



## *Informal Governance in World Politics*

Throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, cooperation among nations was based on international regimes and formal intergovernmental organizations. However, since the 1990s, informal modes of global governance, such as informal intergovernmental organizations and transnational public–private governance initiatives, have proliferated. Even within formal intergovernmental organizations, informal means of influence and informal procedures affect outcomes, while, around all these institutions, even more informal networks shape agendas. This volume introduces and analyzes these three types of informality in governance: informality of, within, and around institutions. An introductory chapter traces the rise of informal governance and suggests a range of theoretical perspectives and variables that may explain this surge. Empirical chapters then apply these and other explanations to diverse issue areas and cross-cutting issues, often using newly developed datasets or original case study research. The concluding chapter sets out a research agenda on informality in global governance, including its normative implications.

KENNETH W. ABBOTT is Jack E. Brown Chair in Law Emeritus at Arizona State University. Professor Abbott's research focuses on global governance institutions. He studies a wide range of public, private, and hybrid institutions and institutional complexes in fields including environment, health and corruption, and diverse governance modes, including intermediaries and orchestration. He received the inaugural Distinguished Scholar Award from the ISA International Law Section in 2017.

THOMAS J. BIERSTEKER is Gasteyger Professor Honoraire at the Geneva Graduate Institute and Public Policy Fellow at the Wilson Center in Washington. Professor Biersteker's research focuses on global governance, international sanctions, and dialectical approaches to International Relations theory. He concentrates on UN sanctions, has addressed the UN Security Council, and regularly briefs Security Council members on sanctions issues. He received the Professional Achievement Award from the University of Chicago in 2020.

Cambridge University Press & Assessment  
978-1-009-18054-2 — Informal Governance in World Politics  
Kenneth W. Abbott , Thomas J. Biersteker  
Frontmatter  
[More Information](#)

---

# Informal Governance in World Politics

*Edited by*

KENNETH W. ABBOTT

*Arizona State University*

THOMAS J. BIERSTEKER

*Geneva Graduate Institute*



CAMBRIDGE  
UNIVERSITY PRESS

Cambridge University Press & Assessment  
978-1-009-18054-2 — Informal Governance in World Politics  
Kenneth W. Abbott, Thomas J. Biersteker  
Frontmatter  
[More Information](#)



CAMBRIDGE  
UNIVERSITY PRESS

Shaftesbury Road, Cambridge CB2 8EA, United Kingdom  
One Liberty Plaza, 20th Floor, New York, NY 10006, USA  
477 Williamstown Road, Port Melbourne, VIC 3207, Australia  
314–321, 3rd Floor, Plot 3, Splendor Forum, Jasola District Centre,  
New Delhi – 110025, India  
103 Penang Road, #05–06/07, Visioncrest Commercial, Singapore 238467

Cambridge University Press is part of Cambridge University Press & Assessment,  
a department of the University of Cambridge.

We share the University's mission to contribute to society through the pursuit of  
education, learning and research at the highest international levels of excellence.

[www.cambridge.org](http://www.cambridge.org)

Information on this title: [www.cambridge.org/9781009180542](http://www.cambridge.org/9781009180542)

DOI: 10.1017/9781009180528

© Cambridge University Press & Assessment 2024

This publication is in copyright. Subject to statutory exception and to the provisions  
of relevant collective licensing agreements, no reproduction of any part may take  
place without the written permission of Cambridge University Press & Assessment.

When citing this work, please include a reference to the  
DOI 10.1017/9781009180528

First published 2024

*A catalogue record for this publication is available from the British Library*

*Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data*

Names: Abbott, Kenneth W., editor. | Biersteker, Thomas J., editor.

Title: Informal governance in world politics / edited by Kenneth W. Abbott,  
Thomas J. Biersteker.

Description: Cambridge, United Kingdom ; New York, NY : Cambridge  
University Press, 2024. | Includes bibliographical references and index.

Identifiers: LCCN 2024003728 (print) | LCCN 2024003729 (ebook) |

ISBN 9781009180542 (hardback) | ISBN 9781009180528 (ebook)

Subjects: LCSH: International cooperation. | Communication in international  
relations.

Classification: LCC JZ1318 .I538 2024 (print) | LCC JZ1318 (ebook) |

DDC 327.101/4–dc23/eng/20240327

LC record available at <https://lcn.loc.gov/2024003728>

LC ebook record available at <https://lcn.loc.gov/2024003729>

ISBN 978-1-009-18054-2 Hardback

ISBN 978-1-009-18053-5 Paperback

Cambridge University Press & Assessment has no responsibility for the persistence  
or accuracy of URLs for external or third-party internet websites referred to in this  
publication and does not guarantee that any content on such websites is, or will  
remain, accurate or appropriate.

Contents

<i>List of Figures</i>	<i>page</i> vii
<i>List of Tables</i>	viii
<i>List of Contributors</i>	ix
<i>Preface</i>	xi
<i>Acknowledgments</i>	xii
<i>List of Abbreviations</i>	xiii
 <b>Part I Introduction</b>	 <b>1</b>
1 Informality in Global Governance: An Introduction KENNETH W. ABBOTT AND THOMAS J. BIERSTEKER	3
 <b>Part II Informality of Institutions</b>	 <b>29</b>
2 From Complex Interdependence to Complex Governance MILES KAHLER	31
3 Soft Pooling: How IIGOs Govern Collective Decision-making without Delegation DUNCAN SNIDAL AND FELICITY VABULAS	53
4 Informal Governance in the Development Regime: A Political Economy Perspective on Two Types of Informal Organizations BERNHARD REINSBERG	74
5 Informal Governance of International Climate Policy AXEL MICHAELOWA, KATHARINA MICHAELOWA, AND CHANDREYEE NAMHATA	107
6 Why Do States Cooperate Informally? Comparing Secret Agreements in Europe and the Middle East BARBARA KOREMENOS AND MELISSA CARLSON	130

vi	<i>Contents</i>
<b>Part III   Informality within Institutions</b>	<b>159</b>
7   International Consequences of Domestic Politics: How Divided Government Drives Informal US Influence in the World Bank ERASMUS KERSTING AND CHRISTOPHER KILBY	161
8   Knowledge Guardians in Informal Networks: How International Organizations Retain Knowledge of Strategic Errors HEIDI HARDT	188
<b>Part IV   Informality around Institutions</b>	<b>213</b>
9   The Role of Transnational Policy Networks in Informal Governance: Creating the Office of the Ombudsperson at the United Nations THOMAS J. BIERSTEKER	215
<b>Part V   Normative Issues</b>	<b>241</b>
10 Can Informal Governance Promote Procedural Justice? LORA ANNE VIOLA	243
<b>Part VI   Conclusion</b>	<b>265</b>
11 Conclusions: A Research Agenda on Informal Global Governance KENNETH W. ABBOTT AND THOMAS J. BIERSTEKER	267
<i>References</i>	272
<i>Index</i>	314

Figures

1.1	FIGO, IIGO, and TGI growth	<i>page</i> 4
1.2	FIGO, IIGO, and TGI issue areas	9
3.1	The pooling spectrum	58
3.2a	Multiple principals	60
3.2b	Collective principal	60
3.3a	Collective delegation through hard pooling	61
3.3b	Collective decision-making through soft pooling	61
3.4	Combinations of delegation and pooling in IGOs	63
4.1	New organizations in multilateral development architecture	85
5.1	Role of FIGOs, IIGOs, and TGIs prior to Paris Agreement	111
5.2	Relative shares of FIGOs, IIGOs, and TGIs	112
5.3	Development of negotiation groups over time	114
7.1	Marginal effect of an election on disbursement speed	185
8.1	Visualization of informal NATO knowledge network	202
8.2	Formal institution for identifying strategic errors	206
8.A1	Frequency of elites identified in informal network	211

# Tables

1.1	Candidate explanatory variables	<i>page</i> 23
4.1	Design features across organizational types in development	85
4.2	Variation in design features across development TGIs	87
4.3	Summary statistics	91
4.4	Comparing design determinants of informal organizations	92
4.5	Comparing design determinants of issue areas and tasks	94
4.A1	Comparing design determinants with control variables	98
4.A2	Comparing design determinants with alternative measures	99
4.A3	Analysis of design determinants by geographical scope	100
4.A4	Selection-corrected estimates of design determinants	103
4.A5	Variable definitions and descriptive statistics	104
5.A1	Interviews at UNFCCC negotiations, Paris, December 2015	128
5.A2	Descriptive statistics: Developing country participation and mitigation orientation of TGI design	129
7.1	Overview of replicated studies	175
7.2	The political economy of World Bank conditionality	177
7.3	Informal influence on World Bank disbursement	180
7.4	The political economy of IEG ratings	182
8.1	Observations in support of informal mechanisms explanation	199
8.2	Descriptive statistics of NATO network	202
8.A1	Selected quotes on informal networks	209
8.A2	Selected quotes on knowledge guardians	210
9.1	Contrasting TPNs with other institutional arrangements	221

## *Contributors*

KENNETH W. ABBOTT Arizona State University  
THOMAS J. BIERSTEKER Geneva Graduate Institute  
MELISSA CARLSON Stanford University  
HEIDI HARDT University of California, Irvine  
MILES KAHLER American University; Council on Foreign Relations  
ERASMUS KERSTING Villanova University  
CHRISTOPHER KILBY Villanova University  
BARBARA KOREMENOS University of Michigan  
AXEL MICHAELOWA University of Zurich  
KATHARINA MICHAELOWA University of Zurich  
CHANDREYEE NAMHATA University of Zurich  
BERNHARD REINSBERG University of Glasgow  
DUNCAN SNIDAL University of Oxford  
FELICITY VABULAS Pepperdine University  
LORA ANNE VIOLA Freie Universität Berlin



## *Preface*

The project from which this volume emerged would not have been possible had it not been for the extraordinary initiative, creativity, and perspicacity of Oliver Westerwinter. Oliver took the lead in drafting proposals for a series of workshops and conferences that laid the basis for the exploration of the concept of informal governance taken up in this book. Drawing on his unusual capacity for networking and knowing how to invite just the right mix of scholars from different disciplines to Switzerland, Oliver approached both of us in 2014 and invited us to join him in this innovative project. His goal was to employ both quantitative and qualitative analysis to investigate the emergence and politics of informal governance in world politics in different issue domains. He was the engine that drove the project through the sequential workshops and conferences over the years that examined why states began using informal institutions, how informality varies across issue domains, and how formal and informal institutions interrelate in novel and complex ways.

To our great regret, Oliver chose to leave academe in 2022 to pursue other activities. It was a loss for us personally and for the profession more generally. We wish him well and thank him for the impetus and inspiration that made this book possible.

## *Acknowledgments*

In addition to Oliver Westerwinter, whose essential contributions were enumerated in the Preface, we would like to thank the Swiss Network for International Studies for its financial support of the conferences convened in St Gallen and Geneva early in the project. The many participants in the meetings to discuss early drafts of most chapters added considerably to the development of our thinking. We also acknowledge the valuable staff support at the University of St Gallen and the Geneva Graduate Institute for facilitating the meetings held on their campuses. We would also like to thank Michael Barnett, Orfeo Fioretos, Tana Johnson, Phillip Lipsy, and Jon Pevehouse for their trenchant and constructive comments at the 2023 ISA roundtable convened to discuss Chapters 1 and 2. Finally, we acknowledge and greatly appreciate the assistance of Matthew Currie and Joshua Hellinger from the Geneva Graduate Institute for the detailed work that was essential for the final completion of this manuscript.

Abbreviations

ACO	Allied Command Operations (NATO)
ACT	Allied Command Transformation (NATO)
AHC	ad hoc coalition
AID	Agency for International Development
AIJ	Activities Implemented Jointly (Berlin Conference 1995)
AILAC	Independent Alliance of Latin America and the Caribbean
ALBA	Alliance for the Peoples of Our America
AOSIS	Alliance of Small Island States
BASIC	Group of Brazil, South Africa, India and China
BFC	Better Factories Cambodia partnership between ILO and Cambodian Government
BIS	Bank for International Settlements
BP	Budapest Process
BRICS	Group of Brazil, Russia South Africa, India, and China
CACAM	Countries of Central Asia and the Caucasus, Albania, and Moldova
CDM	Clean Development Mechanism
CEE	Competitive Executive Election
CfRN	Coalition for Rainforest Nations
CG 11	Central Group 11 for Eastern European countries
CICA	Conference on Interaction and Confidence Building in Asia
CINC	Composite Indicator of National Capability (Correlates of War Project)
CMX	Crisis Management Exercise (NATO)
COP	UNFCCC’s Conferences of the Parties
COW	Correlates of War Project
CSCE	Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe
CSO	Civil Society Organizations
DAC	Donor Assistance Committee (OECD)

DSS	WTO Dispute Settlement System
ECJ	European Court of Justice
ED	Executive Director
EIG	Environmental Integrity Group (Switzerland, Liechtenstein, Monaco, Mexico, and South Korea)
EPO	European Patent Office
EU	European Union
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization
FIGO	Formal intergovernmental organization
FLO	Fairtrade Labeling Organization
FNR	Front for National Reforms (1953 Opposition group in Saudi Arabia)
FOIA	Freedom of Information Act
FSC	Forest Stewardship Council
GATT	General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade
GAVI	Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance (previously Global Vaccine Alliance)
GCF	Green Climate Fund (UNFCCC)
GEF	Global Environment Facility (UNFCCC)
GPEDC	Global Partnership for Effective Development Cooperation
GRILA	Grupo de Iniciativa Latinoamericana
GVC	Global value chains
IASB	International Accounting Standards Board
IASC	International Accounting Standards Committee
IBRD	International Bank for Reconstruction and Development
IBSA	India, Brazil, South Africa Dialogue Forum
ICAO	International Civil Aviation Organization
ICR	Implementation Completion Report
IDA	International Development Association
IDB	Inter-American Development Bank
IEA	International Energy Agency
IEC	International Electrotechnical Commission
IEG	Independent Evaluation (World Bank)
IETA	International Emissions Trading Association
IFAD	International Fund for Agricultural Development
IFI	International financial institutions
IGO	Intergovernmental organization

*List of Abbreviations*

xv

IIGO	Informal intergovernmental organizations
ILO	International Labour Organization
IMF	International Monetary Fund
IMO	International Maritime Organisation
IMS	International Military Staff
INC	Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee (UNFCCC)
INGO	International NGO
IO	International Organization
IOM	International Organization for Migration
IPCC	Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change
IR	International Relations
IS	International Staff
ISAF	International Security Assistance Force (Afghanistan)
ISIL	Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant
ISO	International Organization for Standardization
ITTO	International Tropical Timber Organization
IUCN	International Union for Conservation of Nature
JALLC	Joint Analysis and Lessons Learned Centre (NATO)
JI	Project-based mechanism referred to in Article 6 of the Kyoto Protocol
JUSSCANZ	Group of Japan, US, Switzerland, Canada, and New Zealand
LDC	Least Developed Countries
LMDC	Like-Minded Developing Countries on Climate Change
MEF	Major Economies Forum on Energy and Climate
MIKTA	Group of Mexico, India, South Korea, Turkey, and Australia
MNC	Multinational corporations
MRV	Monitoring, reporting and verification
MSI	Multistakeholder initiatives
MTCR	Missile Technology Control Regime
NAC	North Atlantic Council
NAFTA	North American Free Trade Agreement
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NDB	New Development Bank
NGO	Nongovernmental organization
OCHA	Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
OECD	Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development

OFAC	Office of Foreign Assets Control
OLA	Office of Legal Affairs (UN)
OPEC	Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries
OSCE	Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe
PCF	Prototype Carbon Fund
PPAR	Project Performance Assessment Report
PPP	Public–private partnerships
REDD	Reducing emissions from deforestation and forest degradation in developing countries
RSS	Regulatory standard setting
SECO	State Secretariat for Economic Affairs (Switzerland)
SNA	Social network analysis
SUR	Seemingly unrelated regressions model
SVE	Small and vulnerable economies
TAN	Transnational advocacy networks
TFAP	Tropical Forest Action Plan (FAO)
TGI	Transnational public–private governance initiatives
TGIWP	Transnational Governance Initiatives in World Politics dataset
TGN	Trans-governmental networks
TPC	Transnational policy community
TPN	Transnational policy networks
UAR	United Arab Republic
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNEP	United Nations Environment Programme
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNFCCC	United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change
UNGA	United Nations General Assembly
UNICEF	United Nations Children’s Fund
UNSC	United Nations Security Council
UNSCR	United Nations Security Council Resolution
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
WHO	World Health Organization
WTO	World Trade Organization