Making and Bending International Rules

All treaties, from human rights to international trade, include formal exceptions that allow governments to legally break the rules that they have committed to, in order to deal with unexpected events. Such institutional “flexibility” is necessary, yet it raises a tricky theoretical question: how to allow for this necessary flexibility, while preventing its abuse? Krzysztof Pelc examines how designers of rules in vastly different settings come upon similar solutions to render treaties resistant to unexpected events.

Essential for undergraduate students, graduate students, and scholars in political science, economics, and law, the book provides a comprehensive account of the politics of treaty flexibility. Drawing on a wide range of evidence, its multi-disciplinary approach addresses the paradoxes inherent in making and bending international rules.

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Making and Bending International Rules

The Design of Exceptions and Escape Clauses in Trade Law

KRZYSZTOF J. PELC
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As debt-ridden sovereigns soon learn, debts too large to be repaid must get rolled over onto future generations. And so it is with the intellectual debts this book rests on. I can only hope to serve others as well as I have been served by my PhD advisors, mentors, colleagues and friends. First among many, Marc Busch stimulated my interest in these topics when I was still an undergraduate in business school, on a dangerous trajectory to the private sector, and throughout my graduate work at Georgetown. His emphasis on the importance of selling ideas clearly and his formidable knowledge of the politics of trade rules have made him a model to follow. Erik Voeten pushed for greater rigor where it was most needed. Jim Vreeland, who completed my raucous dissertation committee, was a constant source of valuable advice, some of it occasionally relating to work. A number of friends enriched my time at Georgetown, and served as my first sounding boards. Luis Felipe Mantilla, Philipp Bleek and Adam Mount were my companions on night time walks through Glover Park, climbs in Great Falls, and bike rides through DC. Christina Davis was an invaluable conversation partner during my time at Princeton’s Niehaus Center, where her door was always open, and conveniently across the hall from mine. My fruitful stay at the Niehaus Center was made possible by Helen Milner, my “academic grand-mother,” who has been a mentor and source of support, as she has been to so many others. Emilie Hafner-Burton repeatedly proved herself a generous and willing reader, and this text is better for her ever-tactful suggestions. Peter Rosendorff and Edward Mansfield provided me with many words of wisdom, professional and otherwise, and inspired me through their work. Much of this book has been written at McGill, where I have benefited from wonderful
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One of Marc Busch’s favorite sayings, deployed whenever some long labored over bit of work leads us back to square one, as it often does, is T.S. Eliot’s phrase in the *Four Quartets* about how “the end of all our exploring will be to arrive where we started and know the place for the first time.” The line applies equally well to this book, which began with a question asked early in graduate school, and improved over the course of countless debates and conversations. I am grateful for all of these.