Internal Dynamics and Dysfunctions of International Organizations—An Introduction to the Special Issue

by Julian Junk, Peace Research Institute Frankfurt, and Frederik Trettin, University of Konstanz[1]

There can be no doubt that international organizations (IOs) have become increasingly important actors in international relations and, as such, are important research objects in international relations. Organizations such as the United Nations and related organizations perform critical functions not only in the area of international peace and security but also in areas such as development or international trade. Despite an emerging research agenda devoted to the analysis of international organizations as organizations and thereby highlighting both the agency as well as the administrative side of IOs, there are still two major interrelated shortcomings. First, there is little understanding about the intra-organizational dynamics and patterns. Second, the consequences of these dynamics for the agency and performance of IOs have not been analyzed yet. By and large, IO studies fall into the trap of starting with the premise that the bureaucratic agency is flawed, without investigating into the sources of dysfunctions and into the permanence of these dynamics and patterns.

By contrast, the articles in this special issue start with the assumption that it is precisely an understanding of the micropolitics among administrative substructures that helps to explain important elements of the effectiveness and performance of IOs. Consequently, all contributions analyze different aspects of the internal dimension of international organizations and the consequences for the activities and agency of IOs. They highlight, for instance, the existence and the effects of bureaucratic spoiling and the various levels of agency within IOs.

This special issue contributes to two main issue areas: first, to the study of international organizations as organizational actors and, second, to an understanding of the dynamics among administrative elements within those organizations. To varying degrees, these two issues have been a concern in the academic literature in recent years.

First, despite the increasing importance of IOs and their respective administrative bodies, especially in the field of peace and security, a recurring theme over decades is the very assessment that still too little is known about the actual inside and inner workings of these organizations. Although some landmark publications highlighting the bureaucratic and organizational characteristics of IOs were published many years ago and have been "rediscovered" recently (e.g., Weiss 1975; Pitt and Weiss 1986), starting with—among others—the seminal studies by Barnett and Finnemore (1999; 2004), one may identify a serious new research agenda conceptualizing international organizations as organizations with their own authority and relevant inner patterns. In this agenda, there has been progress to acknowledge that substructures of intergovernmental organizations share common characteristics of bureaucratic organizations, such as a clear system of super- and subordination, creating a hierarchical formal organizational structure, and a division of labor between experts based on rules and standard operating procedures.

However, it remains an acknowledgement, and there is still a lack of conceptual and

empirical advances in the details, despite some promising transfers from public administration and organization theory (see, for instance, Dijkzeul and Beigbeder 2003, Knill and Bauer 2007, Dingwerth et al. 2009, Benner et al. 2011, Junk and Blume 2012, Junk et al. forthcoming). Although one may observe a "considerable convergence between organizational sociology and IOs" (Brechin and Ness 2013: 32), the previous blind spot of international relations research that "for several decades, states have taken IOs more seriously than have scholars" (Abbott and Snidal 1998: 29) is not sufficiently covered yet. It still holds true that "the number of studies that shed light on their inner workings is still relatively small" (Dijkzeul and Beigbeder 2003:1), and we "know very little about the actual workings of these bureaucracies" (Benner et al. 2007:2).

Second, while for a long time the preferences of the member states had been viewed as the most important factor for the design of its output (often referred to as politicization of IOs),[2] more recent studies highlight the influence of individual civil servants within IOs bureaucracy on policy outcomes (Liese and Weinlich 2006, Mathiason 2007, Weller and Xu 2010) and, thus, of internal politicization. Nevertheless, the mechanisms of politicization within the bureaucratic core, by the bureaucratic core, or at the nexus between the inner and outer environment is rarely addressed. For instance and by contrast, the administration and management of peace operations is neither apolitical nor purely externally influenced. Not only are questions of peace and war per se much politicized issues but so are the political dynamics between the "First UN"—composed of the member states—and the "Second UN"—composed of the secretariats (cf. Claude 1996). Thus, the interplay of politics and administration are especially relevant: The UN Secretariat in New York as well as the administration of UN peace operations in the field are situated between the conflicting poles of politics and administration. Cooperation and coordination, recruitment, or learning from previous peace operations—all these administrative tasks are not only superimposed by the particular interest of the UN member states (geopolitics) but also by the internal politics of the various administrative units (micropolitics).

Most articles in this special issue elaborate on these patterns of implementing UN peace operations and use this empirical focus to illustrate the consequences of micropolitical dynamics for the performance of IOs in general.

The article by Trettin and Junk sets the conceptual stage for some of the following contributions by scrutinizing the notion of bureaucratic spoiling. Based on studies from the field of organizational behavior and public administration, it combines two strands of literature that both investigate the dark side behavior of and in organizations: organizational behavior studies and public administration failures. This contribution proposes that a closer look at the phenomenon of bureaucratic spoiling and its three basic forms (dissent shirking, obstruction, and sabotage) might set the stage for an expansion of the research agenda on international organizations and inform organizational behavior literature, too. Throughout the article, empirical illustrations from UN peace operations are used to develop the concept of bureaucratic spoiling and to weigh its plausibility.

The article by Schöndorf builds on the concept of bureaucratic spoilers and contributes empirical evidence for the phenomenon of "spoiling from within" a UN peace operation. In detail, she demonstrates that the planning and the implementation of the mandate of the UN Transitional Administration in East Timor (UNTAET) was considerably hampered by individual and structural obstructions—by UN employees and from within the UN bureaucratic structure. Providing advice for policy makers, Schöndorf identifies able leadership of the mis-

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2. There are two major strands of politicization literature with regard to IOs. One recent strand is focusing on the societal politicization of international institutions (Zürn et al. 2012; Ecker-Ehrhardt and Zürn 2013). This agenda focuses on the growing development of an international political system with increasing authority and resulting questions of legitimacy. It revitalized the research agenda of politicization. However, in the UN-related literature, there has been a very a different conceptual use of the term since the 1980s: Politicization refers here to the intrusion of by and large unrelated external political debates and conflicts into a seemingly apolitical or merely technical organization. The empirical analysis has focused on specialized UN agencies and programmes (see, for instance, Ghebali 1985 and Imber 1989; see for a longer discussion on the politicization literature Trettin/Junk/Lange forthcoming in 2014).

sion as the most promising path of coping with these obstructions.

Dijkzeul and Wakenge compare two other cases (Sudan and Congo) of potential spoiling by focusing on a hitherto largely neglected and challenging empirical phenomenon: proselytizing peacekeepers. It examines whether and to what extent proselytization occurs, whether it can be considered a form of spoiling from within the UN mission, and how it can be addressed. The authors expand the definition of bureaucratic spoiling as developed by Trettin and Junk by identifying a fourth form of spoiling from within: pushing particularized universalisms.

The contribution by Schindler broadens the analytical perspective of the special issue by analyzing the politicization of micropolitics. Bureaucratic spoiling, agency slack, and bureaucratic politics have been used as moral allegations against political opponents in a conflict between the World Food Programme (WFP) and the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO). On each side of the FAO-WFP conflict regarding institutional autonomy, the other was depicted negatively with allegations to provide justification for the ongoing turf battles.

The following two articles go beyond the focus of bureaucratic spoiling and investigate into less intentional patterns of bureaucratic performance. Winckler analyzes the links between the headquarters and the field. He finds that communication processes and behavior lead to internal protectionism between the two levels of peace operations, to a dysfunctional diffusion of responsibilities among them, and to undermining the development and acceptance of common organizational goals.

Karlsrud's contribution analyzes a strategy to cope with the obstacles to normative change in the UN. These obstacles include political bargaining and horse-trading, turf battles between UN entities, and bureaucratic resistance to implement change. The article looks at the UN as a competitive arena where states, think tanks, academia, and NGOs form informal policy alliances to further norm goals. By doing so, these actors circumvent patterns of spoiling and turf battles between UN entities. Through strengthened informal consultations they avoid political horse trading on difficult issues.

All contributions in this special issue enter empirically unchartered waters and all manage to cope with the problem of data access in these politically sensitive environments. No organization is happy to acknowledge the existence of internal dynamics that have negative consequences for its performance. However, IOs are definitely shaped by the inevitabilities of bureaucratic organization—even more so as the governance structures are less able to exercise control and to mitigate dysfunctions than in the national realm. They are governed by more than one government and consequently have to respond to multifaceted demands that are not necessarily compatible. The possibilities for internal actors to pit various outside actors against each other makes IOs even more prone to internal turf wars. All of this made the endeavor of these contributions worthwhile and the future analysis of internal dynamics and micropolitical behavior even more critical.

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