Most theoretical frameworks in international relations assign a secondary role to international organizations (IOs). Scholars adopting a principal-agent approach are wont to treat IOs as the mere servants of their principals—the nation-states. At the extreme, neorealist theory sees a subset of states—the major powers—as the masters who dangle the strings of IOs (or in the case of IO failure, do not allow IOs to be effective). These approaches accord little if any autonomy to IOs and take no account of how the IOs might change over time. Michael Barnett and Martha Finnemore challenge traditional theory by attempting to provide a framework for analyzing IOs as semi-independent actors. In particular, they argue that IOs have significant autonomy and derive their power from a number of sources beyond the limited leeway and resources delegated to them by member-states. From the standpoint of international relations theory, their argument is significant and will help guide the study of IOs, which have assumed greater prominence in global politics over the past two decades. Equally important, their analysis explains the failures of IOs in a number of areas and suggests ways of improving their performance.

Barnett and Finnemore begin their argument with the fundamental assumption that IOs act as bureaucracies. In social science analysis, this is hardly a stunning innovation. Organizational theory has been the staple of many different disciplines (sociology, political science, business administration, etc.) for many years. Furthermore, studies of the American federal bureaucracy have established a strong body of theory to understand the autonomy, inertia, and other properties of government organizations. But anyone who might be tempted to dismiss the Barnett-Finnemore book as something of little importance would be making a mistake. The treatment of IOs as bureaucracies is relatively new in the literature. Some early studies, such as Robert W. Cox and Harold K. Jacobson, *The Anatomy of Influence: Decision Making in International Organization* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1973), looked at international organization decision-making but only to describe and classify the different kinds of decisions taken and the roles played by different actors. The earlier studies shed little if any light on broader theoretical issues and how international organizations performed as actors on the global stage along with states. Barnett and Finnemore have a much broader purpose and do an excellent job of clearly defining the different sources of authority, change, and pathologies for IOs. This chapter does not necessarily offer specific propositions but rather presents general arguments about IO authority and behavior. The result is more theoretical framework than theory.

Chapters 3–5 present case studies of the International Monetary Fund, the United Nations (UN) High Commissioner for Refugees, and UN peacekeeping (with special attention to Rwanda), respectively. Barnett and Finnemore trace the history of the organizations or efforts for each. Generally, they provide thick description that is supposed to offer illustrations of the claims made in the theoretical chapter. The his-
Historical approach allows the reader to track changes in the IOs, but sometimes other points about IO autonomy or power are lost or are not adequately clarified in the discussion. What is the value of these chapters? They are not meant to provide tests of specific hypotheses. Rather, the cases are best treated as extended examples of points made in the opening chapters. The case studies also have value for scholars interested in the individual organizations or issue areas covered. For example, the chapter on peacekeeping contains a compelling and counterintuitive argument that places much of the blame for the Rwanda tragedy on the UN Secretariat rather than leading UN members, who are the usual scapegoats. The book concludes with a discussion of legitimacy as it relates to the trend toward more numerous and developed bureaucracies at the international level.

Overall, this book does not necessarily have the theoretical import of David Mitrany’s *A Working Peace System* (Chicago: Quadrangle Books, 1966), but the subfield of international organization studies has historically been deficient in broad theoretical work. *Rules for the World* is an important contribution to the subfield. The primary contributions of the book are found in the second chapter, and it should be required reading for any graduate course on international organizations. Adopting the authors’ framework will lead scholars to ask different questions and make interpretations outside conventional approaches. The book may contain little new about bureaucracies, but the application of our knowledge about them to IOs is innovative and must be taken seriously. In the long run, this book is likely to have staying power as a heuristic for future research rather than as a fully articulated and empirically confirmed theory.


Reviewed by David M. Barrett, Villanova University

Near the beginning of *Congress and the Cold War*, Robert David Johnson aptly quotes the late scholar and Senator Patrick Moynihan (D-NY), who once observed that “the neglect of congressional history is something of a scandal in the American scholarship” (p. xxii). Moynihan was right. Occasionally, significant scholarly histories of events on Capitol Hill appear, but this happens far less often than the publication of important books on the U.S. presidency or the Supreme Court.

The relative paucity of scholarly work on Congress is attributable to many factors, among which is the sheer complexity of the institution. As I tell my students, “There are two bodies of Congress, not one, and each body does its most significant work in a multitude of committees and subcommittees.” Moreover, any historian of Congress must deal with the challenge of describing a body with 535 members.

Another reason for the relative lack of attention to Congress, surely, is that the president has usually played a dominant role in U.S. foreign policymaking since