

The Making of the World: How International Organizations Shape Our Future

Yves SCHEMEIL

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The role of intergovernmental organizations (IGOs) and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in the global system is a contentious issue. States delegate some responsibilities and in certain instances accept growing autonomy. Coalitions address complex environments, wasteful overlaps and jurisdictional trespass, turning them into productive divisions of labor. Therefore, Yves Schemeil aims to explain in his new book, *The Making of the World: How International Organizations Shape Our Future*, the expansion, collaboration, competition, and death of international organizations (IO), offering “a concise and topical discussion” to distinguish the book from the IOs literature.

The book examines the impact of IOs on daily life and the exogenous contexts that constrain their action, focusing on inputs rather than outputs and emphasizing networks rather than single units. It highlights the interplay between factors employed in IOs, such as collaborative trends and networking potential. Networks are essential for IOs as they help prevent deadlocks, make the fight for narrower win-sets obsolete, and solve the credibility problem by generating trust. IOs have, moreover, invented new ways of management and governance, making their organizations more flexible, cognitive, transformative, and networking-based.

The book has five main parts and seventeen chapters. In the first part, Schemeil presents a comprehensive analysis of the domain of international collaboration, highlighting a notable gap in the existing literature, specifically in the examination of interorganizational cooperation, which becomes the central focus of the work. In this part, the substitution of a chaotic arena for governments with a network that prioritizes IOs and fosters collaboration among several stakeholders has been proposed. In addition, this part delves into the development of international relations theories, specifically focusing on both “the classics” (realists and neo-realists) and “the mavericks” (who emphasize to “abandon anarchy, sovereignty, and structural constraints on the distribution of power and privilege reasonable decisions effected within institutions or between organizations”), to enhance our understanding of IOs (p. 48).

In the second part, the author explores the complexities involved in comprehending the proliferation of IOs. Then Schemeil puts forth the contention that achieving harmony among distinct entities is necessary to prevent the establishment of the hegemony of the dominant power. The examination of the balance between the centralization and decentralization of IOs is regarded as a crucial element within the discourse around homogenization versus fragmentation.

In the third part, he provides an analysis of the changing emphasis in management and organization studies, namely towards atypical organizations and leadership approaches in high-pressure situations. This contributes to the existing body of research on New Public Management (NPM) and post-NPM. Furthermore, a range of recommendations are provided to IOs and their leaders. This shift facilitates comparisons between IOs and IGOs, emphasizing the significance of transformative leadership and other modern organizational concepts in addressing the challenges they face.

In the fourth part, matters of expansion, contraction, and collaboration are discussed. Many solutions have been offered to effectively manage the unavoidable occurrence of overlap; a comprehensive analysis has been conducted to examine the distinctions between IGOs and NGOs; and the vulnerability of IOs has been contextualized and evaluated. The subsequent discussion pertains to the notion of collaboration among IOs, acknowledging it as a dynamic process characterized by distinct phases and accompanied by certain obstacles. To elucidate the contrasting perspectives on collaboration, which is considered important for efficiently addressing intricate global matters, the author presents the concepts of “avoidance” and “attraction.” The part underscores the long-term advantages of decreased transaction costs and the appeal of interorganizational networks for international actors, despite the obstacles and expenses associated with interorganizational collaboration, including transaction and coordination costs. The author posits IO networks as entities capable of transforming liabilities into resources, dissent into legitimacy, and competition into collaboration. This part highlights the significant importance of IO networks in shaping the future structure of the world. He presents them as fundamental components for enhancing global governance, enabling more efficient and robust systems that can facilitate the transformation of differences into diversity and dissent into consent.

In the last part, Schemeil discusses the robustness of the United States’ worldwide dominance, attributing it in part to the efforts of its NGOs and the impact of IGOs that support and validate global norms. This part also examines various levels of multilateralism, including challenges and remedies that might be clarified with examples. In this part, the visions of Thomas Hobbes, Hedley Bull, and Alexander Wendt on world politics are also examined. The author undertakes an in-depth examination of political theory, referring to Hobbes’ framework about political power, sovereignty, rights, and covenants. Then, Bull’s and his successors’ perspectives are discussed, with both pluralism and solidarism being explored in these contexts. At that point, the author emphasizes that Bull’s legacy, the contribution to the transformation of a society primarily composed of nation-states into an international society encompassing peoples, is central to his argument. He then moves to focus on Wendt’s vision of world government and thin and thick recognition, pointing out that Hobbes and Wendt

have similar perspectives about “the inevitability of a final transfer of sovereignty” (p. 355). In the last part, Schemeil emphasizes the limitations of traditional philosophical and political models, which “are predicated on the monopoly of states over macropolitics and the connection between state, war, and peace.” He also observes that most analyses miss the key link in a realistic model of world evolution: interorganizational networks. According to Schemeil, these networks have more flexibility, practicality, and effectiveness in managing global challenges than state-centric models. By focusing on these interorganizational networks, the world can shift from a state of warfare to welfare, offering a more feasible and impactful pathway to peace and cooperation.

The book suggests that IOs can accelerate the evolution of global public goods by pooling incentives for staff members, diplomats, ministers, and scholars. According to the author, IOs are not just venues for exchanging information and reducing communication costs; they are also public goods themselves and must be protected from intergovernmental turbulence. Cooperation between governments is a puzzle, and staff at IOs should focus on the world population rather than national governments (p. 373).

The book highlights the importance of multilateralism in international negotiations, despite pessimistic predictions about their fate. Multilateralism is a consequence of governance, where stakeholders of different legal statuses, decision-making layers, and sizes share responsibility for the outcome of their multilevel and multi-stakeholder debates. IGOs collaborate with NGOs, foundations, think tanks, and business partners, resulting in full multilateral action. Networks grow each time a prominent global issue is urgently raised, which is the best way to negotiate common solutions to common problems in the long run. Nonetheless, the reader should not expect the following remarks from the book: explanation of interstate collaboration, in-depth discussion of the balance of power between states and IOs, democratization of the world, or focus on geopolitical issues such as solutions to key conflicts.

The book presents a distinctive viewpoint in the field of literature by examining IOs from an internal perspective, considering them as autonomous institutions rather than subordinate institutions to their member states and targeting successful examples contrary to many scholars. I highly recommend the book, particularly to young scholars, as Schemeil provides a comprehensive guide for anyone who is interested in conducting research, composing a thesis, or engaging in academic study on the given topic.