International Organizations for Political Scientists

A Teaching Course Material

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Chapter I: Introduction, Week 1-2; 6 hrs

1.1. Meaning & Role of International Organizations

I. THE PROCESS AND THE INSTITUTION*Inis L. Claude, Jr.*

I. THE PROCESS AND THE INSTITUTION

International organization is the process by which states establish and develop formal, continuing institutional structures for the conduct of certain aspects of their relationships with each other. It represents a reaction to the extreme decentralization of the traditional system of international relations and an effort by statesmen to adapt the mechanics of that system to the requirements posed by the constantly increasing complexity of the interdependence of states. Particular international organizations may be regarded as manifestations of the organizing process on the international level.

The history of international organization

The process of international organization had its origins in the nineteenth century, largely in Europe. Innovations associated with the rise of industrialism and the introduction of new methods of transport and communication stimulated the creation of special-purpose agencies, usually called public international unions, designed to facilitate the collaboration of governments in dealing with economic, social, and technical problems. Notable among these were the International Telegraphic Union (1865) and the Universal Postal Union (1874), which survived to become specialized agencies of the United Nations system (the former under the title International Telecommunication Union) after World War II. In the political field, an effort to institutionalize the dominant role of the great powers of Europe was undertaken at the Congress of Vienna in 1815. While the resultant Concert of Europe did not assume the character of a standing political organization, the same pattern functioned until World War I as the framework for a system of occasional great-power conferences which lent some substance to the idea that the European family of states constituted an organized entity. This concept was broadened by the Hague Conferences of 1899 and 1907, which admitted small states as well as great powers, and extra-European as well as European states, to participation in collective political deliberations. Near the end of the nineteenth century, the establishment of the Pan American Union and the initiation of a series of inter-American conferences reinforced the Monroe Doctrine and Simón Bolívar's pronouncements by giving institutional expression to the idea that the states of the Western Hemisphere constituted a distinct subgroup within the larger multi-state system.

These nineteenth-century beginnings provided, in large measure, the basis for the phenomenal development of international organization since World War I. Certain distinctions which emerged during this period—between political and nonpolitical agencies, between the status of great powers and that of small states, between regional and geographically undefined organizations—were to prove significant in the later course of international organization. Basic patterns of institutional structure and procedure were evolved. The trend toward broadening the

conception of international organization to include entities beyond the confines of the European state system was initiated. Most importantly, the dual motivations of international institution building—(a) the urge to promote coordinated responses by states to the problems of peaceful intercourse in an era of growing economic, social, and technical interdependence, and(b)the recognition of the necessity for moderating conflict in the political and military spheres—became operative in this period.

The establishment of the League of Nations and its affiliate, the International Labour Organisation, at the end of World War I represented the first attempt to combine into one general organization the disparate elements of organizational development which had emerged during the previous century. The League was the first general international organization in several senses: (a) it pulled together the threads of the great-power council, the general conference of statesmen, and the technically oriented international bureau; (b) it was a multipurpose organization, although its primary focus was onthe political and security problems of war and peace; and (c) it was, in principle, a world-wide institution, even though it retained much of the nineteenth-century emphasis upon the centrality of Europe in international affairs.

After World War ii, the League was superseded by the United Nations, a general organization which derived its major features from the nineteenth-century heritage and the lessons of experience, both positive and negative, provided by the League. The United Nations was conceived as the central component of a varied and decentralized system of international institutions that would include both autonomous specialized agencies, following the pattern first set by the public international unions, and such regional organizations as existed or might be created by limited groups of states. The organizational design formulated in the United Nations Charter called for the active coordination of the work of the specialized agencies by the central institution, primarily through the agency of its Economic and Social Council, and the utilization and control of regional agencies, largely through the Security Council.

In actuality, the organizational system of the post-World War II era has involved the operation of approximately a dozen specialized agencies, many of them newly created, coordinated with varying degrees of effectiveness by the United Nations. The post-1945 system has also involved the proliferation of regional organizations of every sort, most of them functioning quite independently, without any genuine tie to the central organization. The term "United Nations system" may, therefore, properly be used to refer to the United Nations and the specialized agencies, but it does not embrace the considerable number of regional organizations which have developed independently.

The total network of international institutions also comprises more than one hundred intergovernmental agencies outside the scope of the United Nations system, dealing with a vast range of problems and providing a variety of mechanisms for the conduct of relations among states. These are supplemented by approximately 1,500 nongovern-mental organizations which promote international consultation and activity in specialized fields at the unofficial level (Yearbook of International Organizations 1962-1963).

The conceptual basis

The conception of international relations underlying international organization is frequently described as idealistic, in the sense that it minimizes the element of conflict and emphasizes the potentialities of harmony and cooperation in the relationships of states. International organizations are characterized, by supporters and critics alike, as arrangements for cooperation among states. Most accurately, international organization can be said to rest upon a dualistic conception of international relations, one which acknowledges both conflictual and cooperative relationships as basic features of the multistate system. In principle, international organization represents an attempt to minimize conflict and maximize collaboration among participating states, treating conflict as an evil to be controlled and cooperation as a good to be promoted. In these terms, international organization both denies the inevitability of war and other manifestations of hostility among nations and expresses a commitment to the harmonization of international relations.

In fact, a more sophisticated analysis of international organization reveals a much more complex approach to the conflictual and cooperative aspects of international affairs than that described above. Some international agencies are primarily concerned with problems of conflict, while others emphasize the promotion of collaboration: within the United Nations, for instance, the Security Council is illustrative of the former type and the Economic and Social Council of the latter. Moreover, conflicting interests of states intrude upon programs of cooperation, making it necessary for cooperation-oriented agencies to deal with problems of conflict, and the common interests of states provide the means by which conflict-oriented agencies undertake to cope with tendencies toward international disorder. Thus, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization is a regional agency inspired by the East–West conflict after World War II, but it relies upon cooperation among its members to enable it to meet the dangers posed by that conflict. Similarly, the concept of collective security envisages cooperative action by most members of a general international organization as the essential means for deterring or defeating aggression.

It is significant that both the League of Nations and the United Nations were established in the aftermath of major world wars and were conceived primarily as means for preventing the recurrence of such catastrophic struggles; the Charter of the United Nations begins with the expression of de-termination “to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war, which twice in our lifetime has brought untold sorrow to mankind.” General inter-national organization in the twentieth century is a reaction to the grim reality of violent conflict among states and a response to the danger of future conflict. In the United Nations system, preoccupation with the conflictual aspect of international relations is so great that the official ideology requires the formal justification of virtually every cooperative project, however useful it may promise to be in itself, in terms of its putative contribution to the avoidance of war. Article 55 of the United Nations Charter calls for collaborative activity in the economic, social, health, cultural, educational, and human rights fields, “with a view to the creation of conditions of stability and well-being which are necessary for peaceful and friendly relations among nations. . . .” Article 76 lists as the first objective of the United Nations trusteeship system the furtherance of international peace and security Moreover, the functional theory of international organization, which explicitly stresses the development of agencies devoted to cooperative solution of problems in the economic and social realm, is ultimately concerned with the issue of political

and military struggle; functionalism treats the promotion of welfare as an indirect approach to the prevention of warfare [seeInternational integration, article onfunctionalism and functional integration]. On the whole, international organization has reflected greater concern with the probability of conflict than with the possibility of cooperation.

In the final analysis, governmental leaders of member states impose their conceptions of international relations upon international organization and determine the ends toward which and the means by which international agencies operate. While international institutions tend to some limited degree to develop corporate viewpoints and purposes, usually through professional staff members who identify themselves with the organizations which they serve, these institutions are essentially instruments of their member states. Hence, international organization reflects the variety of viewpoints and purposes which prevails among governments. In the United Nations, a fundamental issue is whether the world organization should serve primarily as a battlefield or a peace conference, an arena for conflict or a chamber for the settlement of disputes. Some statesmen are primarily interested in the waging of political battles and others concentrate more on the mitigation of conflict. Moreover, some leaders give priority to the stimulation of effective international cooperation and treat the organization as a workshop for economic and social collaboration rather than as an agency concerned with conflict. Whether the United Nations emphasizes the conflictual or the cooperative aspects of international relations is determined less by the formal statement of the organization's nature and purpose contained in its charter than by the day-to-day outcome of the political process of the organization, in which members vie with each other for control over the utilization of its mechanism. International organization does not introduce a distinctive conception of international relations but gives expression to whatever viewpoints may be dominant in the international political arena.

This analysis indicates that international organization is essentially a process of developing a new structural and procedural framework for the interplay of national governments within the context of the multistate system. It represents an attempt by statesmen to improve the operation of that system by enhancing the institutional equipment available for the conduct of relations among states and by promoting the general acceptance of standards of state behavior compatible with the minimum requirements of an orderly system. Insofar as international organization represents a reformist movement within the multistate system, it expresses the awareness of national leaders that international order is requisite to the promotion and protection of the most basic interests of their states. The quest for order through international organization does not involve repudiation of national interests or subordination of national interests to an overriding internationalism, but at most it involves the redefinition of national interests in conformity with the demands of increasing interdependence and the commitment of statesmen to the pursuit of those interests within the revised framework provided by international organization. It should occasion no surprise that governments undertake to use international agencies as instruments of their national policies. Such agencies are created and maintained by governments for instrumental purposes, and their usefulness depends upon the disposition of statesmen to resort to them for the promotion of values deemed compatible with national interests. International organization reflects the view that world order is not more important than national interests, but that it is important to national interests [see Systems analysis, article on international systems].

The character of international organization

Internationalism

In keeping with this emphasis upon the national values of member states, international organizations have generally functioned as loose associations, heavily dependent upon the voluntary acceptance by states of the obligations of membership, upon the development of consensus among governments as to programs and policies, and upon techniques of persuasion and political influence rather than command and coercion. In limited areas, international agencies have been endowed with legislative authority and enforcement procedures, but their capacity to function is based essentially upon processes of political accommodation. Usefulness to states, not power over states, is the secret of such strength as an international institution may acquire or possess.

The symbol of the dependence of international organization upon the will of states is theveto—the formally acknowledged competence of a state to frustrate majority decision and block action deemed incompatible with its interests. This constitutional capacity has been progressively relinquished by states, in favor of decision making by simpler or qualified majorities. In the United Nations, this trend has reached the point of confining the veto power to the Security Council, within which only the five major powers holding permanent seats are authorized to veto certain decisions of a nonprocedural character. Even this limited veto power has been eroded in practice, so that its negative effect upon majority will is seldom definitive. Despite this apparent diminution of the veto in international institutions, individual states—particularly the major powers—retain a basic capacity, grounded in political reality more than in constitutional documents, to inhibit the effective functioning of international agencies. If the concept of the veto is broadened beyond the negative vote to include all available manifestations of nonsupport and opposition, it becomes clear that all international agencies, regardless of their constitutional provisions, are ultimately dependent upon the capacity to promote substantial consensus among their members. Indeed, the veto rule is, in positive terms, the rule of unanimity; the latter suggests the fundamentally consensual character of international institutions.

While international organization has sometimes been criticized as involving too radical and idealistic a transformation of international relations, the tendency since World War II has been to compare it unfavorably with a hypothetical world government. Noting the limited capabilities of international agencies for controlling the behavior of states, advocates of world government have insisted that nothing short of the replacement of the multistate system by a global federation, involving the creation of a central institution endowed with authoritative and coercive powers comparable to those of national governments, will suffice to prevent catastrophic war. This point of view has gained widespread acceptance, with the result that the observation that “the United Nations is not, of course, a world government” has become a standard introduction to discussions of the inadequacy of international organization. Critical evaluation of international institutions has tended to measure them against the standard of governmental institutions and to attribute significant value to them only to the degree that they conform to that standard.

Supranationalism

From the point of view of approaching world government, the high point in the evolution of international organization since World War II is the development of the European Community, which began with the creation of the European Coal and Steel Community by France, West Germany, Italy, Belgium, the Netherlands, and Luxembourg, and subsequently expanded its functional scope with the establishment of the European Economic Community and the European Atomic Energy Community by the same group of states. Certain features of these institutions, including the conferment of significant policy-making and executive authority upon commissions composed of members acting independently of their governments on behalf of the community as a whole, and the capacity of community organs to deal directly and authoritatively with individuals and business enterprises within member states, have led to their characterization as supranational agencies.

The concept of supranationalism has not been precisely defined, but it is clearly intended to designate governmentlike qualities. Supranational institutions are regarded as falling between the poles of federal government and international organization and are defined in terms of their approximation of the former and their deviation from the latter. The adoption of this new designation for the institutions of the European Community suggests a difference in kind from conventional international organizations. The crucial differentiation implied in the concept of supranationalism concerns the relationship between a supranational agency and the governments of member states. In contrast to an international organization, a supranational body is thought to be superior to its member states and relatively independent of their consent and support in its operations. Supranationalism, in short, symbolizes the proposition that certain international organizations have achieved substantial emancipation from the control of national governments and acquired an autonomous role in international affairs [seeInternational integration, article onglobal integration].

The institutions of the European Community have developed remarkable innovations in international organization, and they show promise of leading toward the development of a full-fledged federal arrangement among their member states. Nevertheless, it appears that the quality of supranationalism is not so meaningful in practice as it is impressive in theory. The achievements of the Community have depended upon the successful development of consensus among the governments of member states, not upon the evasion of the necessity for such consensus; the effectiveness of the institutions has rested not upon the elimination of the veto in theory but upon the achievement of unanimity in practice. The evidence provided by the European experience does not suggest that supranationalism offers international institutions a realistic escape from their dependence upon governments. It does indicate that, under appropriate circumstances, the innovations associated with supranationalism may facilitate the development and implementation of the willingness of governments to move ahead in ambitious programs of common action [seeInternational integration, article onregional integration].

For better or for worse, the development of the United Nations system has not pointed toward the evolution of a global federal system or even toward the quasi-federalism of supranational institutions. The expanding membership of the organization has testified to the proliferation of new states and to the increasing dominance within the United Nations of the view that it should be a universal institution which mirrors the complex realities of the multistate system. This

expansion of the organization has completed the process of eliminating the European parochialism of international institutions, making formal acknowledgment of the global character of the international system. The rise to primacy within the United Nations of the General Assembly, the organ in which all member states enjoy equality of formal status and voting capacity, is in part attributable to the fact that this body comprises an unprecedentedly comprehensive collection of spokesmen for the units of the multistate system.

Far from undermining the position of national states as the primary actors on the international scene, international organization since World War II has in fact served to strengthen their position by enhancing their viability and effectiveness. States newly formed from colonial empires have been particularly reliant upon membership in the United Nations to provide symbolic confirmation of their emergence to independent status and to give them a political base for promoting the causes which they deem most essential to the consolidation of their position: the definitive elimination of the colonial system, the concentration of international agencies upon the provision of technical and developmental aid to the economically underdeveloped countries, and the prevention of major war. By providing postindependence assistance of various kinds, a diplomatic training ground, and the institutional context within which new states may individually and collectively bring their influence to bear upon international affairs, the United Nations and its specialized agencies have contributed to the working of the multistate system in the difficult period of the drastic alteration of its dimensions and the intensification of its heterogeneity.

The prevention of war

The multistate system has undergone radical change since World War II, not only in the sense that decolonization has effected the quantitative and qualitative transformation of its membership but also in the sense that a series of revolutions in the technology of military power, combined with a fundamental political and ideological cleavage between the states best equipped to exploit the new technology, has radically altered the problem of security and given new urgency to the prevention of military conflict. Under these circumstances, the crucial test of international organization has to do with its relevance to the task of preventing the destruction of the multistate system.

Collective security

Prior to the era of general international organization, the modern state system relied upon the autonomous manipulation of power relationships by its independent units, both singly and in competitive alliances, for the achievement of the stability of the system and the security of its members. This arrangement, known as the balance-of-power system, was not subjected to attempts at significant revision until the formation of the League of Nations. The Hague Conferences of 1899 and 1907 introduced plans for disarmament agreements and institutionalized procedures for pacific settlement of disputes as alternative approaches to peace and security. The founders of the League gave institutional meaning to these approaches by incorporating them in the basic covenant of the new organization. As their major contribution to the restructuring of international relations, they added the concept of collective security [seeCollective security]. In practice, however, members of the League were reluctant to accept

the obligations and risks which an operative system of collective security implied for them. Except for a half-hearted and abortive attempt to invoke the scheme in order to frustrate Italian aggression against Ethiopia in 1935, they virtually discarded this approach to the problems of war and peace.

Despite the failure of the League to translate the concept of collective security into a working system, the ideal of establishing such a system caught hold. When statesmen and scholars contemplated the problem of launching a new organizational enterprise after World War II, they appeared almost to take it for granted that a world organization should adopt collective security as the central approach to the maintenance of international peace. The Charter of the United Nations, as formulated at the San Francisco Conference in 1945, endorsed the principle of collective security but repudiated its general applicability by giving the major powers the constitutional power to veto the actions of the Security Council. The formulators of the charter, in fact, rejected the notion that this approach to the ordering of international relations was relevant to the critical problems of war and peace that might arise after World War II. The issue of the feasibility of effectuating collective security against the opposition of a great power has been reopened from time to time, but political realism has prevailed, and instead of expanding the coverage of the coercive system envisaged in the charter, members of the United Nations have in practice abandoned all efforts to establish that system. It is thoroughly in keeping with the history of attitudes toward collective security that the United Nations should have endorsed the principle in general terms, denied the possibility of its application in the most crucial cases, shifted toward the position that the restriction upon its implementation should be lifted, and finally discarded any meaningful commitment to give effect to the concept.

Defensive alliances

In the period since World War II, the struggle between the massive blocs led by the Soviet Union and the United States, commonly designated as the cold war, has stimulated the use of international organizations for purposes quite different from that of implementing collective security. The primary response to the threat of war resulting from the aggressive policy of a great power has been the adaptation of the forms and procedures of international organization to serve the purposes of defensive alliances. The North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) is the prime example of the combining of a conventional alliance with the institutional devices developed by the modern process of international organization. The formation of NATO in reaction to the expansionist tendencies of the Soviet Union represented, in fact, the following of the advice implicitly tendered in the United Nations Charter to states confronted with the danger of aggression by a great power; the charter's renunciation of the intent or expectation that the United Nations should provide security in such a situation is followed, in article 51, by acknowledgment of the propriety of arrangements for collective self-defense. Insofar as international agencies have a realistic role to play in deterring or defeating military ventures by major powers, it is evident that this role devolves upon regional or selective-membership agencies, composed of states perceiving a common threat to their security and resolved to combine their strength in support of a common defensive policy—not upon general organizations such as the United Nations [seeAlliances].

Preventive diplomacy

While the pragmatic division of labor among international institutions assigns the basic function of military defense to agencies of the NATO variety and not to a global organization attempting to effectuate the principle of collective security, this assignment leaves a significant group of functions to the United Nations. From its beginning, this organization has provided a political forum and a setting for diplomacy—public and private, formal and informal—and has exhibited flexibility in the provision of mechanisms and procedures for assisting states to reach agreed settlements of disputes. An essentially new function, albeit an outgrowth of the organization's development of instrumentalities for pacific settlement, emerged in 1956 with the creation of the United Nations Emergency Force (UNEF) and, more definitively, in 1960 with the launching of the United Nations Operation in the Congo (ONUC). This function was given the title "preventive diplomacy" by Secretary-General Dag Hammarskjöld. It deserves to be noted as the major innovation produced by the United Nations in the realm of approaches to the maintenance of peace through the functioning of international agencies. Preventive diplomacy represents the organization's tentative answer to the question of what major function in the political and security realm it may be able to substitute for the unattainable ideal of providing collective security.

Preventive diplomacy, developed pragmatically in response to the Middle Eastern crisis of 1956 and the Congo crisis of 1960, was ably articulated in theoretical terms by Secretary-General Hammarskjold (Hammarskjold 1960). It involves the intervention of the United Nations in areas of conflict outside of, or peripheral to, the cold war struggle, for the purpose of forestalling the competitive intrusion of the rival power blocs into those areas. As in the cases of UNEF and ONUC, this intervention is carried out by military forces placed at the disposal of and under the direction of the organization by states other than the great powers, and, so far as possible, disassociated from the rival blocs. The mission of the forces, which are dispatched to the scene with the consent of the parties most directly involved, is not to combat an aggressor but to stabilize the local situation so as to prevent the area's becoming a new zone of cold war competition. A basic requirement of this kind of operation is the consent of the major powers, who, recognizing a common interest in the avoidance of a military showdown, are confident that the United Nations will not favor any one of them in its conduct of the operation. This requirement suggests the fundamental limitations of preventive diplomacy. It is a function which can be carried out by international organization on behalf of competitive great powers only to the extent that political and other circumstances make it acceptable to those powers. Preventive diplomacy is a modest concept in that it assigns international organization only the role of assisting rival powers in the avoidance of unwanted confrontations, not that of exercising coercive control over disturbers of the international peace. Nevertheless, it represents the most significant role presently available to general international organization in the stabilization of an international situation dominated by great-power struggles [seeDiplomacy].

Operationalism and politics

The espousal by the United Nations of the function of preventive diplomacy was only one aspect of a general trend toward the expansion of the operational responsibilities and capabilities of international institutions. The development of the United Nations and its specialized agencies has taken these institutions beyond the minimal function of providing facilities for multilateral

diplomatic interchange, to the actual administration of programs and execution of operations in both the economic and the political realms. Many of these programs have been initiated in response to the demand for international assistance to underdeveloped countries in their quest for economic advance. This expansion of the executive function and capacity, in the case of the United Nations in particular, has accompanied the evolution of the secretary-generalship into a post of leadership and policy direction. The status of the secretary-general as a kind of chief executive of the organization has been achieved as the product of a steady evolution, but the precariousness of this result is indicated by the opposition which it has sporadically evoked.

These developments have given rise to controversy over the issue of the political direction and control of the programs sponsored and administered by international agencies. States are not realistically divisible into those which support and those which oppose international organization or those which accept and those which reject the principle of expanding the executive capacity of international agencies. The policies of states with respect to international institutions are dependent upon conceptions of national interests and expectations as to whether or not the activities of those institutions will be compatible with and conducive to the protection and promotion of national interests. In short, states are actually divisible into those which have and those which lack confidence that they and their political allies can exercise effective control over the functioning of particular international agencies or the operation of given programs. No state is committed to the support or the rejection of international operations as a matter of principle, without regard to the nature of their policy direction and control. In the final analysis, member states support or oppose specific international activities in proportion to their success or failure in influencing the nature of the policy which these activities serve.

The struggle of states for control over the policy and activities of the organization has been particularly intense in the United Nations. Such issues as the admission of new members, the integrity of the veto power, the expansion of the realm of competence of the General Assembly, and the financing and general policy direction of the Congo operation have illustrated this point. There has also been a trend toward the organization of member states into distinct blocs and the development of shifting patterns of alignment of states and groups of states in the debates and votes of the General Assembly.

All these developments indicate the emergence of a distinctive and significant political process within the United Nations. This phenomenon is disturbing to idealists who have looked to international organization for the abolition of international politics and the establishment of the rule of law in all its purity on a global scale. From a more realistic point of view, it suggests the coming of age of international organization; the intensity of the political contest is a measure of the significance attached to the institution.

The study of international organization

The development of the politics of international organization as a part of the larger sphere of international politics has been paralleled by the evolution of a political emphasis in the scholarly study of international organization. In its earliest phases, this study was generally characterized by a legal emphasis which was frequently accompanied by a strong value commitment to the amelioration of international politics. Scholarship in this field was largely a quest for structural

and legal reforms applicable to the international system. Since World War II, specialists in international organization have tended to be less dominated by aversion to international politics, less oriented toward legal analysis, and more cognizant of the political aspects of the interplay of states within the framework of international agencies. Numerous studies have been made of the policies and attitudes of particular states toward and within the United Nations and other international institutions, and pioneer research has been undertaken on the development of bloc affiliations, voting patterns, and other aspects of the political processes within international agencies.

Research of this type has been largely focused on the United Nations and the regional institutions of western Europe, leaving a need for systematic political analysis of other institutions, global and regional, in order to develop an understanding of the full range of the international organizational system. As researchers provide analyses of the political processes within and the political impacts of an increasing number of international agencies, it may become possible to develop the field of comparative international organization as an area of study which may contribute to an understanding of international politics in the broadest sense.

Trends in international organization research since World War II suggest the possibility that the study of international institutions, of the foreign policies of particular states, and of the international political system as a whole may be integrated in a way conducive to the more sophisticated analysis of the general nature of the interaction of states in a multistate context which is itself undergoing fundamental transformations.