

EDITORIAL

How to Study International Organizations

by John Mathiason and Kirsten Haack

The unifying theme for the articles and reviews in this second edition of the *Journal of International Organizations Studies (JOIS)* is a question: How shall we study international organizations? Each of the authors seeks to provide an answer by either looking at the field as a whole or at individual organizations. The results show we have come some distance in determining how international organizations should be studied; however, we need to go still further before we can say we have settled the theoretical and methodological issues.

At the same time, a number of the articles describe new functions the international public sector is performing. This indicates there will be obstacles to addressing twenty-first-century institutional challenges, such as transnational crime and climate change. In the issue, these are seen from both the academic observers' perspective and the reflections of insiders. The dual perspective is important since much of what happens inside international organizations has been invisible to academic observers, while insiders have not always been able to express their observations in ways that would convince academic observers as valid.

Balding and Wehrenfennig's essay uses organizational theory to analyze international organizations. They note that organization theory has not been used extensively to examine UN system entities. Partly, as can be seen, because the focus of analysis has been on national entities and applying the concepts to international organizations is a complex task. Ness and Brechin's 1988 study was an exception but not one pursued by other scholars. Balding and Wehrenfennig's analysis provides some insights into the application of organizational theory to IOs. They present two cases of the GATT/WTO and the UN General Assembly in an analysis focused on the Member-States of the organization. The WTO is both a direct deliverer of services and a negotiating forum, while the UN General Assembly (in contrast to the UN as a whole) is merely a negotiating forum. The analysis shows it is useful to try new approaches, but a question for further research would be how to focus on the public sector aspect of the organization as well.

Kille and Hendrickson take a different approach in looking at the evolution of relationships between the UN and a military alliance, NATO. Here they note how NATO has become a major partner with the UN in peacekeeping operations over time—not without controversy, which they analyze in depth. The UN's peacekeeping operations were, for most of the organization's history, staffed by varied national contingents. They have become increasingly involved in operations where the military are not merely observers but, rather, must apply coercive force to maintain order. The UN has a problem mobilizing coercive force and often has to find outside sources of troops. NATO is one of them, but ECOWAS and the African Union

have also provided troops in operations. This broader aspect of peacekeeping clearly merits analysis, into which Kille and Hendrickson fit.

Kerwer and Hülse address another area in which the international public sector is taking on a greater role, examining the Financial Action Task Force (FATF). As it has evolved, FATF has become a significant operational player in addressing money-laundering on the international level. While they argue FATF is a standard-setting organization (like the International Standards Organization), they show it has gone even beyond that. By monitoring state compliance with agreed international norms they use, as a main tool, a blacklist—or its equivalent—of states that are not in compliance. This is like “naming and shaming” as used in the human rights regime but with more consequences (such as increases in interest rates for states not in compliance).

Tapio Kanninen and Georgios Kostakos provide a detailed, insider’s view, which argues the UN’s evolution in early warning and strategic planning has given the international secretariats an important position that, as their evidence shows, can address international problems. Their focus on climate change is particularly apt, since the complex negotiations cut across most of the work of the UN’s system and the role of the secretariat in finding ways to link the issues has become critical. This development needs to be followed as the climate change negotiations proceed. The analytical approach shows how insider insights can help show how complex international organizations function.

The four book reviews look at a set of publications that show in their own ways how the organizational complexities of IOs can be seen. Silke Weinlich’s review of Joachim Müller’s study of UN system coordination shows the complexity of managing the complex organization and builds on his extensive analysis of UN reform. Since Müller is an insider, his approach is particularly interesting. Julia Harfensteller looks at Ian Hurd’s most recent book on international organizations. Hurd is one of the few analysts who has looked at international organizations from a non-realist approach, based on regime theory. His most recent work shows what IOs do, and puts this into a larger theoretical context. Christian Bueger and Elena Heßelmann report on a workshop: “Rediscovering Global Bureaucracies—from Weber to Where?” They focus on the work of young scholars, mostly in Europe, and suggest new approaches are being tried to understand the emerging phenomenon of an international public sector. Finally, Kirsten Haack’s review of two volumes, one dealing with UN studies and the other of EU studies, shows there is still considerable work to be done to define the field of IO studies.

As subsequent issues of *JIOS* will show, the field is emerging quickly as scholars determine the subject is of growing importance and practitioners seek to contribute their insights.