The Ebb and Flow of Global Governance

The Ebb and Flow of Global Governance challenges the traditionally dichotomous distinction between international intergovernmental organizations and international nongovernmental organizations. Alexandru Grigorescu argues that international organizations are best understood as falling on an “integovernmental–nongovernmental continuum.” The placement of organizations on this continuum is determined by how much government involvement factors into their decision making, financing, and deliberations. Using this fine-grained conceptualization, Grigorescu uncovers numerous changes in the intergovernmental versus nongovernmental nature of global governance over the past century and a half. These changes are due primarily to ideological and institutional domestic shifts in powerful states. The Ebb and Flow of Global Governance assesses the plausibility of these arguments through archival research on a dozen organizations from the global health, labor, and technical standards realms. Grigorescu concludes that there has been a continuous ebb and flow in world politics, rather than an inexorable movement toward greater roles for nongovernmental actors, as existing literature contends.

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The Ebb and Flow of Global Governance

Intergovernmentalism versus Nongovernmentalism in World Politics

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Acknowledgments

The idea behind this study was sparked by archival research I conducted for my previous book, *Democratic Intergovernmental Organizations? Normative Pressures and Decision-Making Rules* (Cambridge University Press, 2015). At that time, while reading about developments in international organizations (IOs) over almost two centuries, I began noticing global trends that seemed to repeat themselves across time. I was surprised that the study of IOs had not truly paid attention to such cyclical patterns and that, instead, almost all of the literature had been emphasizing recent linear trends. I was just as surprised to find that officials working for or with such organizations were not aware (and were genuinely interested to hear) that other practitioners had grappled with similar problems many decades earlier. The “ebb and flow of global governance” that I noticed would not have been as visible without considering the main idea of this book: that we have looked upon intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations as dichotomous terms too long and that all IOs do, in fact, fall upon a continuum. Moreover, once I introduced the concept of a continuum, the all-important question of when global governance shifts across this continuum became an essential one.

As my main arguments crystalized, I began searching for the necessary evidence to assess the validity of my claims. Throughout the five years during which I conducted the research for this book, I was fortunate to have the support of dozens of women and men overseeing the archives and libraries of numerous IOs: Food and Agriculture Organization; International Association for Labour Legislation; International Bureau for Education; International Committee of the Red Cross; International Electrotechnical Commission; International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies; International Labour Organization; International Organization for Standardization; International Telecommunication Union; League of
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Acronyms

AESC American Engineering Standards Committee
AFL American Federation of Labor
AGTU Austro-German Telegraph Union
AIIB Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank
AIP Apparel Industry Partnership
ANEC European Association for Consumer Representation in Standardisation
AO changes in relevance among existing organizations
ARC American Red Cross
AT&T American Telephone and Telegraph Company
BESA British Engineering Standards Association
BIPM International Bureau of Weights and Measures
CEN European Committee for Standardization
CI Consumer International
CIO Congress of Industrial Organizations
COPOLCO International Organization for Standardization Committee on Consumer Policy
ECITO European Central Inland Transport Organization
ECOSOC Economic and Social Council
ETSI European Telecommunications Standards Institute
FAO Food and Agriculture Organization
GA United Nations General Assembly
GATT The General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade
GAVI Global Vaccine Alliance
GF Gates Foundation
IAF International Aeronautical Federation
IBE International Bureau for Education
ICFTU International Confederation of Free Trade Unions
List of Acronyms

ICI International Commission on Illumination
ICRC International Committee of the Red Cross
IEC International Electrotechnical Commission
IEE Institution of Electrical Engineers
IFTU International Federation of Trade Unions
IGO intergovernmental organization
IHC International Health Conference
ILL International Association for Labour Legislation
ILO International Labour Organization
ILRF International Labor Rights Fund
INGO international nongovernmental organization
INTERPOL International Criminal Police Organization
IO international organization
IR international relations
IRU International Relief Union
ISA International Federation of National Standardizing Associations
ISO International Organization for Standardization
ITC Inland Transport Committee
ITU International Telecommunication Union
IUCN International Union for Conservation of Nature
LNHO League of Nations Health Organization
NDB New Development Bank
NGO nongovernmental organization
NO new organization
OIHP International Office of Public Health
OTIF Intergovernmental Organisation for International Carriage by Rail
RF Rockefeller Foundation
RTUI Red Trade Union International
UN United Nations
UNAIDS Joint United Nations Programme on HIV and AIDS
UNCIO United Nations Conference on International Organization
UNECE United Nations Economic Commission for Europe
UNESCO United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNICEF United Nations Children’s Fund
UNIDO United Nations Industrial Development Organization
UNRRA United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration
UNSCC United Nations Standards Coordinating Committee
WFTU World Federation of Trade Unions
WHO World Health Organization
WO changes to rules within existing organization
WTO World Trade Organization