

THE ROLE OF INTER- AND NONGOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS

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Contents

1. Introduction
2. Intergovernmental Organizations
 - 2.1. The United Nations
 - 2.1.1. The United Nations and the Environment
 - 2.2. The World Bank
 - 2.2.1. The World Bank and the Environment
 - 2.3. International Monetary Fund
 - 2.3.1. The International Monetary Fund and the Environment
 - 2.4. The European Community
 - 2.5. The European Union
 - 2.5.1. The European Community/European Union and the Environment
 - 2.6. North American Free Trade Agreement
 - 2.6.1. NAFTA and the Environment
3. Nongovernmental Organizations
 - 3.1. Environmental Nongovernmental Organizations: From Stockholm to Rio
 - 3.2. Nongovernmental Organizations, Globalization, and the Changing Nature of Sovereignty
 - 3.3. The Evolution of NGO Operations in the International Arena
4. Conclusions
- Glossary
- Bibliography
- Biographical Sketch

Summary

International politics traditionally focuses on relationships between states. However, since the end of World War II, other actors have become important players in the international arena—some created by states, and others emerging autonomously. Intergovernmental organizations (IGOs) are structures created by states to enhance political cooperation and communication. They are organizations that restrain the behavior of their members. Nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) are associations created by private individuals, to address or redress issues that are often outside of the scope of government. NGOs often try to influence, set the direction of, or maintain government policy.

With globalization of the world economy, there has been an increase in interaction among a wide variety of state and nonstate actors across borders. Governments, IGOs,

and NGOs may all benefit from more interaction and cooperation. In fact, governments increasingly enlist IGOs to coordinate some of their cooperative efforts, contributing funds, and administrative functions; IGOs in turn often entrust some of these functions to NGOs. One often sees examples of these collaborative activities in the issue area of environmental protection.

1. Introduction

The world is becoming increasingly interconnected through the globalization of communications, transportation, and the world's economies. With the collapse of communism in Central and Eastern Europe and in the former Soviet Union, the world has seen an increase in the number of states. Along with this increase in new states, there has been an explosion in the number of intergovernmental organizations (IGOs) and nongovernmental organizations (NGOs). These private agencies link people across international borders in a variety of ways, by occupation, religion, personal interest, and issue activism. The proliferation of organizations has greatly contributed to the complexity of the international system. No longer are most state interactions bilateral ones in which states deal with each other one-on-one; instead many issues and problems are dealt with on a multilateral basis. Moreover, states are no longer the primary channels for international interaction; individuals and groups often bypass state institutions to work with each other through NGOs and IGOs.

2. Intergovernmental Organizations

Intergovernmental organizations (IGOs) are international organizations that have only states as members, and the decision-making authority lies with representatives from member governments. They are supranational organizations, in that states give up some of their sovereignty when they consent to abide by any agreements they enter into by joining the organization. Moreover, IGOs transcend country borders and can have a major impact on the governmental and transnational actors within states. As a result, over time, IGOs can develop independent power bases and develop identities separate from those of founding states.

IGOs can be single-issue or multi-issue organizations and they can be regional or global in their scope. IGOs are entities that are meant to function to some degree beyond the states that create them. IGOs are not replacements for government, as they do not govern. They try to contend with and help administer complex interrelationships and global economic, political, and social changes by facilitating cooperation with other actors, particularly governments. To this end, their work extends beyond the traditional boundaries of governmental sovereignty.

The charters of IGOs generally include the principles, norms, rules, structures, functions, and decision-making processes within organizations. The IGOs' decision-making processes are often used by member states to create other norms and rules, to enforce rules and resolve disputes, to provide collective goods, and to support operations. IGOs also collect, analyze, and disseminate information to member states. These activities improve the information that states receive, and keep states in

continuous contact with each other, thus reducing the temptation to cheat on agreements and enhancing the value of ones' reputation.

As instruments of international policy, IGOs provide forums for principles, norms, and positions. States, however, may use these forums to block cooperation or spread conflict. For example, both the US and the USSR used their veto power in the UN's Security Council, from the late 1940s to the late 1980s, to block resolutions they found objectionable or to thwart those that the other state supported. As a result, the UN Security Council was ineffectual for much of the Cold War era. IGOs are also utilized to smooth the progress of interactions between governments and nongovernmental actors, often leading to the creation of transnational networks. International cooperation facilitated by the creation of transnational networks on issues such as ozone depletion, led to the signing of the Montreal Protocol; one of the most significant environmental agreements of the 20th century.

IGOs not only bring about opportunities for their member states but also exert influence and impose limits on members' policies and the way in which those policies are made. By setting international agendas, and thus influencing domestic ones, governments are compelled to take positions on issues. Moreover, in democratic societies, norms and principles created or supported by IGOs can be used by domestic groups to push for change in national policies.

Though abiding by commitments to IGOs by member states is based upon voluntary compliance, states can fall into the habit of international cooperation. States may be socialized through regular involvement in multilateral relationships and policy coordination. Additionally, states may come to feel that they want to maintain a reputation for law-abiding behavior in the international realm. Finally, domestic groups that support the principles and norms of IGOs that they work with may reinforce the custom of cooperation.

IGOs may be instrumental in creating and sustaining international cooperation. If this is the case, then they must have some way of influencing the largest and most powerful states within the international system. Using IGOs to influence the behavior of others means that the reciprocal holds true as well, that one is constrained by those very organizations and way others utilize them. Even if an individual IGO loses its *raison d'être* over time as a result of the emergence of new issues or organizations, the custom and patterns of cooperation that it helped make possible should aid in the development of other possibilities for cooperation. Moreover, crises may compel states to find new ways of utilizing and even increasing the power of IGOs.

The world has become increasingly interconnected with advances in technology that have made international travel and global communications cheaper and easier, as result both state and nonstate actors have more contact with each other. Moreover, governments and societies are discovering that many issues and problems need to be addressed and redressed on a global or regional level, rather than on the national level. Thus, states have increasingly sought to work through IGOs to achieve cooperation on a variety of issues.

A few IGOs have the authority to enact rules and interpret their application through dispute resolution and supervisory processes. In cases where they do have such powers, rules and administrative processes such as those from the World Trade Organization (WTO) and the European Union (EU), affect national laws and regulations. Indirectly, IGOs' roles in information gathering, analysis, and dissemination affect domestic policies of member states. By making members' activities more transparent, the above processes pressure governments to make changes that are at odds with collective interests. Finally, member states frequently adapt their policy-making processes, create representative structures, and allocate budgetary funds, to accommodate participation in IGOs.

Often IGOs appear to be just tools of their member states, but many are independent powerful actors in their own right. And, they may be answerable to representatives of their member states, but they also interact with states, NGOs, and other actors separately and on their own terms. Each IGO is different both in the issues it addresses and the scope of its interaction in the international system. Several examples of IGOs, from global to regional, will be discussed below.

2.1. The United Nations

The United Nations (UN) is a global, multipurpose, intergovernmental organization. The UN was established in April 1945 at a conference held in San Francisco. The UN officially opened in September 1945 at its headquarters in New York City. The organization was established in response to the initiatives of the states that had led the war against Germany and Japan, namely the United States, Great Britain, and the Soviet Union. They were determined to build upon the League of Nations, while at the same time correcting the problems in that organization. Additionally, the three allies wanted to prevent another devastating world war. To that end, the principal purpose of the UN is to maintain and preserve peace.

The UN Charter spelled out the principles and powers of the new organization, as well as its organizational structure. The Charter talked about maintaining international peace and security. But it also referred to the needs and interests of people, including a belief in fundamental human rights, human dignity, and equality among men and women and of states both large and small. To those ends, the UN proposed several objectives, including promoting friendly relations among states based on respect for equal rights and self-determination; promotion of economic and social cooperation among states; and taking measures to strengthen peace. The charter was signed by 51 founding member states.

International security was the main concern of the UN, thus the Security Council was created and given the task of maintaining or securing peace. Initially, there were 11 states, and then after 1965, 15 states on the Security Council. Decisions were to be made by a majority of nine out of 15 states, but the five permanent members—Great Britain, China, France, the US, and the Soviet Union—had veto power. An assembly of all member states was also established; theoretically it was supposed to be a powerful organization in the UN with one country, one vote. But they only meet once a year. The UN General Assembly's most important function is to discuss and recommend

resolutions that were not on the agenda of the Security Council. These recommendations are non-binding, except with regard to the annual budget. The General Assembly also supervises and reviews all activities of the UN.

The central system of the UN also includes the Secretariat, headed by the Secretary-General. The Secretariat is the administrative unit of the UN, in charge of day-to-day operations. It also carries out a number of research functions on the recommendation of other UN bodies, including peacekeeping activities. The Secretary-General performs all of the tasks assigned to him by the General Assembly and the Security Council. Additionally, Article 99 of the UN Charter says that if there is a situation in the world that threatens international security, it is the duty of the Secretary-General to bring it to the attention of the Security Council.

Another body in the UN's central system is the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), which deals with issues such as economic and social development, human rights, refugees, education, health, housing, and labor conditions, etc. ECOSOC makes recommendations on these issues to the General Assembly. Moreover, ECOSOC oversees the activities of a number of other institutions, namely the Specialized Agencies and the Funds and Programs of the UN. The former include such well-known organizations as the World Health Organization (WHO), the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), and the United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), which have their own constitutions, continually assessed budgets, and executives, and are not subject to direct UN control. The Funds and Programs (e.g. the United Nations Development Program (UNDP)) have less autonomy than the specialized agencies, as their management is subject to direct General Assembly control, can be modified by Assembly resolutions, and are largely funded on a voluntary basis.

2.1.1. The United Nations and the Environment

Prior to the UN conference in Stockholm, environmental organizations had limited connections with the UN system. Moreover, the UN played a limited role in international environmental affairs. The UN Educational, Social, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), however, played an important part in the 1948 creation of the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN), an organization with governmental and NGO associates. In turn, the IUCN spun off a separate environmental NGO, the World Wildlife Fund (WWF), as an autonomous fundraising body in 1961.

In 1972, the United Nations held the Stockholm Conference on the Human Environment, the first international conference in which states made an effort to address global environmental problems. In addition to focusing international public attention on the global environment, the Stockholm Conference led to the founding of the United Nations Environmental Program (UNEP) and spurred the negotiation of a number of international conventions to protect the marine environment. The developed countries, led by the United States, ensured that UNEP would not be given a mandate or the funding to achieve very much independently. Headquartered in Nairobi, Kenya, UNEP's sole role was to coax and catalyze other UN-affiliated institutions, such as the World Bank, and states to carry out environmental actions and commitments.

Though relatively small, routinely underfunded, and marginal within the UN realm, UNEP has evolved into a fairly effective organization. Up until 1990, its budget was never more than US\$40 million a year—smaller than the cost of most individual World Bank projects. UNEP's professional staff realized that it did not have the capacity to coordinate international conventions and environmental programs on a large-scale. Thus, UNEP came to define its role as a catalyst for international environmental cooperation, especially in the promotion of international environmental agreements. Prior to the signing of the Montreal Protocol in 1987 to regulate the use and production of ozone-depleting CFCs, UNEP's consummate achievement was the Mediterranean Action Plan signed in 1975, its most successful attempt to clean-up the world's seas. The most significant part of the plan is the Barcelona Convention of 1978 where all 18 Mediterranean states agreed to take radical actions to reduce and sanitize sewage and chemical waste discharged into coastal areas.

Nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) have been an important part of UNEP's approach to international environmental protection. UNEP has played a key role in the growth of the Nairobi-based Environmental Liaison Center (ELC), an informational and networking clearing-house for over 6 000 NGOs, with an emphasis on development and environmental issues. One of the main reasons for UNEP's willingness to work with NGOs can be explained by its small size and marginal position within the UN, which has brought about an ongoing need to build alliances.

2.2. The World Bank

The International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (IBRD)—or the World Bank, as it came to be known—was one of the two institutions (the other being the IMF) created at Bretton Woods in 1947 for structural adjustment lending. The main purposes of the Bank were to assist in the reconstruction and development of member countries by facilitating the investment of capital for productive purposes. It also aimed to promote long-term, balanced growth in international trade by bolstering international investment and thereby helping to raise productivity, the standard of living, and labor conditions. To this end, the bank would guarantee private investments as well as provide direct lending from its own capital. Reconstruction and development were given equal priority from the start in the bank's activities.

The original capital of the bank was US\$10 billion; a huge sum that far exceeded anything the world had ever known in this domain. Twenty percent of the capital would come from subscriptions paid by member states, and the other 80% of the capital would be “callable” as a guarantee. A guarantee by major industrialized states (the bank's callable capital) allows the bank to raise money for lending through borrowing in international markets. The bank charges borrowers approximately 0.5% interest above its own cost of borrowing, using the difference to cover its own operating expenses and to add to its reserves. Joining the International Monetary Fund is a prerequisite for membership in the bank.

The bank would lend money only for specific projects—usually infrastructure projects, such as dams, highways, power plants, etc.—except under special circumstances. According to its charter, the bank is supposed to ensure that the proceeds of any loan be

used only for the purposes for which the loan was granted, with regard to the economy and efficiency, but not to political or other noneconomic considerations. The principle of noninterference in the political affairs of any member state by the bank or its officers was reiterated again in the bank's charter.

For the first 20 years of its existence, World Bank loans were provided for large infrastructure projects in the Third World. The bank's lending was mainly for electric power projects (especially large dams) for transportation (first railroads, and later highways), and cash crop agriculture (e.g., cacao, livestock, and rubber). Many of these projects had detrimental social and environmental consequences that were usually ignored.

The 1947–1948 World Bank annual report revealed its development philosophy, which guided its lending practices for decades. The report emphasized the disparity in productivity and living standards between developing countries and developed ones in North America and Europe, and concluded that increasing production and income levels in poor countries required technological development, increased capital investment, and increased trade. The bank's strategy would be to invest capital in carefully planned projects that were less attractive to private capital; this it was believed would catalyze additional capital to flow into other areas of the economy.

In the 1950s and 1960s, bank lending was biased towards what was easiest for the bank, rather than towards the needs of the borrowing country. As a result, power and transportation projects were common because they were easy to appraise, and involved technology transfer and planning that seemed to be the same all over the world. The one-sidedness of the bank's lending strategy went even deeper in its combination of paternalism and ignorance. Rooted in *a priori* macro- and microeconomic assumptions, rather than in empirical consideration of local social, political, and economic realities, the bank's projects often did more harm than good.

In the 1970s, under the guidance of the World Bank's new President McNamara, poverty projects were added to the bank's usual repertoire of infrastructure projects. McNamara's plan was to remake the bank—not only did it include a huge increase in lending with a reorientation to targeting investment to help the poor, it intensified bank research and long-term planning, the ultimate being to shape the future of scores of developing countries. The bank would prepare five-year master country lending plans, laid out in “country programming papers” (CPPs); the CPPs set out priorities and targets for all bank lending in a state, based on the work of country economic missions and subsequent reports. The result was a vision of global central planning, based on incredible supposition; the staff of the World Bank would, through visits of a few days or weeks, combined with at-home research, take the lead in gathering data to prepare a development plan that incorporated every relevant aspect of a state's social framework. The bank would then lead scores of governments in formulating comprehensive plans that would regulate every relevant aspect of society. Lack of consultation or participation by the beneficiaries of the huge increases in bank lending was also par for the course.

From the perspective of the environment, the social and technological inappropriateness of bank policy compounded the destructiveness of development strategies. A major focus of the new-style projects of the 1970s was the opening of new lands, often in tropical forests, to agriculture, commercial forestry, and cattle ranching, which often meant large-scale resettlement programs as well.

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Biographical Sketch

Marni Berg is an adjunct faculty member in the Department of Political Science at Colorado State University. She has written several articles on environmental activism and environmental protection in Hungary. She is currently doing research on the impact of EU accession and of external sources on environmental policy in Hungary. Future plans include research in the Czech Republic and Slovenia, as well as a continuation of work in Hungary with regard to state-society relations and the rebirth of civil society. She is interested in evaluating the democratization process in these countries through the examination of public participation in voluntary associations, and whether or not these associations have access to policy makers and the ability to influence policy outcomes.