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International Organizations and the Foundations of Global Governance

THE ANTECEDENTS FOR CONTEMPORARY INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS and global governance lie in early efforts by political communities to establish norms and rules for interacting with their neighbors. The Greek city-states sought to establish permanent protective alliances to address conflict issues and follow established rules. The Hanseatic League (1200s–1400s) was formed to facilitate trade and the interaction among a group of Northern European cities on the Baltic and North Seas. Similarly, the Kingdom of Naples and Sicily, the Papal States, and the city-states of Florence, Venice, and Milan established a system for regularizing diplomacy and commercial interaction in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. Many of these early practices persisted as the contemporary state system evolved, providing some foundation for the later development of more institutionalized forms of governance.

The State System and Its Weaknesses:

The Process of International Organization

International relations (IR) scholars date the contemporary state system from 1648, when the Treaty of Westphalia ended the Thirty Years War. Although most of the more than 100 articles of the treaty dealt with allocating the spoils of war, other provisions proved groundbreaking. Articles 64, 65, and 67 established several key principles of a new state system: territorial sovereignty; the right of the state (prince or ruler) to choose its religion and determine its own domestic policies; and the prohibition of interference from supranational authorities like the Catholic Church or Holy Roman Empire. The treaty marked the end of rule by religious authority in Europe and the emergence of secular states. With secular authority came the principle of the territorial integrity of states that were legally equal and sovereign participants in the international system.

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Sovereignty was (and remains) the core concept in this state system. As French philosopher Jean Bodin (1530–1596) put it, sovereignty is “the distinguishing mark of the sovereign that he cannot in any way be subject to the commands of another, for it is he who makes law for the subject, abrogates law already made, and amends obsolete law” (1967: 25). Although there is no supreme arbiter among states, Bodin acknowledged that sovereignty may be limited by divine law or natural law, by the type of regime, or even by promises to the people.

During this period, Hugo Grotius, the early Dutch legal scholar discussed in Chapter 2, rejected the concept that states have complete freedom to do whatever they wish. Thus, even in the seventeenth century, the meaning of state sovereignty was contested. More recently, Stephen Krasner (1993: 235) has argued: “The actual content of sovereignty, the scope of authority that states can exercise, has always been contested. The basic organizing principle of sovereignty—exclusive control over territory—has been persistently challenged by the creation of new institutional forms that better meet specific national needs.” Although breaches of sovereignty occur continuously through treaties, contracts, coercion, and imposition, Krasner asserts that there is no alternative conception of international system organization. Other scholars, such as James Rosenau (1997: 217–236) see states as vulnerable to demands from below—decentralizing tendencies, including domestic constituencies and nonstate actors—and from above, including globalization processes and international organizations. They have to contend with a variety of new actors and processes that confound and constrain them, limiting authority and challenging the notion of state sovereignty, and hence the state system based on that principle. Noting shifting interpretations of sovereignty in the 1990s, UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan stated in his 1999 annual address to the UN General Assembly, “State sovereignty, in its most basic sense, is being redefined by the forces of globalization and international cooperation” (Annan 1999). Kalevi Holsti (2004: 138), however, has pointed out, that “state capacity in the contemporary world varies greatly from the very weak to the very strong. But that does not make them less or more sovereign.”

One significant indicator of the continuing importance of sovereignty is the importance that states attach to borders not just as “jurisdictional divisions,” according to Beth Simmons (2019: 257), but as “institutions of governance.” She notes how much more important border security and states’ physical presence at borders have become in many parts of the world; how much more of the world’s population now lives near border crossings; and how much borders matter with regard to legal and illicit movement of goods, people, terrorists, and traffickers. In short, Simmons argues (2019: 266), “Governing borders has become a complex matter,” one for which there is limited public international law and increasingly dense state practice.

States' attachment to sovereignty and their borders may be strong, but the weaknesses of the state system became increasingly apparent during the nineteenth century with growing international trade, migration, democratization, technological innovation, and other developments that increased interdependence and highlighted the limitations imposed by state sovereignty. These changes gave rise to the process of international organization—the historical process that “represents a secular trend toward the systematic development of an enterprising quest for political means of making the world safe for human habitation” (Claude 1964: 405). The concrete manifestations of that process, which continues today, have been the creation of international organizations, including intergovernmental and nongovernmental organizations.

This chapter provides a historical overview of the process of international organization since the mid-nineteenth century. The process has been propelled and shaped by the weaknesses of the state system and by major power wars, technological changes, European imperialism, economic development and growing interdependence associated with industrial capitalism, and now globalization. It has also been shaped by the decolonization process that ended European and US imperial rule in Latin America, Asia, and Africa, and the emergence of a host of governance challenges in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries. Subsequent chapters provide greater depth on the UN system, regional organizations, and nongovernmental organizations (NGOs).

Early Governance Innovations: The Legacy of the Nineteenth Century

In the nineteenth century, the process of international organization was stimulated by several key trends. Napoleon's defeat in 1815 ended the upheavals that followed the French Revolution and Napoleon's effort to create a French empire in Europe. The emergence of five major European powers—Austria-Hungary, Great Britain, France, Prussia, and Russia—ushered in an era of relative peace that lasted for almost a century. Industrialization, beginning in England, spread to all parts of the continent, resulting in expanded commerce and trade among the European countries and between European states and their colonies. Technological innovations such as the telegraph gave rise to practical problems in interstate relations and the need to establish common standards. State-to-state interactions became more frequent and intense, while the spread of democratic ideas empowered people to organize nongovernmental groups to address humanitarian needs, workers' rights, and private business interests.

In a pioneering textbook on international organization, *Swords into Plowshares*, Inis Claude (1964) described three major innovations of governance

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that emerged in the nineteenth century: the Concert of Europe, public international unions, and the Hague Conferences. Recent histories, some inspired by efforts to “globalize” the study of IR, have added more complexity to the story (Acharya 2016a; Acharya and Buzan 2017). We now know more about the contributions of actors in the Global South, the intertwined development of international civil society and transnational movements with that of IOs, and the importance of the concept of internationalism as a kind of ideological framework (Helleiner 2014; Herren 2016).

The Concert of Europe

In Inis Claude’s (1964) telling, the first IO-related innovation was the Concert of Europe, established in 1815—a group of major European powers making systemwide decisions by negotiation and consensus. Members agreed to coordinate behavior based on certain rights and responsibilities, with expectations of diffuse reciprocity. They still operated as separate states and societies, but in a framework of rules and consultation without creating a formal organization.

The concert system involved periodic multilateral meetings among the major European powers for settling problems and coordinating actions. Meeting over thirty times in the century before World War I, the major powers constituted a club of the like-minded, dictating the conditions of entry for other would-be participants. They legitimated the independence of new European states, such as Belgium and Greece in the 1820s. At the last of the concert meetings, which took place in Berlin in 1878, they divided up the previously uncolonized parts of Africa, extending the reach of European imperialism.

Although these meetings were not institutionalized and included no explicit mechanism for implementing collective action, they solidified important practices that later IOs followed. These included multilateral consultation, collective diplomacy, and special status for “great powers.” As Claude (1964: 22) summarizes, “The Concert system was the manifestation of a rudimentary but growing sense of interdependence and community of interest among the states of Europe.” Such a community of interest was a vital prerequisite for modern international organizations and broader global governance.

The idea of mutual consultations among major powers and special responsibilities, necessitated by a growing community of interests, was the inspiration for the League of Nations Council, the UN Security Council, and the concept of permanent members with the special privilege of veto power. It can be seen in the Group of Seven, established in the 1970s to coordinate the macroeconomic policies of the seven major developed states.

Public International Unions and Other Specialized Bodies

Public international unions were the second important nineteenth-century organizational innovation. The European states established a number of

agencies to deal with problems stemming from the Industrial Revolution, expanding commerce, communications, and technological innovation. These involved such concerns as health standards for travelers, shipping rules on the Rhine and other rivers, access to ports, the movement of increased mail volumes, and the cross-boundary usage of the newly invented telegraph.

Many of these practical problems of expanding international relations among states proved amenable to resolution with intergovernmental cooperation. The International Telegraph Union (ITU) was formed in 1865 and the Universal Postal Union (UPU) in 1874; each was instrumental in facilitating communication, transportation, trade, and industrial development. With growing levels of interdependence, the European states found it necessary to cooperate on a voluntary basis to accomplish nonpolitical tasks. Almost immediately, these began to include non-European states (and some then colonial territories, such as India and Egypt).

Because the ITU and UPU were among the first intergovernmental organizations (IGOs) to be established, they set a number of precedents. Both were based on international conventions that called for periodic conferences of parties to the conventions. The delegates, however, came from telegraph and postal administrations of the parties, not ministries of foreign affairs—establishing the pattern of involving technical experts when dealing with technical matters. Thus, multilateral diplomacy was no longer the exclusive domain of traditional diplomats. Both organizations, along with subsequent public international unions, established international bureaus or secretariats composed of permanent staff hired from various countries. They also created councils consisting of representatives of a few selected members to function as policy directorates on behalf of the organization in the intervals between general conferences. As Claude (1964: 32) notes, “Thus was established the structural pattern of bureau, council, and conference which, with many elaborations but few deviations, serves as the blueprint of international organization today.” In addition, the public unions developed techniques for multilateral conventions—lawmaking or rulemaking treaties—through periodic revisions of the regulations. Thus, public international unions and organizations dedicated to defined nonpolitical tasks gave rise to functionalism and specialized IGOs helping states deal with practical problems in their international relations, as discussed in Chapter 2.

Alongside the public international unions, other bodies were established to facilitate cooperation of experts from different nations, including the regular flow of information. Examples include the International Geodetic Commission established after a conference in Berlin in 1864 to connect geodetic experts responsible for surveying and mapping. The International Office of Public Hygiene was founded in 1907 as the first health-related international institution concerned with the spread of human, animal, and plant diseases.

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The Hague System

The third governance innovation in the nineteenth century was the concept of generalized conferences in which all states were invited to participate in problem solving. In 1899 and 1907, Czar Nicholas II of Russia convened two conferences in The Hague (Netherlands), involving both European and non-European states, to think proactively about what methods states should have available to prevent war and under what conditions arbitration, negotiation, and legal recourse would be appropriate (Aldrich and Chinkin 2000). Exploring such issues in the absence of a crisis was a novelty. In fact, universal participation of states was not yet a norm.

As Finnemore and Jurkovich (2014: 362) recount, “The Hague Conferences . . . mark an important inflection point in the evolution of expectations about participation and shared governance. . . . Of particular significance was the fact that while the number of European delegates remained roughly the same between the first and second Hague Conferences, participation from the Global South (particularly Latin America) expanded dramatically.” All of the Latin American states were invited in 1907, and nineteen attended. Thereafter, broad participation became the norm, carrying over what Finnemore and Jurkovich point out had been the practice among the Latin American states since their first conference in 1826. Accompanying this were expectations of sovereign equality among states, recurring conferences, the practice of majority voting on resolutions, the creation of a secretariat to collect and distribute information as well as a governing board to meet between plenary meetings, and the understanding that states could only be legally bound with their consent. Today, we take these things for granted as core elements of international organization and multilateralism, but we need to acknowledge their roots in the Americas and the pressure for inclusion that made change possible (Finnemore and Jurkovich 2014: 369).

The Hague Conferences created the Convention for the Pacific Settlement of International Disputes, ad hoc international commissions of inquiry, and the Permanent Court of Arbitration (PCA). The latter grew out of the widespread practice of inserting clauses into treaties calling for arbitration should disputes arise among parties. The PCA, composed of jurists selected by each country from which members of arbitral tribunals are chosen, remains in existence and has been used extensively for handling boundary, investment, and other disputes involving states, corporations, and other nonstate actors, including the recent dispute between the Philippines and China over claims in the South China Sea.

The Hague Conferences produced several major procedural innovations. The Latin American states’ pressure, supported by the United States, resulted in twenty-six states participating in the first conference, including China, Siam, the Ottoman Empire, Mexico, and Japan. The second conference had forty-five participating states. Thus, what had been largely a European state

system until the end of the nineteenth century became a truly international system at the beginning of the twentieth. For the first time, participants elected chairs, organized committees, and took roll-call votes, all of which became permanent features of twentieth-century organizations. The Hague Conferences also promoted the novel ideas of common interests of humankind and the codification of international law.

With the outbreak of World War I in 1914, a third Hague Conference was never convened. But the first two, along with numerous other conferences held during the nineteenth century, represented the first collective efforts to address problems of war, emergencies, and issues arising from new technologies and greater commerce on a regular, universal basis.

Nineteenth-century innovations therefore established vital foundations for the development of twentieth-century IGOs and the broader notion of global governance in the twenty-first century. States established new approaches to dealing with problems of joint concern, including the great power multilateralism of the concert system, the functional and specialized public international unions, and the broader participation and legalistic institutions of the Hague system.

Alongside the development of these foundations for IGOs, there were also important nongovernmental initiatives, including international peace societies, the International Committee of the Red Cross, the international labor movement, and the International Chamber of Commerce. This history is discussed further in Chapter 6. The nongovernmental effort to develop international standards for everything from nuts and bolts to telecommunication frequencies and shipping containers led to the 1946 creation of the International Organization for Standardization (ISO) and is covered later in this chapter. One further late nineteenth-century IO development was the creation of the Inter-Parliamentary Union in 1889. It continues to bring parliamentarians from 179 countries together in regular conferences to support the development of international law, promote democratic governance and accountability, and promote gender parity in legislatures today.

Craig Murphy (1994) makes a somewhat different argument than Claude and others about the nineteenth-century transportation, communication, standards, monetary, and trade organizations. From the standpoint of international political economy, he argues, rather than being responses to economic developments, these specialized IOs were designed to facilitate the creation of larger market areas in which industrial goods could be sold. Their promoters believed that what we now call economic globalization would benefit everyone (Murphy 1994).

The institutional arrangements of the nineteenth century proved inadequate for preventing war among the major European powers in the twentieth century, however. High levels of interdependence and cooperation in numerous areas of interest did not prevent World War I, illuminating the

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weaknesses and shortcomings of the arrangements and the state system. Yet the war had barely begun when private groups and prominent people in Europe and the United States began to plan a more permanent framework to prevent future wars. NGOs such as the League to Enforce Peace in the United States and the League of Nations Society and Fabians in the United Kingdom played active roles in pushing for the creation of a new IGO and drafting plans for it. French and British government committees were appointed to consider the form of a new institution. US President Woodrow Wilson based his own proposal for a permanent IGO on some of these plans. The resulting League of Nations expanded on those nineteenth-century foundations and set many important precedents.

The League of Nations

League principles. The League of Nations first and foremost reflected the environment in which it was conceived. Ten of the League Covenant's twenty-six provisions focused on preventing war. Two basic principles were paramount: member states agreed to respect and preserve the territorial integrity and political independence of states, and members agreed to try different methods of dispute settlement. Failing that, the League was given the power under Article 16 to enforce settlements through sanctions. The second principle was firmly embedded in the proposition of collective security: that aggression by one state should be countered by all acting together as a "league of nations."

Although the Covenant's primary focus was on maintaining peace, it also recognized the desirability of economic and social cooperation, but established no machinery for carrying out such activities except in providing for one or more organizations to secure "fair and humane conditions of labour for men, women and children" (Article 23). The Covenant also envisioned the desirability of bringing all public international unions under the League's direction, but this did not happen.

League organs. The Covenant of the League of Nations established three permanent organs—the Council, Assembly, and Secretariat—and two autonomous organizations, the Permanent Court of International Justice (PCIJ) and the International Labour Organization (ILO). The Council was composed of four permanent members (United Kingdom, France, Italy, and Japan) and four elected members. Because the Covenant permitted the Council and Assembly to change both categories of membership, membership varied between eight and fifteen states. For example, Germany gained permanent Council membership when it joined the League in 1926, as did the Soviet Union in 1934. The failure of the United States to ratify the Treaty of Versailles after World War I meant that it never assumed its seat.

The Council was to settle disputes, enforce sanctions, supervise mandates, formulate disarmament plans, approve Secretariat appointments, and implement peaceful settlements. League members agreed to submit disputes to arbitration, adjudication, or the Council if they could not reach negotiated agreements. They agreed also to register all treaties with the League Secretariat (thus eliminating secret agreements). If states resorted to war, the Council had the authority under Article 16 to apply diplomatic and economic sanctions, but the requirement of unanimity made action very difficult to achieve. The Council was clearly a remnant of the European concert system.

The League's Assembly was a quasi-legislative body that met annually and consisted of representatives of all member states (sixty at the peak), each with one vote. It was authorized to admit new members, approve the budget, elect the nonpermanent members to the Council, and act on matters referred by the Council. Beginning with its first session in 1919, the Assembly established a number of precedents, such as requiring the League's secretary-general to submit an annual report on the activities of the organization, engaging in general debate involving speeches by heads of delegations, and creating six committees to consider important matters between annual sessions (all practices continued by the UN General Assembly). Decisions in committees were by majority, in contrast to decisions in the Assembly itself, which required unanimity. Strict unanimity was tempered by special procedures requiring less-than-majority votes. In practice, states generally preferred to abstain rather than block action. In addition to the main committees, the Assembly set up various other advisory committees dealing with health, drug traffic, slavery, trafficking in women, child welfare, transit, economics and finance, and intellectual cooperation. At the time, the League's Assembly was considered quite revolutionary, and over time its activities drew even more attention than the Council.

The Covenant established the Secretariat but provided few instructions on its responsibilities. More a clearinghouse for relevant information, the Secretariat had little independent authority. Still, it became the first truly international civil service, with its members independent of the member states. The first League secretary-general, Sir Eric Drummond (who served 1919–1933), was considered an excellent administrator who chose not to undertake political initiatives and, by playing a limited role, avoided the kinds of political pressures to which later UN Secretaries-General have been subject. The Secretariat provided coordination for some twenty organizations that were affiliated with the League, including the Health Organization, the Mandates Commission, the ILO, and the PCIJ.

Successes and failures. The League enjoyed a number of successes, many of them concerned with European territorial issues. It conducted plebiscites in Silesia and the Saar and then demarcated the German–Polish border. It

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settled several territorial disputes, including those between Finland and Russia and Bulgaria and Greece. In the latter case, the Council agreed to send military observers to oversee a cease-fire and troop withdrawal and established a commission of inquiry to recommend terms of settlement—all precedents the UN later adopted.

The League established the mandate system under which former German colonies in Africa and the Pacific and non-Turkish territories of the former Ottoman Empire were administered by the United Kingdom, France, South Africa, Belgium, Australia, New Zealand, and Japan under the League's supervision. The League's Mandates Commission, composed of nongovernmental representatives, reviewed annual reports submitted by the colonial powers about conditions in the mandates.

Most important, the League was the first permanent international organization of a general political nature with continuously functioning political, economic, social, judicial, and administrative machinery. It embodied the idea that the international community could and should act against international lawbreakers and promote cooperation on a wide range of problems.

Overall, the League fell far short of expectations, however. As LeRoy Bennett (1995: 41) put it, "As long as all members realized mutual advantages through cooperation, the League provided them with a useful avenue for achieving their common goals." When Japan, Italy, and Germany challenged the status quo, he added, "the League mirrored the lack of cooperative will among its members." The failure to act when Japan invaded Manchuria in 1931 pointed to the Council's refusal to take decisive action and the unwillingness of either the United Kingdom or France to institute military action or economic sanctions. The Council's delayed response to Italy's 1935 invasion of Ethiopia, a League member, further undermined its legitimacy. Fifty of the fifty-four members of the League Assembly concurred with cutting off credit to the Italian economy and stopping arms sales, but these measures were insufficient to make Italy retreat, and by 1936 all sanctions against Italy were abandoned. The League neither intervened in the Spanish civil war nor opposed Hitler's remilitarization of the Rhineland and occupation of Austria and Czechoslovakia. With the great powers unwilling to uphold the League's principles, its power and legitimacy deteriorated.

The League of Nations was also unable to respond to the Great Depression of the 1930s. Proposals to reorganize the League's structures to address economic and social issues, including human rights, did not come to fruition, but did influence the drafting of the United Nations Charter a decade later.

In sum, the League's close association with the unjust peace of World War I and the Treaty of Versailles hamstrung the organization from the outset. The absence of the United States from League membership proved a critical weakness, but it was the unwillingness of other major powers, most notably the United Kingdom and France, to uphold the League's principles

and to respond to overt aggression by Japan, Italy, and Germany that doomed the League as an instrument of collective security. Some also argue that the very idea of collective security was overly idealistic in a world of sovereign states. The Covenant itself contained a number of gaps, although none could be considered fatal flaws.

Between 1935 and 1939, many members withdrew, and the League was silent during the six years of World War II from 1939 to 1945. Its members convened one final time in April 1946 to terminate the organization and transfer its assets to the new United Nations.

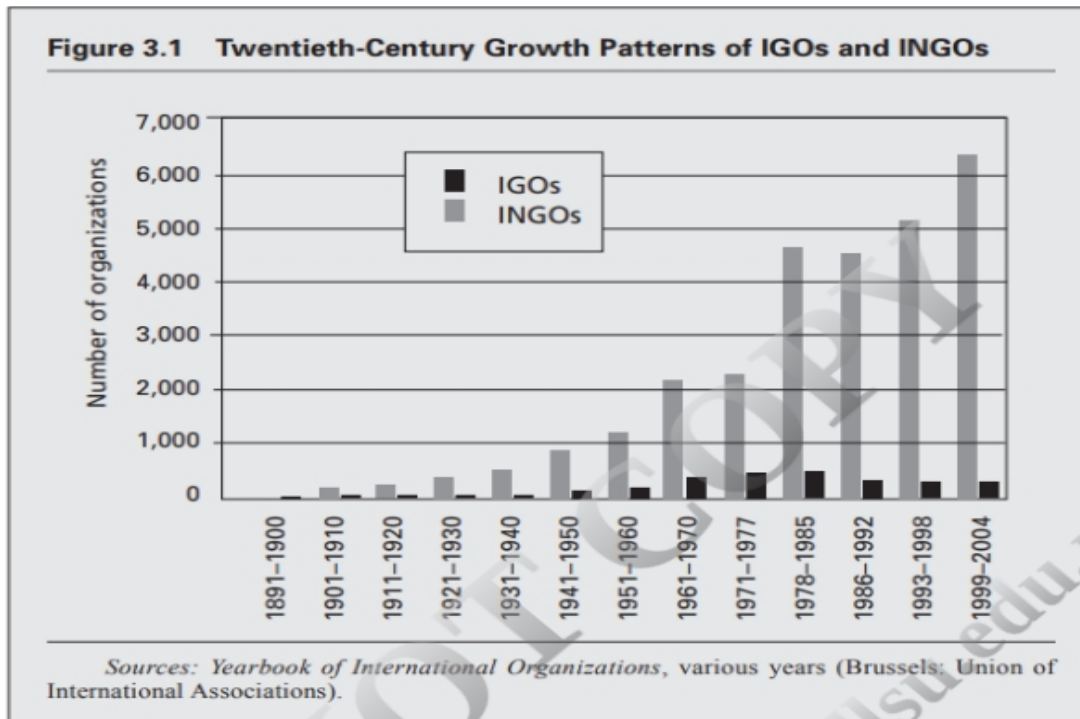
The Emergence of a Common Core of IGO Structures

Despite its shortcomings, the League represented an important step forward in the process of international organization and in global governance. Thus, early in World War II, many people recognized the need to begin planning for a new organization, one whose scope was greater than the League's. Planning began shortly after the United States entered the war in 1941 and built on the lessons of the League in laying the groundwork for the United Nations (Grigorescu 2005). Even before the war ended, a number of new specialized international organizations were established, including the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), the UN Relief and Rehabilitation Agency, the World Bank, and the International Monetary Fund (IMF). Shortly after World War II, still other IGOs were established in a number of regions around the world.

Over time, it became evident that one of the major trends of the twentieth century was the development of numerous IOs small and large; general purpose and specialized; intergovernmental and nongovernmental; global, regional, and transregional to serve disparate goals and manage various needs, as shown in Figure 3.1.

Cumulatively, precedents set by the Concert of Europe, the public international unions, the Hague Conferences, the inter-American states, and the League of Nations established the basic structural forms for the majority of international organizations, particularly IGOs. These include a limited membership council; an assembly of all member states wherein each state has one vote—signifying the internationalization of the democratic principle of equal representation of all members, regardless of size, wealth, or power; and a secretariat to provide administrative services, implement programs, and serve as institutional continuity. The councils in some IGOs, however, such as the UN Security Council, the European Union Council, and the executive boards of the World Bank and IMF, operate with weighted or qualified voting, such as the five Security Council permanent members' veto power. Still, not all full-membership entities labeled "assembly" or "general assembly" or "conference" are alike. Although many are like the League Assembly in being made up of representatives of all member states, some, like the African Union's Assembly of Heads of State and

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Government—are entities that function at the summit level only. Among regional organizations, only the Organization of American States has a general assembly modeled on the League and UN assemblies. A number of regional organizations such as the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, the European Union, and African Union have parliamentary bodies, although they differ in fundamental ways. Some also have judicial bodies, as discussed later in the chapter.

The secretariats of these IGOs, like bureaucracies more generally, tend to share certain characteristics. They derive authority in performing “duties of office” from their rational-legal character and their expertise; they derive legitimacy from the moral purposes of the organization and from their claims to neutrality, impartiality, and objectivity; and they derive power from their missions of serving others. In many IGOs, the secretariats are staffed by technocrats—people with specialized training and knowledge who shape policy options consistent with that expertise. That professional training along with norms and occupational cultures tend to shape the way they see the world and to “influence what problems are visible to staff and what range of solutions are entertained” (Barnett and Finnemore 2005: 174; Piiparinen 2016).

Thus, as one studies various IGOs, one sees commonalities in structures, decisionmaking processes, and some functions, such as assemblies approving organizational budgets and electing executive heads. Yet one must be attuned to the differences between and among organizations and specific entities. As illustrated earlier, use of the word “assembly” does not necessarily mean that two entities with the same name in different organizations will have the same composition or functions.

Subsequent sections of this chapter briefly examine the establishment of the United Nations, the expansion of functional and specialized organizations within and outside the UN system, and the growth of international courts. Chapter 4 provides a more detailed look at the UN, and regional and transregional organizations are the subject of Chapter 5.

The UN System

The establishment of the United Nations in the closing days of World War II was an affirmation of the desire of war-weary nations for a general international organization that could help them avoid future conflicts and promote international economic and social cooperation. In many important ways, the UN structure was patterned after the League of Nations, with changes made where lessons had been learned. For example, the League’s Council could act only with unanimous agreement; the UN Security Council, while requiring the support of all five permanent members, needs only a majority of the nonpermanent members to take action. The UN Charter also built on lessons from the public international unions, conference diplomacy, and Hague Conference dispute settlement mechanisms.

The Atlantic Charter of August 14, 1941—a joint declaration by US president Franklin Roosevelt and British prime minister Winston Churchill calling for collaboration on economic issues and a permanent system of security—was the foundation for the “Declaration by the United Nations” in January 1942. Twenty-six nations affirmed the principles of the Atlantic Charter and agreed to create a new universal organization to replace the League of Nations. The UN Charter was drafted in two sets of meetings between August and October 1944 at Dumbarton Oaks in Washington, DC. The participants agreed that the organization would be based on the principle of the sovereign equality of members, with all “peace-loving” states eligible for membership, thereby excluding the Axis powers—Germany, Italy, Japan, and Spain. It was further agreed (though not without some strong dissension) that decisions on security issues would require unanimity of the permanent members of the Security Council, the great powers. There was consensus on broadening the scope of the new organization beyond that of the League, and President Roosevelt early on sought to ensure domestic support for US participation.

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When the United Nations Conference on International Organization convened in San Francisco on April 25, 1945, delegates from the fifty participating states modified and finalized what had already been negotiated among the great powers. Among them were a small number of women, including seven Latin American women who pushed successfully for provisions on human rights and women's rights in the UN Charter (Dietrichson and Sator 2022). On July 28, 1945, with Senate approval, the United States became the first country to ratify the Charter. It took only three months for a sufficient number of countries to ratify the document. As one conference participant noted after the Charter was signed: "One of the most significant features was the demonstration of the large area of agreement which existed from the start among the 50 nations. . . . Not a single reservation was made to the charter when it was adopted. . . . The conference will long stand as one of the landmarks in international diplomacy" (Padelford 1945). Historically, the emphasis in accounts of the UN's founding has been on the roles of the major powers and countries in the Global North. Recent work has shown the influence of delegations from the Global South, including the nineteen independent Latin American countries that made up the largest voting bloc, plus three from Africa, seven from the Middle East, and three from Asia (Weiss and Roy 2016; Dietrichson and Sator 2022).

Four of the UN's principal organs were patterned after those of the League of Nations: the Security Council, General Assembly, Secretariat, and International Court of Justice (ICJ). The UN Charter remedied a major gap in the League Covenant by creating the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) and it carried the mandates system forward under the Trusteeship Council. As Chapter 4 explores in depth, the UN is a complex system with many parts and many functions, making it the centerpiece of global governance since its inception, despite its many weaknesses. Other IGOs have been created within the UN system, such as the UN Conference on Trade and Development, the UN Children's Fund, and the International Atomic Energy Agency, as well as countless programs, funds, commissions, and committees. It has sponsored global conferences and summits; it serves as a catalyst for global policy networks and has increasingly established partnerships with nonstate actors.

Among the core elements of the UN system are a number of specialized agencies, including the first two public international unions: the ITU and UPU. There are now several related organizations, among them the World Trade Organization (WTO) and the International Organization for Migration (IOM).

The Expansion of Functional and Specialized Organizations

The establishment of single-function IGOs to address specific issues such as health, economics, trade, labor issues, and environmental threats mirrors

a pattern carried over from national governments. Over time, new organizations have been created to address more specialized problems in response to new issues and unmet needs. Thus, the numbers of functional and specialized IGOs have increased exponentially since the mid-nineteenth century.

In line with functionalist theory, functional organizations were once perceived to be nonpolitical, with technical experts working out solutions to problems among the member states. Staying above politics is not always possible, however, since the issues such IGOs deal with are not merely technical but can touch at the core of state sovereignty and deeply political concerns, especially as rules and regulations expand. Nonetheless, they retain their functional, specialized character and are important elements of global governance, forming the institutional core for governance activities on a particular set of issues.

The founders of the UN envisaged that functional agencies would play key roles in activities aimed at economic and social advancement. As a result, Articles 57 and 63 of the UN Charter call for the affiliation with the UN of specialized organizations established by separate intergovernmental agreements with “wide international responsibility” in economics, health, food, educational, and cultural fields. Today, the seventeen specialized agencies are formally affiliated with the UN through agreements with ECOSOC and the General Assembly. Like the UN itself, they have global rather than regional responsibilities, but separate charters, memberships, budgets, and secretariats as well as their own interests and constituencies. (See Chapter 4 for further discussion and Figure 4.2 for a full list of UN specialized and related agencies.) There are a significant number of functional organizations in the UN system that are not classified as specialized agencies, as they have been established by the UN itself and report to the Security Council or General Assembly. There are also a wide variety of other specialized functional organizations outside the UN system. Some are regional in scope; others have been formed by countries with shared interests in specific issues. Figure 3.2 lists some of the variety of functional organizations.

The evolution of governance and core functional IGOs in four areas of activity are discussed here, with others discussed in subsequent chapters. Efforts to address health, communications, and labor issues began in the nineteenth century, and those for economic, agriculture, and food issues developed during the twentieth century. In addition, we look at the standardization movement that began in the nineteenth century and the creation of the International Organization for Standardization—an IO, not an IGO—after World War II.

Health and the World Health Organization

One of the oldest areas of functional activity is health, an issue that respects no national boundaries. In medieval times, as trade expanded between Europe and East Asia, epidemics followed trade routes. European discovery

Figure 3.2
Functional Intergovernmental Organizations (selected)

Functional Organizations within the United Nations System

- Food and Agriculture Organization
- International Atomic Energy Agency
- International Civil Aviation Organization
- International Labour Organization
- International Maritime Organization
- International Telecommunications Union
- UN High Commissioner for Refugees
- Universal Postal Union
- World Health Organization
- World Meteorological Organization

Other Functional Organizations

- International Coffee Organization
- International Whaling Commission
- Northwest Atlantic Fisheries Organization
- Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries

Regional Functional Organizations

- African Development Bank
- Arab Monetary Fund
- Economic Community of West African States
- European Central Bank
- Mekong River Commission
- Pan American Health Organization

of the Americas brought diseases like smallpox, measles, and yellow fever to the Western Hemisphere. Increased trade and travel in nineteenth-century Europe accelerated the spread of deadly diseases across national borders and populations. Clearly, no single state could solve health problems alone. Cooperation was required.

In response to a cholera outbreak in Europe, the first International Sanitary Conference was convened in Paris in 1851 to develop a collective response based on increased knowledge about public health and medicine and improvements in sanitation. Between 1851 and 1903, eleven such conferences were convened to develop procedures to prevent the spread of contagious and infectious diseases.

In 1907 the Office International d'Hygiène Publique was created with a mandate to disseminate information on communicable diseases, such as cholera, plague, and yellow fever. More than a decade later, at the request of the League of Nations Council, an international health conference met to prepare for a permanent international health organization. The Office did not become part of this new health organization but remained a distinct entity with its own secretariat.

In 1948, a single health organization, the World Health Organization (WHO), came into being as a UN specialized agency.

The principal decisionmaking body is the World Health Assembly (WHA), which is composed of delegations from its 194 member states, the majority of whom are medical doctors or come from health or related government ministries. This reflects the pattern set by the ITU and UPU as the first public international unions and gives meetings a professional atmosphere that differs greatly from that of the UN General Assembly. Each country has one vote, and decisions are made either by simple majority or by

a two-thirds majority for important questions. The WHA meets annually in contrast to the assemblies and conferences of many other functional organizations. As the WHO's legislative body, it approves international regulations concerning sanitary and quarantine requirements and standards for diagnostic procedures, as well as for biological, pharmaceutical, and other products; it controls the WHO's budget, appoints the director-general, elects members of the Executive Board, adopts agreements, and sets goals and policies.

The Executive Board is a smaller group of thirty-four technically qualified individuals elected by the WHA for three-year terms. By "gentlemen's agreement," at least three of the UN Security Council members are supposed to be represented. The board sets WHA agendas and resolutions to be considered and oversees implementation of WHA decisions and policies. The WHO's Secretariat, located in Geneva, has several key roles: carrying out the programs the WHA has approved (often in partnerships with national health ministries, NGOs, research centers, etc.), providing technical guidance and support as a global hub of scientific and technical expertise, and coordinating responses to international health emergencies. The WHO has the distinction of having been the very first UN specialized agency with a woman director-general—former Norwegian prime minister Gro Harlem Brundtland, who served from 1998 to 2003.

The WHO is a quintessential functionalist organization and is one of the largest of the UN specialized agencies in terms of both membership (194 members), staff (7,000 in 150 countries), and budget (\$5.84 billion in 2020–2021), a sign of the universality of health concerns. In contrast to many UN agencies, a significant portion of its funding comes from states' voluntary contributions (in addition to their assessed contributions) and from private donors, such as the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation. These are known as extrabudgetary funds and are generally designated for specific purposes, such as polio eradication or HIV/AIDS programs. The World Bank has been a major funder of the WHO's budget and programs since the late 1980s. WHO is also one of the more decentralized functional organizations, having six regional offices (Africa, Americas, Southeast Asia, Europe, Eastern Mediterranean, Western Pacific) with significant autonomy to adopt their own programs, select their own directors, and control their own budgets. With the director-general, other WHO officials, and many WHA delegates being medical doctors and public health experts, they form a strong epistemic community based on their technical expertise and training. The WHO is involved in partnerships with other IGOs, such as UNICEF and the World Bank, as well as private partners such as the Gates Foundation and NGOs. These include the Global Vaccine Alliance (GAVI) and the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria.

The WHO's activities today include four major areas: containing the spread of communicable diseases; disease eradication; standard-setting and

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norm creation; and noncommunicable diseases, often called lifestyle-related health issues. Of these, disease eradication remains its most important activity.

In 1951, the WHO approved the International Sanitary Regulations, which were renamed the International Health Regulations (IHR) in a 1969 revision. They constitute the only international treaty that “explicitly regulates a state’s obligations to the international community on the spread of infectious diseases.” They also established the WHO as the “repository of all required disease surveillance information” (Youde 2012: 147). Initially, the IHR required states to report outbreaks of four communicable diseases (yellow fever, cholera, plague, and smallpox) and take appropriate measures to contain any outbreak without impeding international travel and commerce. Over time, governments often failed to report outbreaks in a timely manner or underreported the number of cases, fearing condemnation and adverse economic consequences such as loss of tourism revenue, although some failures were the result of limited resources. Smallpox was removed in 1981 after its successful eradication.

Globalization, however, has had a dramatic effect on the transmission, incidence, and vulnerability of individuals and communities to disease through migration, air transport, trade, and troop movements, including of UN peacekeepers. During the 1980s and 1990s, new diseases emerged that were not covered under the IHR, such as Ebola, West Nile virus, and HIV/AIDS. Older diseases thought to be under control, such as tuberculosis, reemerged in different, often drug-resistant forms. New threats to health arose with incidents of bioterrorism, such as the Tokyo sarin nerve gas attack in 1995 and the US anthrax scare in 2001. At the same time, the internet, cell phones, and other technologies have facilitated faster and better information about outbreaks that countries might once have been able to hide. This made it imperative to enable the WHO to receive reports of outbreaks from non-state actors in addition to governments and to make determinations if an event constitutes a public health emergency of international concern.

In 1995, the WHA requested the director-general to undertake a major revision of the IHR to make them more relevant to contemporary health threats and more effective. The negotiations took almost a decade, concluding in 2005, and the revised IHR took effect in 2007. Key changes included a wider range of public health risks so that rather than listing a set of specific diseases that should be reported, the IHR now refer to all events “posing a serious and direct threat to the health of human populations” (Article 1.1). This makes them more flexible and relevant to future public health threats. Particularly important is the WHO’s ability to receive and act on information from nongovernmental sources. The IHR require member states (194 plus 2 territories as of late 2020) to assess their own surveillance and response systems and implement plans to ensure core capacities. There is also explicit recognition of the human right to health in connection

with public health emergencies. Yet the regulations did not come with financial resources to support implementation; as some critics have charged, they perpetuated the link between health and an “absence of disease” framework rather than promoting a broader concept of health and the factors that support it (Youde 2012: 128–129). Furthermore, the revised IHR did not eliminate problems with states’ transparency, as was evident in 2020 when the Chinese government initially suppressed information on the coronavirus outbreak (discussed further in Chapter 11).

One of the WHO’s greatest accomplishments was the successful eradication of smallpox in 1980—the only human disease to be fully eradicated thus far. The campaign against malaria and polio has built on that success and demonstrates the important role of partnerships in WHO’s current activities. Rotary International and the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation have been particularly important for this campaign along with UNICEF, the Global Vaccine Alliance, and the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. The goal of polio eradication was close to realization in 2006, but local resistance to vaccination in Nigeria led to outbreaks that subsequently spread to neighboring countries, South Asia, and Syria.

In its third major area of activity, standard-setting and norm creation, the WHO has set standards for air pollution and drinking water. As early as 1970, the WHA approved guidelines for drug manufacturing, covering such issues as labeling, potency, purity, and safety, at the urging of developing countries concerned about the quality of imported drugs and pharmaceutical company exports of inferior ones. The WHO has also dealt with the pharmaceutical industry on the issues of pricing for antiretroviral AIDS drugs in poor countries and on the issue of vaccine distribution in the Covid-19 pandemic. The issue of accessibility, quality, and affordability of drugs in developing countries is an ongoing issue that overlaps with WTO-related issues of intellectual property rights and generic drugs. Another area of WHO standard-setting and norm creation was the Health for All by 2000 program initiated with the 1978 Alma Ata Declaration that called for acceptance of health as a public good, universal access to essential medicines, and nondiscrimination in care provision.

In 2003, the WHA approved the Framework Convention on Tobacco Control. This marked a major step in its fourth area of activity—noncommunicable diseases or lifestyle-related health issues. Key among them is its campaign against smoking and tobacco, which the *World Health Report 2003* named as the world’s leading cause of preventable deaths—an estimated 5 million and mostly in developing areas by that time since consumption had dropped significantly in developed countries (Youde 2012: 41–42). Not surprisingly, the campaign encountered stiff opposition from the large tobacco companies and initially from the United States. The story of the choice to negotiate a framework convention and the extensive NGO activity on the issue is

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discussed in Chapter 6. The convention bans advertising of tobacco products, requires health warnings on packaging, and creates broader liability for manufacturers. It took effect in 2005 and had been ratified by 182 parties as of 2023 (the United States, Indonesia, and Argentina are the three largest nonratifiers.)

The convention is the very first case of the WHO using the authority granted by Article 19 of its constitution to adopt a global health treaty, and it has subsequently been complemented by the Protocol to Eliminate Illicit Trade in Tobacco Products, concluded in 2012. Implementation has been slow, however, and smoking rates continue to rise in developing countries. The marketing restrictions have not been implemented and generally there is a loss of momentum on the issue.

The WHO continues to be the key IGO in global health governance. We look further at its critical role in Chapter 11, including how it handled major outbreaks of communicable diseases—Ebola in West Africa in 2014 and the global Covid-19 pandemic.

Telecommunications

Like health issues, telecommunication services have changed dramatically, from the invention of the telegraph and telephone in the nineteenth century to radio, computers, satellites, and internet in the twentieth century and various social media in the early twenty-first century. The founding of the International Telegraph Union in 1865 enabled people to communicate through one international network. But as that network has changed and new types of communication devices have developed, the successor organization, the ITU, which merged with the International Radio Union in 1932, rests on informal understandings rather than formal legal edicts. These include open access to outer space and the radio spectrum of airspace and the principle of prior use. States must respect use of specific frequencies and not transmit on them, but states also have a right to exclude foreign firms from their telecommunications industries, establishing the basis of a legal monopoly. Most telecommunications norms must be deduced from various agreements, statements, and the behavior of state and industry officials.

As in the health arena, where multiple governance structures interact, the ITU is one among many public and private bodies focusing on communications. It devotes significant attention to ensuring technical standards for various technologies and preventing interference in radio transmissions. The ITU works with the International Organization for Standardization and the International Electrotechnical Commission, which are both nongovernmental entities, and with a group of regional bodies under the Global Standards Cooperation Group in setting these technical standards.

The ITU along with the UPU pioneered a number of structures for specialized, functional IGOs. These include the predominance of technical