforcement powers, and the IAEA’s technical assistance programs to non-nuclear weapon countries for developing peaceful uses of nuclear energy. In issue areas where regimes exist, they constitute the core global governance.

Scholars have also identified a number of what are called “regime complexes.” These are defined as “an array of partially overlapping and nonhierarchical institutions governing a particular issue area” (Raustiala and Victor 2004: 278–279). The complexity arises from the lack of hierarchy and overlaps in membership, mandates, and rules, which can lead to uncertainty about which rules and interpretations of rules prevail and the potential for decisions in one body to undermine or influence decisions in another (Alter and Raustiala 2018). It can create opportunities for forum shopping, that is, for states to seek the forum likely to be most favorable to their preferences and for conflicts over interpretations of rules and competing authority claims.

The global refugee regime complex, explored further in Chapter 11, is one example. Its elemental regimes include the refugee regime centered around the UNHCR, the human rights regime centered around the international human rights conventions and the UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, the humanitarian regime that includes the UN Office for Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, and the labor migration regime based on International Labour Organization conventions. Because of the complexity, what becomes problematic is not only that elemental regimes overlap, but as Betts (2013) notes, relevant actors are in different agencies that have different mandates, memberships, decisionmaking processes, and dynamics with different sources of authority. Other examples include the food security, maritime piracy, and international forest regime complexes.

The value of the regime complex concept is that it captures the reality that “Global problems increasingly overlap and intersect. As new problems emerge on the international agenda, they often are fit into preexisting institutions and agreements”; these arrangements “rarely occur on a blank slate” (Alter and Raustiala 2018: 337). A regime complex is often an almost inevitable result of broader international relations trends: the density of international agreements and international organizations; the ease of creating something new instead of reforming something that already exists; the inevitability of shifts in power and preferences as well as the emergence of new problems, demands for greater representation, and some degree of confusion. Indeed, regime complexity makes it harder to understand the global governance of some issues and requires more than just mapping a complex to discover how institutions and outcomes have evolved, how states and other actors have adapted their strategies given the complexity, and who have been winners and losers.

### *Groups and Global Conferences*

As multilateralism has become the dominant practice in international affairs, other less formal forms of global governance have emerged—some more institutionalized than others. These include various intergovernmental arrangements and groups that lack the legal formality of charters or treaties such as UN-sponsored global conferences, panels, forums, and commissions.

The first of the Gs was the G-77, formed by developing countries of Africa, Asia, and Latin America in 1964 in conjunction with the establishment of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development. For many years, it operated as a unified bloc constituting more than two-thirds of the UN's membership. It is still active today, but less cohesive, as member country interests have diverged.

The Group of Seven (G-7) began in the mid-1970s when summit meetings of governmental leaders were not yet common practice and major changes in international economic relations suggested the value of periodic, informal gatherings. These later evolved into a regular arrangement, including annual summits, but not a formal IGO. The G-7's agenda grew well beyond macroeconomic policy coordination, as discussed further in Chapter 8. From 1992 to 2014, Russia joined the group for noneconomic discussions, thus creating the Group of Eight (G-8), which dealt with issues surrounding the Cold War's end, the rising threat of terrorism, and so on. That ended with Russia's annexation of Crimea in 2014.

In 1999, the Group of 20 (G-20) was created as a forum for economic policy discussions among the finance ministers and central bank governors of advanced and emerging market countries. It includes nineteen states and the EU, with the World Bank and IMF participating on an *ex officio* basis. Today, the G-20 members represent 90 percent of world GDP, 80 percent of world trade, and two-thirds of world population. Little known until the 2008–2009 global financial crisis, when US president George W. Bush convened the first summit meeting, it now convenes annually at the summit level. Like the G-7, it does not have a permanent secretariat. The G-20 welcomed the African Union in 2023 and is discussed in Chapter 8.

Within and outside the UN system, various *ad hoc* multilateral “contact” and “friends” groups have been formed to harness multilateral diplomatic efforts to address specific problems. The first contact group was formed in the late 1970s to secure the independence of Southwest Africa, which was originally a German colony, then a League of Nations mandate territory administered by South Africa, but not given independence or converted to a UN trusteeship after World War II (Karns 1987). After nearly ten years of diplomacy, it gained independence as Namibia in 1990. Other contact groups have formed, for example, to aid the search for peace in Central America in the late 1980s and in the former Yugoslavia in the 1990s, and to marshal assistance for Ukraine in 2022.

Another type of governance entity is the not-for-profit World Economic Forum—an international organization (not IGO) that promotes public–private cooperation. It hosts an annual gathering of government, business, and other elites each year in Davos, Switzerland.

Since the 1970s, the UN has convened many global conferences and, more recently, summits on topics ranging from the environment, food supply,



population, and women's rights to water supplies, children, and desertification. There was a large cluster of these conferences in the 1970s and another in the 1990s, with a lull in the 1980s and an effort to scale back since 2000. These conferences have spawned complex multilateral diplomacy, with NGOs, scientific experts, corporations, and interested individuals trying to influence outcomes, but often have been disappointing because their outcomes represent the least common denominator of agreement among the large number of participants, of whom only states actually have a formal say.

UN conferences like the Summit for Children (New York, 1990), the Earth Summit (Rio, 1992), and the four World Conferences on Women (1975, 1980, 1985, 1995) have been important global political processes for addressing interdependence issues. Cumulatively, the conferences have also bolstered understanding of the linkages among issues such as environmental protection, equal rights (especially for women), poverty elimination, and participation of local communities. They are discussed in Chapter 4.

### *Private Governance*

Private governance is a growing phenomenon that involves authoritative decisionmaking in areas where states have not acted, or have chosen not to exercise authority, or where states have themselves been ineffective in the exercise of authority. A variety of private transnational regulatory organizations, for example, have been established and governed by actors from business, civil society, and other sectors to set a wide range of voluntary standards for corporations and other entities on issues ranging from workers' rights to climate change. These entities also promote, monitor, and enforce standards. Operating through markets, they rely on incentives such as consumer demand, reputational benefits, reduced transactional costs, and avoidance of mandatory regulations (Abbott, Green, and Keohane 2016: 2). Other examples of private governance and governors include international accounting standards set by the International Accounting Standards Board; the private bond-rating agencies, such as Moody's Investors Service and Standard & Poor's Ratings Group, whose rules can shape government actions through a threatened drop in a country's rating; International Chamber of Commerce rules and actions; initiatives to establish social and environmental certifications for certain products, such as the those of Fairtrade International and the Forest Stewardship Council, through which major corporations and advocacy groups collaborate; and labor standards in a single multinational firm, such as Nike or Ford.

Private authorities are not inherently good or bad, but they have some advantages and disadvantages. Abbott, Green, and Keohane (2016), for example, have compared the ways private governance initiatives can more quickly identify and fill governance gaps (and fill niches blocked by lack of agreement among states) as well as provide opportunities for NSA participation.

They also find such initiatives less resilient than IGOs, vulnerable to changes in circumstances, and less predictable.

Occasionally, however, global corporations may be more powerful than some international organizations in their ability to “more effectively sanction and govern network members” (May 2018: 348).

### *Public–Private Partnerships*

Since the late 1980s, the variety of public–private partnerships involving the UN and most of its specialized agencies, funds, and programs, including the UN Development Programme, the World Bank, the UN Children’s Fund, and the UNEP, has mushroomed with the recognition that such partnerships can contribute to achieving internationally agreed development goals. UNSG Kofi Annan’s Global Compact initiative, created in 1999, was an important step, as was the 2002 World Summit on Sustainable Development in Johannesburg, which called for creating partnerships for sustainable development. Partnerships have become a major source of funding and have influenced ideas of how development should be achieved and who should deliver it, as well as the architecture of the UN itself (Gregoratti 2014: 311). Some are large, institutionalized, multistakeholder arrangements; others are more temporary with fewer actors. Not all are about donating money; they may involve mobilizing corporate knowledge, personnel, and expertise to achieve policy objectives. These partnerships represent a more decentralized form of governance, one that is also networked, flexible, and voluntary (Andonova 2017). Public–private partnerships such as Goldman Sachs 10000 Women global initiative and the EU Directive on gender balance in decisionmaking positions, for example, have served as vehicles for promoting gender equality in businesses and governments (Prügl and True 2014).

Although the newer forms of global governance vary in scope, effectiveness, and durability, as discussed in later chapters, those that do not involve states have begun to raise troubling questions of legitimacy. We explore this issue in Chapter 12.

## **The Politics and Effectiveness of Global Governance**

The politics of global governance reflects “struggles over wealth, power, and knowledge” in the world (Murphy 2000: 798) and over “the global structures, processes, and institutions that shape the fates and life chances of actors around the world” (Barnett and Duval 2005: 7–8). Thus, although power relationships among states still matter, so do the resources and actions of a host of NSAs, including international organizations. Among the central issues, then, are who gets to participate in decisionmaking, whose voices get heard, who gets excluded at what price, and whose interests do

certain institutions privilege. Power matters, as do authority, legitimacy, and accountability. As with all types of governance, effectiveness, or the ability to deliver public goods and to make a difference, matters.

*Power: Who Gets What? Who Benefits? Who Loses?*

At one time, the politics of global governance seemed to be about US power and hegemony. To be sure, US power and preferences shaped (and continue to influence) many pieces of global governance, including the UN and the liberal international economic system. Following the Cold War's end and the dissolution of the Soviet Union, the United States emerged as the sole superpower; its economy drove globalization, and democracy seemed to be spreading everywhere. Yet beginning with the contested invasion of Iraq in 2003, US power and influence in the world have substantially declined. Even before then, the unilateralist policies of the George W. Bush administration were leading small, middle-power, and larger states to take initiatives without US participation, let alone leadership, such as with the International Criminal Court, the Kyoto Protocol, and the convention banning antipersonnel landmines.

Today, there are many indicators that the United States is no longer at the center of global politics in the way it once was, and there are "more states with more relations with one another on a wider range of issues than ever before" (Jentleson 2012: 135). Two factors in particular stand out. One is the rapid rise of China as a superpower competing with the United States in ways the former Soviet Union never did. The other explanation is rooted in US domestic politics: the impact of the Trump administration in denigrating the value of allies, international institutions (including the UN), and multilateralism in general and touting "America first." Although his successor, President Biden, announced that "America is back," what was damaged is not easily repaired, especially after the precipitous US withdrawal from Afghanistan in 2021. Increasingly, global politics is being seen as multipolar with Russia, China, and the United States increasingly in competition with one another, while others such as India, Brazil, and South Africa are declining to take sides. This all makes for a world in which the politics of different issues and of governance is pluralized. It is also making for a world in which multilateralism is increasingly challenged.

Global governance arrangements exist because states and other actors create them and imbue them with power, authority, and legitimacy and deem them valuable for performing certain tasks and serving certain needs and interests. Yet IGOs are not just passive structures and agents of states. As Michael Barnett and Martha Finnemore (2005: 162) have argued, they have power "both because of their form (as rational-legal bureaucracies) and because of their (liberal) goals," as well as the authority that derives from goals that are "widely viewed as desirable and legitimate." They can

exercise “compulsory power” through the use of material resources like humanitarian relief, food, peacekeepers, weapons, and sanctions, as well as normative resources such as naming and shaming, spreading global values and norms such as gender equality, or inculcating “best practices.” IGO secretariats’ set agendas of meetings and conferences, structure options for Security Council debates, and classify and organize information, whether on types of economies, what is a genocide, or who is a refugee. These all constitute “institutional power.” A third type of IGO power, “productive power,” is that of determining the existence of a problem such as internally displaced persons (as differentiated from refugees who cross national borders), defining it, proposing solutions, and persuading other actors to accept those solutions (Barnett and Finnemore 2005).

The power of NSAs also can be derived from various material resources as well as symbolic and normative resources. Transnational advocacy groups, civil society organizations, and NGOs of all stripes have shown the many ways they can marshal the resources inherent in naming and shaming to pressure MNCs and governments of targeted states to change their behavior.

Power, whether in global or local governance, is intimately linked to authority and legitimacy. IGOs can exercise power largely because they are generally recognized to have legitimate authority, just as states whose governments are recognized as legitimate are recognized by other states and accepted as members of IGOs. Understanding the nature and types of authority and legitimacy in global governance is part of the puzzle.

### *Authority and Legitimacy: Who Governs and On What Basis?*

Historically, states were the only entities thought to have authority in international politics due to their sovereignty, and the only authority IGOs had was assumed to be that delegated by states, and thus it was subject to withdrawal. In recent years, there has been more attention given to issues of authority and legitimacy with gradual recognition of the varied bases of authority and legitimacy in global governance.

Many commentators agree that authority is derived from the consent of and deference by others “based on the acceptance of a decision or an interpretation because it comes from a certain source. It is a belief in certain qualities of an authority which make subordinates adapt their beliefs and behavior” (Zürn 2018: 38). Compliance is not automatic, though. As Barnett and Finnemore (2004: 20–21) emphasized, “Actors might recognize an authority’s judgment as legitimate but still follow an alternative course of action for some other set of reasons.” With their particular interest in international organization bureaucracies, they argue that “authority provides the substance of which IOs are made . . . and bureaucracy is the embodiment of rational-legal authority . . . a form of authority that moder-

nity views as particularly legitimate and good.” They note, however, that bureaucracies must be able to “present themselves . . . as not exercising power but instead serving others.”

A somewhat broader view of authority is presented by Avant, Finnemore, and Sell (2010c) in their book *Who Governs the Globe?* where they posit five bases of authority: institutional, delegated, expert, principled, and capacity-based. The first is derived from the rules and purposes of an institution, whether an IGO such as the IMF or a credit-rating agency such as Moody’s. The second is the primary basis of IGO authority: delegated authority from member states for certain tasks, such as peacekeeping. The third derives from the need for certain tasks to be done by those with specialized knowledge about them, for example, the medical and public health experts in the WHO. That expertise influences how staff see the world and define issues, what policy options are considered, and the very culture of the institution. The fourth base—principled or moral authority—reflects the fact that many IGOs and NGOs are created precisely to serve or protect a set of principles, morals, or values, such as peace, women’s rights, disarmament, or environmental protection. Finally, demonstrated ability to accomplish tasks such as alleviating extreme poverty is a further basis of authority.

Yet why do the powerful and not-so-powerful actors in global governance decide to cooperate, accept, and defer to the authority of at least some IGOs? Why do actors obey rules in the absence of coercion or change their behavior when shamed by a transnational advocacy group or accept the authority of the ICJ or a private credit-rating agency? The decision to comply with rules, norms, and law fundamentally rests on legitimacy defined as “the belief by an actor that a rule or institution ought to be obeyed” (Hurd 2007: 30). Such a belief affects behavior, Ian Hurd adds, because “the decision whether to comply is no longer motivated by the simple fear of retribution or by a calculation of self-interest but instead by an internal sense of rightness and obligation.”

A key aspect of legitimacy is membership in the international community, whose system of multilateral, reciprocal interactions helps validate its members, institutions, and rules. As Thomas Franck (1990: 205) has noted, “It is because states constitute a community that legitimacy has the power to influence their conduct.” IGOs, like the UN, are perceived as legitimate to the extent that they are created and function according to certain principles of right process, such as one state, one vote. The UN Security Council’s legitimacy as the core institution in the international system imbued with authority to authorize the use of force derives from the widespread acceptance of that role, as we examine in Chapter 4.

As political theorists have long noted, flags and rituals are important symbols of legitimate authority. Thus, UN peacekeepers’ blue helmets symbolize the UN’s authority and the international community’s recognition of

their legitimacy to act. When the Security Council refused to approve the US military operation in Iraq in 2003, it denied the United States the symbols of legitimacy and affected how the mission was regarded by much of the world. Likewise, the strong General Assembly votes condemning Russia's 2022 invasion of Ukraine were a clear signal to Russia of the world's opprobrium. The very first symbol of legitimate international authority was the red cross (and later the red crescent)—the emblem adopted by the International Committee of the Red Cross after its founding in 1863 as the first emergency humanitarian organization.

Legitimacy is also increasingly tied to other considerations, including whether NSAs and civil society have a voice and can participate. Yet for NGOs, IGOs, and other actors, their legitimacy is based not only on participation but also on their responsiveness, transparency, and accountability.

*Accountability: Who Is Accountable to Whom and How?*

As a result of the diffusion of domestic democratic norms into the international arena, virtually all global governance actors have faced growing demands for greater accountability and transparency. Some of these demands come from NGOs and civil society groups; others come from democratic governments, major donors, and major borrowers. There is no single, widely accepted definition of accountability, however. At its core is the idea of account-giving—reporting, measuring, justifying, and explaining actions. For some, accountability involves a set of standards for evaluating the behavior of public entities. How responsive and responsible are they? Do they act in a fair and equitable manner? For others, accountability is defined in terms of mechanisms that involve obligations to explain and justify conduct (Schillemans and Bovens 2011: 4–5).

The question is, therefore, to whom, for what, and by what mechanisms various global governance actors are accountable. Are IGOs accountable only to their member states, for example? To their major donors? To development aid recipients? Trying to satisfy both donors and recipients may satisfy neither. Tamar Gutner (2010), for example, showed that trying to get the IMF involved with the UN's Millennium Development Goals and poverty reduction was a poor fit with that institution's expertise, reducing the ability of anyone to hold it accountable. To whom are NGOs accountable? Clifford Bob (2010: 200), for example, argues that advocacy groups are held accountable in democratic states primarily by the domestic laws that regulate their activities, since dissatisfied members can simply leave the organization. What about expert groups or private governance arrangements? The fact that many global governance actors, including most IGOs, have multiple constituencies, are responsible for multiple tasks, and face multiple demands and points of view makes them vulnerable to what some scholars have called "multiple accountabilities disorder" (Schillemans and Bovens 2011).

There are various ways through which actors may be held accountable, ranging from hierarchical and fiscal accountability to peer and public reputational accountability (Grant and Keohane 2005). Transparency is also critical to achieving accountability, that is, making information about organizational actions open to public scrutiny (Grigorescu 2007: 626). For IGOs, issues of accountability and transparency frequently hinge on whether conferences and meetings are open to the public or closed and operating more like private clubs. This is why some institutions have established mechanisms for accountability, such as the World Bank's Inspection Panel and the UN's Office of Internal Oversight Services. In other situations, an ad hoc body may be created to investigate a particular problem, as in the case of the independent inquiry committee (the Volcker Committee) that investigated possible malfeasance in the UN's Oil-for-Food Programme in Iraq in 2005. NGOs and member states often play key roles in pushing for such IGO accountability and transparency. Ensuring international accountability, however, is still relatively haphazard and less likely to constrain more powerful actors. Lack of transparency may adversely affect not only legitimacy and compliance but also the efficacy of all kinds of institutions. An ongoing challenge for global governance in the future, then, is how to increase transparency and accountability of the varieties of governance without undermining the very conditions that enable deal-making and cooperation.

*Effectiveness: How Do We Know What Works?*

*How Do We Measure Success and Failure?*

The task of assessing effectiveness is one of the central challenges in public policymaking. What are the outcomes of rules and actions? How are people actually affected? Is security increased, are health and well-being improved, is poverty reduced, is environmental degradation slowed, and sustainable development advanced? To assess effectiveness we need to go beyond formal compliance. Indeed, "Agreements themselves may not be ambitious enough to provide more than temporary or cosmetic relief of global problems" (Simmons and de Jonge Oudraat 2001: 13–14).

The key questions are: What works? For whom does it work? Who does what to translate agreements into action, including incorporating norms into domestic laws? Which techniques or mechanisms work best to get actors to change their behavior, and what are the reactions to noncompliance? What types of incentives or technical assistance to developing countries will enable them to comply with environmental rules? How and when are diplomacy or public shaming, economic sanctions, or military force most likely to secure compliance? When are particular types of peace operations most likely to secure, keep, or build conditions of lasting peace? With all the advances in what Jacqueline Best (2017) calls "measurement-driven governance" and Hans Krause Hansen and Tony Porter (2017) call

“big data,” what are the consequences? Does this narrow the focus only to what can be counted? Does the Human Development Index or the Gender Equality Index really tell us what is happening to the quality of people’s lives around the world? Are states motivated by being ranked and graded as some scholars suggest (Davis et al. 2012; Cooley and Snyder 2015)? Who should be held accountable for the validity of such rankings as Nikhil Gutta (2012) asks? We address these issues in Chapters 7 through 12, but despite decades of global governance initiatives across multiple issue areas, we still do not have answers to some of these questions.

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The challenges of global governance, then, include a wide variety of international policy problems and issues that require governance, not all of which are necessarily global in scope. Rather, what we see are multilevel, often diffuse varieties of governance with many different actors playing key roles alongside states. The need and demand for more global governance is clearly rising; the processes are complex; the politics is an ongoing struggle to influence “who gets what” and “who benefits”; and the issues of legitimacy, accountability, and effectiveness require constant attention. Effectiveness and success depend on whom you ask. Most important, we should not assume that all global governance is necessarily good. As Inis Claude Jr. (1988: 142) noted many years ago, “I must question the assumption of the normative superiority of collective policy, the view that one can have greater confidence in the wisdom and the moral quality of decisions made by a collectivity concerning the use of power and other resources than in the quality of policies set and followed by individual states.”

### **Suggested Further Reading**

- Acharya, Amitav, ed. (2016) *Why Govern? Rethinking Demand and Progress in Global Governance*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Avant, Deborah D., Martha Finnemore, and Susan K. Sell, eds. (2010) *Who Governs the Globe?* New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Barnett, Michael, and Raymond Duvall, eds. (2005) *Power in Global Governance*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Grigorescu, Alexandru. (2020) *The Ebb and Flow of Global Governance: Intergovernmentalism versus Nongovernmentalism in World Politics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Johnson, Tana. (2015) *Organizational Progeny: Why Governments Are Losing Control over the Proliferating Structures of Global Governance*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Weiss, Thomas G., and Rorden Wilkinson, eds. (2023) *International Organizations and Global Governance*, 3rd ed. New York: Routledge.