

### Chapter 20: International organizations in world politics

- International organizations (IOs) have representatives from three or more states supporting a permanent secretariat to perform on-going tasks related to a common purpose.
- IOs were first created by European states to smooth their inter-state relations across a range of new activities resulting from industrial revolutions and technological breakthroughs.
- The basis for IOs emerged with multilateral fora such as the Concert of Europe and the Hague System in the nineteenth century.
- States increasingly turned to multilateralism and then formal IOs after the First World War to prevent international conflict.
- Formal treaty-based IOs continue to be established, but these are now outstripped by emanation IOs that work on increasingly specialized issues.
- IOs are important because they survive and have endured in the international system.
- They shape how states respond to international problems.
- They increasingly affect the lives of individuals everywhere by shaping the distribution of power and making policies that were previously left to states.
- IOs can help states create global public goods by being forums for international cooperation and then helping enact and enforce the provision of those goods.
- Classical liberal theories advanced the idea that IOs can contribute to individual prosperity and peace. Neofunctionalist liberals examined the European experiment to predict the likelihood of increased integration among states leading to a world government, while neoliberal institutionalists argued that states can use IOs as a means of international cooperation that benefits all states.
- Realists view IOs as tools for states to achieve their interests. Neorealism argues that IOs have no independent effect on world politics. Neorealists see cooperation occurring when states perceive their own gains to be greater than the gains going to the states they are cooperating with, and they believe that states controlling IOs can lock in rules that others must follow.
- Social constructivists demonstrated that IOs can be autonomous and shape world politics by framing issues, setting international agendas, and classifying states' behaviour. IOs thus help shape what is possible and socially accepted at the international level.
- Marxist and Gramscian approaches examine how IOs extend capitalism globally through their programmes and policies in order to reinforce the power of capitalist states and elites. They seek to demonstrate how consensus is constructed over the global capitalist system through the operations of IOs.
- The Principal-Agent model extends the insights of neoliberal institutionalism by looking at how member state principals negotiate to give IOs as agents autonomy to undertake tasks on their behalf.
- The P-A model examines when IOs are likely to be slack or engage in slippage, for example when member states cannot agree on a concerted agenda for IOs to enact.
- Social constructivists have challenged the P-A model's assumption that IOs will use their autonomy to advance their own power, autonomy, and resources.

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Revision guide

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- Social constructivism looks at how organizational culture shapes whether new ideas are promoted, accepted, or rejected by IOs.
- Marxist and Gramscian accounts require further empirical investigation to explicitly trace how powerful elites shape IO programmes, policies, and operations.