A variety of different international organizations actively participate in world politics. This chapter details several major intergovernmental organizations (IGOs) in terms of their structures and functions. These IGOs were selected on the basis of their significance to world and regional politics and their geopolitical orientation. Although other IGOs are discussed in later chapters, the purpose here is to provide an abbreviated overview of some of the IGOs central to international relations.

This chapter also examines nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) and multinational corporations (MNCs) in terms of their broad, general characteristics. Since these kinds of international organizations number in the tens of thousands, an extended classification scheme is presented in order to sort them out in a meaningful fashion. While international organizations do not exist in a political vacuum, sometimes “the devil is in the details.” The structures and procedures of international organizations can, and often do, affect political outcomes.

GLOBAL INTERGOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS

Historical Antecedents

The idea of international organization has probably been around since the advent of the first governments. From the writings of ancient Greek philosophers we learn of military alliances and international trading agreements. And we know that the early Greek city-states of Athens, Sparta, and Macedonia once employed a common currency, which required a high degree of international cooperation. Most contemporary scholars, however, point to the Congress of Vienna (1815–1822) as the earliest modern precedent to today’s IGO. The Congress of Vienna, a multipurpose IGO, was created by the European great powers to reestablish order and stability on the continent after
the Napoleonic Wars. It was a forum for international collaboration on European security and commerce. It also strengthened the Rhine River Commission (1804), a bilateral IGO between France and the German confederation. This Commission established navigation rules for the Rhine River and an adjudication board to prosecute individuals accused of violating those rules. Similar river commissions were subsequently created for the Danube and Elbe rivers in Central and Eastern Europe.

League of Nations

The first global IGO with universal membership was the **League of Nations** (1919–1939). The League was created after World War I and was organized around three bodies: the Council, the Assembly, and the Secretariat. The Council was the chief executive organ of the League. It consisted of the victors of World War I, together with any four lesser powers that they chose to invite. The Council was mainly responsible for addressing issues relating to international war and threats to international peace. In addition, according to the League’s Charter, the Council could “deal at its meetings with any matter within the sphere of action of the League” (Article 4, Section 4). The Assembly functioned as a quasi-legislative body; it, too, was entitled to address any matter within the purview of the League. All members of the League of Nations belonged to the Assembly, and each member could have up to three representatives. The Secretariat served as the League’s bureaucracy, responsible for carrying out the League’s policies and mandates.

In addition to the League’s three principal organs, several autonomous and semiautonomous organizations were established under the League’s Charter. The Permanent Court of International Justice (PCIJ) and the International Labor Organization (ILO) were created to help member states meet their obligations under the League’s Charter. Article 13 committed members to submit any matter unsolved by diplomacy to international arbitration or judicial settlement. The PCIJ considered disputes that arose regarding treaty interpretation or breaches of international obligations assumed under international law. The ILO was created, in part, to help member states meet their social responsibilities to workers. Article 23(a) stated that members of the League “will endeavor to secure and maintain fair and humane conditions of labor for men, women and children, both in their own countries and in all countries to which their commercial and industrial relations extend, and for that purpose will establish and maintain the necessary international organizations.” The ILO, one of the few surviving League institutions, remains the central IGO responsible for setting and preserving international labor standards. It also has the potential to be an important vehicle for recognizing workers’ rights as human rights (McIntyre 2008).

The League of Nations was based on three important principles that have since been incorporated by its successor, the United Nations (UN). First, the League of Nations embraced the idea of collective security where international security is directly tied to the security of member states. Second, the League
established as a norm the peaceful settlement of disputes through such nonviolent measures as mediation, negotiation, arbitration, and adjudication. Third, the League was founded to foster international cooperation in the economic and social realms. The ideals of the League were innovative. They were heavily influenced by American values, as one of the principal architects of the League was President Woodrow Wilson. Ultimately, however, the U.S. government chose not to join the organization—a decision that is widely considered to have compromised the League’s effectiveness during the interwar period. The League was politically challenged by the Japan–China conflict in Manchuria (1931) and the Italy–Ethiopia conflict (1935). The outbreak of World War II spelled the demise of the League as a viable international organization. However, its legacy lives on.

The United Nations
The UN system was created in 1945 at the end of World War II. The founders of the UN, meeting in San Francisco, sought to strengthen the idea of the multipurpose, universal IGO first envisioned by the League of Nations. The UN was designed to be the center of multilateral diplomacy in postwar world politics. Its central purposes are: to maintain international peace and security; to develop friendly relations among nations; to address economic, social, cultural, and humanitarian problems; and to promote respect for universal human rights. The UN retains the age-old principle of the sovereign equality of all states; however, it also commits members to the nonuse of force and the peaceful settlement of disputes.

The UN is a comprehensive IGO to which, effectively, any state can belong. The UN system is structured around six principal organs—the General Assembly, the Security Council, the International Court of Justice (ICJ), the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), the Secretariat, and the Trusteeship Council. These organs serve as an umbrella to other UN agencies and autonomous bodies (Figure 2.1). The six principal organs of the UN, together with its several agencies and autonomous organizations, comprise the UN family of IGOs; collectively, they address just about every conceivable global issue, including war, civil disorder, arms control, trade, development, the environment, and human rights.

The General Assembly  The UN General Assembly serves as a quasi-legislative, deliberative body. Its principal, *de jure* (legal) functions are assigned by the UN Charter (Chapter IV) and are fivefold. First, the General Assembly may deliberate and consider any issue or questions that may arise under the Charter. While its resolutions are nonbinding, the General Assembly may address issues that relate to international peace, security, and disarmament, and it may bring to the attention of the Security Council any matter that may cause a breach of the peace. Second, it is responsible for initiating studies and making recommendations for promoting political cooperation and the progressive development of international law. Third, it is responsible for promoting international cooperation in the
FIGURE 2.1
The United Nations System.
Source: Courtesy of the UN Publications Office.

CHAPTER 2
International Organizations: Nuts and bolts

PRINCIPAL ORGANS OF THE UNITED NATIONS

- WORLD BANK GROUP
  - IBRD
  - International Bank for Reconstruction and Development
  - IDA
  - International Development Association
  - IFC
  - International Finance Corporation
  - MIGA
  - Multilateral Investment Guarantee Agency
  - IMF
  - International Monetary Fund
  - IDA
  - International Development Association
  - UPU
  - Universal Postal Union
  - ITU
  - International Telecommunication Union
  - WHO
  - World Health Organization
  - WIPO
  - World Intellectual Property Organization
  - UNIDO
  - United Nations Industrial Development Organization
  - WTO
  - World Trade Organization

PEACEKEEPING OPERATIONS


Although this is a specialized agency, it cooperates with the United Nations. Published by the United Nations Department of Public Information.

Economic, social, cultural, educational, and health care fields. Fourth, it is charged with drafting and approving the UN budget. And fifth, it oversees the UN bureaucracy.

The General Assembly is based on the liberal democratic principles of political equality and majority rule. It is a plenary body, meaning that all member states may attend and fully participate in General Assembly meetings. Originally,
the General Assembly consisted of 51 nation-states. Today, 192 states are represented. Decisions are made on a one-state/one-vote basis, with a simple majority deciding most issues. A qualified majority of two-thirds is required for important questions, such as recommendations made with respect to the maintenance of international peace and security or the election of the nonpermanent members of the Security Council. The General Assembly operates much like a congress or parliament, although it does not produce binding law. Rather, its resolutions function as an expression of general legal principles, often forming the basis of the “hard” international law, which is created through treaties. The General Assembly, through its activities and its resolutions, best approximates the priorities and sentiments of the “international community.”

The Security Council  The UN Security Council (discussed in more detail in Chapter 5) is the organ whose primary responsibility is maintaining international peace and security. This task is quite complicated because it involves identifying threats to international peace and security, crafting an appropriate international response, building international consensus, and carrying out collective security actions. Unlike General Assembly resolutions, Security Council decisions are binding on member states, and members are obligated to abide by and help carry out these decisions. Not all Security Council resolutions are binding, only those in which a formal “decision” under Chapter VII is issued.

The Security Council has limited membership. It is composed of both permanent and nonpermanent, elective members and is headed by a president, an office that rotates among all the members. The permanent members include the five great-power victors of World War II, while the ten elected members are selected from and by the General Assembly. Each of the Security Council’s permanent members possesses an absolute veto over substantive Security Council decisions. This veto allows one member to kill Security Council actions (excluding procedural questions), and it cannot be overridden. Absent a veto, Security Council resolutions are passed by an affirmative vote of nine members.

The International Court of Justice  The ICJ is also known as the World Court and was created to be the principal judicial organ of the UN. Incorporating much of the statute of the League’s Permanent Court of International Justice, the ICJ has semiautonomous status within the UN family. Chapter XIV of the UN Charter authorizes the ICJ to adjudicate disputes arising under the Charter and international law. The ICJ statute mandates that the court consist of fifteen justices, no two of whom may be nationals from the same state. The justices of the Court are elected for nine-year, staggered terms by the General Assembly and the Security Council through a complicated nomination and selection process. These justices hear cases submitted to the Court by member states, and decisions are reached through a majority vote. A quorum of nine justices is required for the Court to hear a case; however, the Court does not have compulsory jurisdiction over all cases. Article 36 of the ICJ statute, often
referred to as the “Optional Clause,” allows parties to decide whether they want to give the Court jurisdiction over their current and future international legal disputes. Very few states have given the Court this kind of jurisdiction; thus, states usually consent to the court’s jurisdiction on a case-by-case basis. Access to the ICJ is also limited to states. That is, only states may be parties in cases before the court. Private individuals are barred from bringing cases to the ICJ, and the court has refused to consider private petitions and requests. All the states involved in a legal dispute must be willing to have the ICJ hear the case before the Court will consider the merits. As a result, the ICJ hears only one or two cases a year, and it is generally considered an ineffective mechanism of international adjudication. The ICJ remains “marginal to most of the structural issues of international relations” (Forsythe 1998, 385).

The ICJ can, however, influence world politics as it is also responsible for providing advisory opinions on legal questions for the Security Council or the General Assembly, upon their request. Other agencies of the UN, when authorized by the General Assembly, may also request advisory opinions on any legal question that may arise in the scope or course of their activities. The ICJ has issued advisory decisions for a variety of UN agencies ranging from the ILO to the International Monetary Fund (IMF) to the World Meteorological Organization (WMO). In 2003, the General Assembly requested an advisory opinion on the legality of the separation barrier being built by Israel in occupied Palestinian territories. The opinion, issued in 2004, held that the construction of the wall violated international law and the human rights of Palestinians living in the occupied territories. This opinion generated considerable controversy as it called into question a key element of Israeli security strategy and complicated the “roadmap” to peace. Its effect also gave the legal and moral high ground to opponents of the barrier and strengthened the Palestinians’ bargaining position in any future peace negotiations. In 2008, the General Assembly requested an ICJ advisory opinion as to whether Kosovo’s unilateral declaration of independence from Serbia is in accordance with international law. In the much anticipated 2010 opinion, the ICJ found that the declaration of independence did not violate general international law. This opinion will likely frame the legal arguments for separatist movements and status quo states for decades to come. It also shows how the ICJ can shape the legal dimensions of international relations.

The Economic and Social Council  The ECOSOC was established under the UN Charter (Chapter X) to promote economic and social cooperation among member states. It is actively involved in the substantive issue areas of economic development, human rights, and social welfare. The ECOSOC consists of fifty-four members elected by the General Assembly for three-year, staggered terms. Each member has one vote, and decisions are based on majority rule. Retiring members are eligible for immediate reelection.

The ECOSOC has several important functions and powers. First, it “may make or initiate studies and reports with respect to international economic, social, cultural, educational, and health and related matters and may make
recommendations with respect to any such matters to the General Assembly, to the Members of the United Nations, and to the specialized agencies concerned” (Article 62, Section 1). Second, the ECOSOC may make recommendations for promoting and protecting human rights. Third, it may prepare draft conventions relating to economic and social issues. Finally, it may call international conferences on matters falling within its competence.

The ECOSOC is a collaborative body with authority to create commissions to promote human rights and economic and social cooperation. It invites all UN members and representatives of the specialized agencies and certain NGOs to participate in its activities. While these non-ECOSOC members do not have a vote in ECOSOC decisions, they provide perspective and expertise to ECOSOC proceedings.

The Trusteeship Council

The Trusteeship Council was created to oversee the transition of colonies into self-governing territories. Its mandate is to ensure that the interests of the inhabitants of these non–self-governing territories are placed at the forefront of the decolonization process. Among the members of the Trusteeship Council are UN member states that administer trust territories. These members take an oath to respect the cultures of the people involved and to respect their political, economic, and social development. The Trusteeship Council also includes permanent members of the Security Council that are not administering trust territories. In addition, the Trusteeship Council is balanced; it must consist of “as many other members elected for three-year terms by the General Assembly as may be necessary to ensure that the total number of the Trusteeship Council is equally divided between those Members of the United Nations which administer trust territories and those which do not” (Article 86, Section 1c). Decision making is based on a one-member/one-vote, majority-rule arrangement.

The Trusteeship Council, while pivotal in the 1960s, is largely obsolete today. All the original UN trusts have become autonomous or self-governing, and there is little left for the Trusteeship Council to do. Its historical legacy is its oversight of the volatile decolonization process, a process for which there have been as many critics as champions. The Trusteeship Council’s role in this process has been to debate and deliberate different strategies for decolonization, as well as to monitor the effects of the process on trust populations. It has also supervised the process by issuing binding decisions on member states that were not permanent members of the Security Council and making recommendations to those that were. At the 2005 UN World Summit, the heads of member states agreed to wind up the business of the Trusteeship Council, reflecting the completion of the role of the Trusteeship Council and the UN in decolonization.

The Secretariat

The Secretariat serves as the UN bureaucracy. It consists of the Secretary-General and the bureaucratic staff necessary to carry out the UN’s complex tasks and functions. The Secretary-General (discussed in more detail in Chapter 5) is the chief diplomat, whose task is to represent the UN to member states. The staff of the Secretariat is supposed to be recruited on the
basis of efficiency, competence, integrity, and geographic diversity, although political patronage is not unknown. The bureaucratic agencies of the Secretariat are created by the General Assembly; however, both the ECOSOC and the Trusteeship Council are explicitly assigned their own staff. The size, expense, and priorities of the UN bureaucracy are widely criticized today; yet, most agree that some kind of bureaucracy is necessary to carry out the large, complex tasks that characterize today’s global issues.

Management reform has been a high priority for the UN and its largest contributor, the United States. Member states have agreed in principle to strengthen the UN’s oversight capacity, especially in relation to the Office of Internal Oversight Services and the new Ethics Office. They have also agreed to overhaul policies relating to budgets, finance, and staff to streamline UN activities. The United States has demanded that the UN change the way it does business, and the scandals involving corruption relating to the “Oil-For-Food” program and the procurement office accentuated the need for reform. The specifics of these reforms are currently being fleshed out and remain contentious at the UN.

The Principles of the United Nations
The UN is based on several complementary principles. First, the UN is founded on the principle of the sovereign equality of all members. This means that each state, at least in legal theory, retains the right to determine its own internal and external affairs. Second, UN members voluntarily accept responsibility to carry out certain international obligations upon joining the UN, one of which is to abide by Security Council decisions. The third founding principle of the UN is the peaceful settlement of disputes. Fourth, member states agree not to threaten or use force in their international relations. Fifth, the UN is enjoined from intervening in the domestic jurisdiction of member states. The principles of sovereign equality, the peaceful settlement of disputes, nonuse of force, and nonintervention are companion principles critical to the maintenance of international peace and security.

The UN Charter attempts to strengthen international peace and security by permitting regional arrangements. Chapter VIII recognizes that regional and local solutions to regional and local problems are often preferable to UN action as regional organizations are more familiar with the actors, issues, and dynamics. The UN Charter does require that the UN be kept informed of regional activities and events that may threaten international peace and security. Furthermore, the Charter restricts regional enforcement activities by stating that “no enforcement action shall be taken under regional arrangements or by regional agencies without the authorization of the Security Council” (Article 53). The architects of the Charter wanted to balance the benefits of regionalism with the need for universal approaches to international problems. The post–World War II era has witnessed an explosion of regional organizations. Two of these organizations, both multi-purpose, are the European Union (EU) and the Organization of Islamic Conference (OIC), and are discussed later in this chapter.
UN Ambitions and Challenges

The UN continues to have a role in preventive diplomacy, peacekeeping, peacemaking, conflict resolution, and economic and social development. However, several challenges threaten to derail or restrict UN activities in these areas. First, the UN suffers from resource difficulties. The United States, which is the UN’s largest contributor, is also its largest debtor. The United States and the UN have been at odds for years over financing for a variety of political reasons. In 1999, a deal was struck between the UN and the United States that broke the impasse that might have led to the loss of the U.S. vote in the General Assembly (Schmitt 1999, A18). This impasse was between the UN and the United States over exactly how much is owed (the United States rejects numerous UN assessments) and between the then Clinton administration and the Republican-controlled Senate over the financing of international organizations that provide abortions or promote abortion rights. The United States agreed to release $1 billion in UN payments in exchange for the implementation of a ban on using that money to fund abortion rights groups. The Bush administration continued the ban; however, the then Republican-controlled House of Representatives continued to withhold payments to the UN until September 2001 and released them only after the World Trade Center and Pentagon attacks. Release of the funds was a goodwill gesture in an effort to enlist UN help in the U.S. “war on terror.” However, the conduct of this war, especially the U.S. invasion of Iraq, as well as allegations of UN corruption and mismanagement relating to the UN-administered “Oil-for-Food” program for Iraq, once again led to additional tensions between the UN and its largest contributor. The U.S. arrears account for approximately 84 percent of what is owed to the UN; however, the Obama administration has begun making payments on the arrears and legislation is pending in the U.S. Congress to pay in full.

Second, the UN has had enormous difficulties in protecting its personnel. Since the 1990s, UN workers have been assaulted, kidnapped, and killed in record numbers in hot spots such as Lebanon, Mozambique, Afghanistan, Angola, Sudan, Cambodia, Somalia, Rwanda, Haiti, the Congo, and Iraq. Given the crisis of resources and the reluctance of member states to commit militarily, UN personnel remain at risk while attempting to deliver humanitarian and development assistance. The UN suffered a particularly devastating blow in 2003 when its headquarters in Iraq was the target of suicide bombings. The attacks killed dozens of UN personnel, including Special Envoy Sergio Vieira De Mello. Referred to as the UN’s 9/11, the attack further exacerbated tensions between the organization and its most powerful member. The United States as the occupying power had the responsibility for security, yet, at the same time, the UN itself bore some responsibility. It did not take adequate security precautions and sent its people into Iraq under a fuzzy and underfunded mandate (Wolffe 2003, 32).

The security of UN personnel in conflict areas remains a priority and a pressing problem for the UN. In December 2007, UN offices and personnel
were attacked by a suicide car bomb in Algeria, killing 17 people and injuring many more. In early 2008, UN peacekeepers and aid workers were assaulted in the Darfur region of Sudan, and in 2009, the UN lost 28 people worldwide. The inability of the UN to carry out its protective and relief activities means vulnerable populations in the world’s hot spots remain at grave risk.

Third, the UN has suffered from a lack of state leadership. The United States, under the Bush administration, demonstrated its preference for unilateral approaches by withdrawing from the Kyoto Protocol and the International Criminal Court (discussed in Chapters 8 and 9, respectively). The attacks on the United States in September 2001 further complicated the political landscape and raised questions about the appropriate role of the UN in the “war on terrorism.” The then Secretary-General Kofi Annan argued that only the UN could give “global legitimacy” to the war on terrorism (Schmemann 2001, B3); however, the United States considered the UN a minor partner to this threat to international peace and security. The U.S. invasion of Iraq in 2003 without UN authorization damaged UN–U.S. relations. The specifics of this tension are discussed in detail in Chapter 5; however, the war in Iraq and the subsequent marginalization of the UN by the United States raised serious questions about the future efficacy of the UN role in international security. The election of Barack Obama and his desire to reengage the UN has signaled the possibility of a renewed UN role, especially as it relates to nuclear nonproliferation and disarmament.

**UN Reform**

In September 2005, the world’s leaders held the World Summit to celebrate the sixtieth anniversary of the UN and to formally address the issue of UN reform. The actual action items that emerged from the Summit are discussed in the following chapters, but the politics of the meeting warrants review here. The Summit was beset with contentiousness, reflecting the tension between the United States and other powerful members, the conflict between advanced industrialized and developing countries (the North–South conflict), and the general disagreement regarding the future direction of the UN. What was hoped to be a San Francisco II—namely, a grand conference aimed at remaking the UN to meet the challenges of the twenty-first century—resulted in very modest outcomes. Almost every major initiative was watered down, postponed, or deliberately left vague. While some noteworthy reforms were agreed to, such as the creation of a new Peacebuilding Commission and Human Rights Council (discussed in Chapters 5 and 9, respectively), the significance of the reforms seems marginal absent specifics and appropriate financing. The more substantial reforms, such as changing the composition of the Security Council, defining terrorism, and establishing clear guidelines for the use of force, generated such intense debate and disagreement that they were not formally considered at the Summit. The proposals were either superficially treated or not formally considered at all. Perhaps, the only issue that did not generate significant discord was the proposal to revise and update the UN
Charter by closing down the obsolete Trusteeship Council. The politics of the World Summit were illustrative of the complexities and competing visions as to the causes and consequences of today’s most pressing global problems. The theories described in the next two chapters will help explain the behavior of the major actors regarding UN reform and the role of the UN in contemporary global governance.

REGIONAL INTERGOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS

The European Union

The EU is a comprehensive, multipurpose regional organization that has been under construction since the end of World War II. The original goals of the EU revolved around the economic and political integration of fifteen European states—France, Great Britain, Germany, Italy, Belgium, the Netherlands, Luxembourg, Denmark, Greece, Spain, Portugal, Ireland, Austria, Sweden, and Finland. In 2004, ten new members joined the EU: Poland, Hungary, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Slovenia, and Cyprus. In 2007, both Bulgaria and Romania joined the EU, making a grand total of 27 members. The EU demonstrates how a series of IGOs can be tied together to create a supranational organization, albeit one in its nascent stages, which combines the interests of diverse nation-states. The EU perhaps represents the highest degree of economic, political, and social integration found in a contemporary international organization.

The construction of a united Europe has been a long and arduous process, and it continues today, as fifteen of the twenty-seven EU members are implementing a common currency, the “euro.” The process began with the Paris Treaty (1951), in which Germany and France agreed to merge their steel and coal industries. Then, in 1952, the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC) was created as Italy and the Benelux countries (Belgium, the Netherlands, and Luxembourg) joined with France and Germany to coordinate their steel and coal policies. Later, the Treaty of Rome (1957) extended ECSC cooperation to atomic energy with the creation of the European Atomic Energy Community (EURATOM). The Treaty of Rome also established the European Economic Community (EEC), which was committed to formation of a common market. The three communities—ECSC, EURATOM, and the EEC—had separate commissions and councils but shared the European Parliament and Court of Justice in common (Noel 1994, 5). In 1979, the three communities evolved into a single organization, called the European Community, and then the EU, in 1992.

EU membership expanded gradually: Great Britain, Ireland, and Denmark joined in 1973; Greece in 1981; Spain and Portugal in 1986; Germany in 1990; and Sweden, Austria, and Denmark in 1994. In 2004, the 10 states noted above became new members. And, as EU membership expanded, its institutions became more powerful and formalized through a series of multilateral treaties. In the following sections, we look at the five institutions of the EU and outline the treaties designed to integrate the nation-states of Europe.
The European Council  The European Council, which consists of the heads of state/government of EU members, represents the political leadership of the EU. The European Council was formally established by the Single European Act of 1985 and was strengthened by the Maastricht Treaty of 1992; however, the Council has existed informally since 1974. The Council meets twice a year with representatives from other EU institutions in order to coordinate EU policy with national policies and interests. It is playing an increasingly influential role in EU affairs but most political and military (and some monetary) decisions are still made at the national level. With the 2009 Lisbon Treaty, the European Council formally became the institution responsible of setting the priorities and direction of the EU. The Lisbon Treaty also conferred legal personality to the EU.

The Council of Ministers  The Council of Ministers, which is made up of the relevant ministers from the governments of EU members, is the chief decision-making body. According to Noel (1994, 6), each national government sends one of its ministers to the Council—which minister usually depends on the subject matter of the Council meeting. The Foreign Minister is usually considered the principal representative to the Council, but a variety of ministers, ranging from the Minister of Agriculture to the Minister of Transportation, regularly attend Council meetings. Formally, decisions in the Council are made through a weighted voting system with a qualified majority rule. Informally, most important policy decisions are made on the basis of unanimity (Noel 1994, 28–29). The Council of Ministers is a fluid body whose composition changes depending on the issue area. Members of the Council represent their national governments to the EU; consequently, the Council is an inherently political institution, often influenced by individual national interests.

The European Commission  The Council of Ministers is only part of the EU decision-making process. Most EU proposals and initiatives emanate from the European Commission, the bureaucratic arm of the EU. While the European Commission formally reports to the Council of Ministers, it exercises a great deal of autonomy. The Commission consists of twenty-seven members who are appointed for four-year terms and maintain a staff of approximately 5,000 people. Commission members are expected to further the interests of the EU as a whole as opposed to the interests of their own countries—hence Commission members and staff are often referred to as “Eurocrats” because of their priorities and allegiances. Commission members tend to be highly trained technocrats/bureaucrats who are skilled, complex-problem solvers. They are often technical experts and adept administrators in the areas of energy, trade, transportation, finance, and agriculture, rather than politicians with national constituencies.

The Commission has several important powers that help it develop common policies for the EU. It has the power to initiate policy proposals. While proposals are often initiated by the Council of Ministers or the European Parliament, the Commission has the authority to investigate strategies for
addressing the problems it identifies. The Commission also has the power to execute EU policies. The European Parliament and the Council of Ministers generally approve broad policy goals, leaving it up to the Commission to create the specific rules, regulations, and procedures for reaching those goals. Coupled with the authority to set budgeting priorities, the execution of EU policies gives the Commission a great deal of influence over those policies. The European Commission has also emerged as the “Guardian of the Treaties.” It is given the responsibility for implementing the multilateral treaties creating the EU and for building confidence among EU members.

**The European Parliament**  The European Parliament is mainly responsible for overseeing the Commission, although its legislative powers are limited. The Parliament can advise both Council and Commission on proposals, and it must approve the Commission’s overall budget. It does not have the right of line-item approval. Even so, the Parliament is an important part of the co-decision process by virtue of its input in EU policy development. The co-decision procedure is a complex one, involving two readings and seven steps. First, the Commission develops a proposal. Second, the Parliament advises the Commission on other considerations and suggests revisions. Third, the Council of Ministers brings national concerns to the table, presenting their positions on the proposal. Fourth, the Parliament votes yes or no. Fifth, the Commission issues a second opinion of the now-revised proposal. Sixth, the Council issues its secondary opinion. Seventh, the European Parliament either accepts or rejects the final proposal. If a proposal reaches the seventh stage, it is almost always approved by the Parliament.

The co-decision process perhaps overemphasizes the legislative role of the Parliament. The Commission and the Council exercise the most influence over the formulation of common EU policy. The Parliament’s influence remains largely deliberative and symbolic. The European Parliament consists of 736 members, each of whom is directly elected by voters in Europe. And, as with national legislatures, political parties feature prominently in European Parliament elections and operations. Europe’s political parties reflect a broad political spectrum; they include, but are not limited to, the European Socialists, the Christian Democrats, the Greens, and the Democratic Alliance. Seating within the Parliament is based on political party sections; however, the members of the parties sit alphabetically in order to reduce any nationalist sentiments that may arise among the party members. The complicated composition of the Parliament is a surprising, yet effective, formula for projecting an image of European unity.

**The European Court of Justice**  The European Court of Justice was created in 1958 to adjudicate any legal disputes arising under the Treaty of Rome involving ECSC, EEC, and EURATOM activities. Over time, the jurisdiction of the Court has expanded to include disputes arising under later treaties such as the Single European Act (1986), the Maastricht Treaty (1992), and the Lisbon Treaty (2009). The Court is composed of 27 justices who are appointed by
their national governments for renewable 6-year terms. The justices are assisted by advocates-general to handle the Court’s expanding caseload. The Court functions much like the U.S. Supreme Court in that it interprets whether EU policies and national laws are congruent with EU treaties. But unlike the U.S. Supreme Court, the European Court is permitted to issue preliminary or advisory opinions that are referred to it by national courts.

The European Court of Justice is different from other international courts in that it may be used by individuals as well as governments. Traditionally, only states are subjects of international law, which means that only states may make claims in international courts. Individuals, though, are traditionally objects of international law, which means they must have their governments make claims on their behalf. The European Court of Justice is unique because individuals have standing to bring some cases before the Court. The Court has heard EU employment cases, for example, addressing such issues as job discrimination and equal pay for equal work.

EU Ambitions and Challenges

The impressive institutional structures of the EU indicate its ambitious goals. EU goals have been outlined in the Single European Act, the Maastricht Treaty, and the Lisbon Treaty. The Single European Act called for the final elimination of all internal barriers to trade in goods and services by 1992. This was a critical step to ensuring the free movement of goods, services, persons, and capital within the EU. The Maastricht Treaty is even more ambitious, calling for the final step of economic integration—the implementation of a common currency, known as the euro. The euro has been the European currency for international transactions since 1999, and it replaced the domestic currencies of 12 EU member states in January 2001. The transition to the euro was rocky. When put to a popular vote via a referendum in Denmark, citizens voted against the euro by a significant majority (Kuchment and Beith 2000, 5). The United Kingdom and Sweden remain outside of the eurozone. For those states that have adopted the euro, public opinion polls initially suggested that their citizens were at best indifferent to the euro and at worst would reject it if the decision were put to a public vote (European Report 2001, 102). Concerns also abounded about the initial value of the euro relative to the U.S. dollar, the security of the euro from theft and counterfeiting, and the loss of millions of dollars worth of undeclared income from Europe’s underground economy. Both Germany and France repeatedly exceeded the permissible budget deficits, raising concerns that government deficits would undermine confidence in the euro. In spite of these challenges, the implementation of the euro was largely successful. In 2008, the euro was one of the strongest currencies in the world, posting record strength against the U.S. dollar, the British pound, and the Japanese yen.

In 2010, a sovereign debt crisis in Greece and to a lesser extent in Portugal, Ireland, and Spain created a crisis of confidence in the euro. Euro-skeptics have long warned that a common currency without a common political system
implementing a common fiscal policy would enable governments to spend beyond their means and limit the ability of governments to respond to economic crises. After months of indecision, the EU along with the IMF and the United States finally took action with a bailout package of approximately 750 billion euro. The bailout stabilized the euro in the short term; however, against the backdrop of the global financial crisis, the future of the euro and the ability of indebted EU governments to pay their bills remain very serious concerns.

The Maastricht Treaty also calls for serious steps toward political and military integration. The Maastricht Treaty obligates EU members to begin the process of formulating a common foreign policy and providing for a common European defense. Both ambitious and controversial, the Maastricht Treaty has been slow in achieving ratification. Great Britain and Denmark have ratified the treaty but retain severe reservations that allow them to opt out of monetary and political union. Currently, no member is taking serious steps toward political and military integration. The integration of the ten new members into the euro-zone will be a gradual process conditioned on economic and fiscal considerations. The EU suffered a serious blow in 2005 when both France and the Netherlands, key members of the organization, rejected the proposed EU constitution in popular referenda. The main features of the constitution were to change most decision-making rules and to establish a single foreign minister for Europe. After the French and Dutch rejections, the EU conceived of the Lisbon Treaty as an alternative constitution. Because of different national procedures, the Lisbon Treaty only needed the approval of the governments of most member states, rather than approval through a popular vote. The only member that required a national referendum was Ireland and it rejected the treaty in 2008. After some minor changes to the treaty, Ireland revoted and the Lisbon Treaty came into force in December 2009.

The future direction of the EU is uncertain, and whether further economic and political integration will take place depends on the continued success of the euro and developments in the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. Observers still question whether European monetary stability will take precedence over immediate national interests. Excessive government deficits, coupled with economic instability, raise the possibility that national interests may trump monetary stability. Furthermore, the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq have further divided EU members many of whom are also members of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), the principal security organization. Great Britain, Spain, Italy, and Poland contributed forces to the U.S. “coalition of the willing,” which invaded Iraq causing tension with Germany and France. Both Poland and Romania were suspected of hosting secret CIA prisons, angering antiwar EU members. The United States—led war in Iraq in 2003 tested alliance commitments (Terriff 2004). French and German skepticism and opposition to the United States at the UN Security Council spilled over into NATO politics as well. Then secretary of defense Donald Rumsfeld referred to these allies as “Old” Europe and intimated that the future lay with the “New” Europe—the newest members of the NATO alliance (Roter and Sabic 2004, 517–542).
Many of the new members of NATO joined the “coalition of the willing,” with Poland contributing the largest force.

NATO’s role in Afghanistan has become more important. Initially, the United States had to engage in serious arm-twisting to get NATO members to contribute more troops to the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF), the NATO peacekeeping mission in Afghanistan. In 2006, NATO and ISAF took responsibility for security in Afghanistan, working in tandem with the Afghan government. The mission has been plagued by increasing levels of violence and increasing NATO casualties, making the allies reluctant to commit more troops. For those troops already there, their governments prevented some from being deployed in combat zones. U.S. defense secretary Robert Gates warned that NATO could become a two-tiered alliance, where some allies are willing to fight and die while others are not (Myers and Shanker 2008). At the June 2008 ministerial summit, Secretary Gates asked NATO allies to share a greater burden by providing more combat troops and pooling resources; however, allies made only modest promises (Shanker 2008, 3).

For many, Afghanistan represents an existential crisis for NATO (Kay 2005, 82; see comments by key public figures in Myers and Shanker 2008). Failure in Afghanistan could shatter the alliance, which would also shatter the 60-year-old security architecture for the EU. The continued existence of NATO seems likely but in what capacity is in dispute. If NATO were to become moribund, a mere “alliance on paper” and a shell of its former self, then the prospects of a Europe with a single foreign policy become a great deal more complicated. Regardless, the EU remains a most remarkable international organization because of its success in uniting the diverse cultures and politics in Europe, creating a single European identity and one of the strongest economies and currencies in the world.

The Organization of Islamic Conference

The OIC was created in 1969 by 24 Islamic states to safeguard the well-being of their peoples and of Muslims in general. According to Article II of the OIC Charter, the OIC seeks to strengthen Islamic solidarity; consolidate cooperation among member states in the economic, social, cultural, and scientific fields; safeguard the Holy Places; support the struggle of the Palestinian people; and eliminate racial discrimination and all forms of colonialism. Currently, it is a 57-member IGO that is based on the following principles:

1. the full equality of member states;
2. the observation of the rights to self-determination and noninterference in the internal affairs of member states;
3. the observation of the sovereignty, independence, and territorial integrity of each state;
4. the settlement of any dispute that may arise among member states by peaceful means;
5. a pledge to refrain, in relations among member states, from resorting to force or threatening to resort to force against the unity and territorial integrity or the political independence of any one member state.

The OIC principles are similar to most post–World War II IGOs in that they recognize the sovereign equality of members, nonintervention, and the peaceful settlement of disputes. Its membership is open to all Islamic states that seek to uphold the principles of OIC. States wishing to join may submit an application to the OIC and membership is decided on the basis of a two-thirds vote of the member states. The OIC is not as comprehensive or institutionalized as the EU; however, it does seek to organize a very diverse group of states that govern well over 1 billion Muslims. Its goals are the promotion and protection of Islam as a religion as well as Islamic cultural values. The OIC is financed by member states, and each member state’s assessment is based proportionally on its national income.

The birth of the OIC was turbulent. Its creation in 1969 was a unified Muslim response to the Israeli policies after the 1967 Arab–Israeli War, including the occupation and annexation of Jerusalem. Known as Al-Quds to the Muslim world, Jerusalem is home to one of Islam’s most holy sites, the Aqsa Mosque. The Aqsa Mosque sustained extensive arson damage while under Israeli control, and the subsequent Arab and Muslim outrage prompted the formation of the OIC (Ahsan 1988, 23). The OIC was created to safeguard Muslim holy sites and to be a voice for the Palestinian people.

The OIC is structured around four major components. At the top is the Conference of the Kings and Heads of State and Government, which is also known as the Islamic Summit Conference. According to Article IV, the Conference of Kings and Heads of State and Government is the supreme authority of the OIC and, with an amendment to the Charter in 1981, it meets once every three years or when the vital interests of the Muslim nations warrant. Next in the hierarchy is the Conference of Foreign Ministers, which meets once a year or when the need arises. According to Article V, the Conference of Foreign Ministers shall be held for the following purposes:

1. to consider the means of implementing the general policy of the Conference;
2. to review the progress in the implementations of resolutions adopted at previous sessions;
3. to adopt resolutions on matters of common interest in accordance with the aims and objectives of the Conference set forth in the Charter;
4. to discuss the report of the Financial Committee and approve the budget of the Secretariat-General;
5. to appoint the Secretary-General and the four assistants to the Secretary-General on recommendation of the Secretary-General;
6. to fix the date and venue of the coming Conference of Foreign Ministers;
7. to consider any issue affecting one or more of the member states whenever a request to that effect is made with a view to taking appropriate measures in that respect.
Meetings at the foreign ministerial level require a quorum of two-thirds of the member states, and resolutions and recommendations are adopted on the basis of a two-thirds majority. Voting is based on a one-state, one-vote basis; however, the norm is that members proceed on the basis of consensus (Ahsan 1988, 26). Decisions and resolutions adopted with a two-thirds majority are not binding on members that either abstained or voted against (Moinuddin 1987, 106). In addition to the annual meeting of the Conference of Foreign Ministers, which is held in the member states by rotation, regular sessions are held in New York during UN General Assembly sessions since 1980.

The OIC political leadership is supported by an elaborate bureaucracy called the Secretariat-General. The Secretariat-General is headed by the Secretary-General, who is appointed for a nonrenewable four-year term. The Secretary-General is the chief bureaucrat and represents the OIC to member states and other states and international organizations. Article VI commits the Secretary-General to political neutrality in that “in the performance of their duties, the Secretary General, his assistants, or the staff of the General Secretariat, shall not seek to receive instructions from any government or authority other than the Conference. Member states undertake to respect this equality and the nature of their responsibilities, and shall not seek to influence them in any way in the discharge of their responsibilities.” The Secretary-General, with the assistance of his staff, is responsible for executing OIC decisions and resolutions, as well as monitoring and drafting reports on existing operations and programs.

OIC Ambitions and Challenges
The OIC is the principal forum for Islamic cooperation; however, cooperation has been difficult to achieve. The OIC is not a regional organization in that the geographic location of member states extends from Africa to Southeast Asia. OIC also includes observer states that have large Muslim populations, like Bosnia-Herzegovina, Central African Republic, and Thailand. The OIC represents not only geographic diversity but also political diversity. Members are Islamic republics, monarchies, military dictatorships, national democracies, and democratic socialist republics (Ahsan 1988, 19). National income among IOC members is also unevenly dispersed. Some states are among the wealthiest in the world, like Oman and Saudi Arabia, while others are among the poorest, like Mali and Afghanistan. Cooperation is further complicated by the fact that while all members share a colonial past, not all have shed the colonial yoke. “The alien structures implanted in the member states of the OIC during the colonial period have failed to cater to the needs of the majority of the people; the colonial system of education and administration which introduced alien values and outlook has estranged the majority of the masses from their rulers” (Moinuddin 1987, 69). As a result, dissension within the OIC was evident during the Lebanese Civil War, the Iran–Iraq War, the Persian Gulf War, and the current U.S. wars in Afghanistan and Iraq.
In spite of all the differences between OIC members, its single unifying force is Islam. This religious commitment also involves protection of the Holy Sites and fostering the self-determination of Muslim people, including Muslims living in non-Muslim countries. This has placed the OIC squarely in the middle of some of the most explosive conflicts in contemporary world politics: the Palestinian–Israeli crisis, the Arab–Israeli crisis, the Bosnian crisis, and the crises in Kashmir, Iraq, and Afghanistan. In addition, the OIC has sought to protect Islamic culture from Western secular materialism. The heads of state of the OIC have declared that “strict adherence to Islam and to Islamic principles and values as a way of life constitutes the highest protection for Muslims against the dangers that confront them. Islam is the only path that can lead them to strength, dignity, prosperity, and a better future. Islam is the pledge and guarantee of the authenticity of the ummah safeguarding it from the tyrannical onrush of materialism” (Ahsan 1988, 19).

The OIC represents a challenge to the West’s liberal world order in that it articulates a different view of the relationship of religion to politics, private property, and human rights. In 2006, the OIC took a unified stand against offensive cartoons depicting Prophet Mohammed that were solicited and published by a Danish newspaper and republished around the world. Muslim anger at the cartoons slowly grew and eventually erupted into widespread violent protests. According to Fattah (2006, A1), the rage of the Muslim world crystallized at an OIC summit meeting in Mecca. According to one political observer, “It was no big deal until the Islamic conference when the OIC took a stance against it” (Fattah 2006, A1). The OIC played a pivotal role by authoritatively speaking against the cartoons, and its member states had a hand in organizing the demonstrations that left scores dead and Danish embassies in flames. Perhaps this is why some view even the OIC as a subversive transnational religious actor undermining state sovereignty in order to further the goal of creating a pan-Islamic religious community (Haynes 2001).

Currently, the greatest challenge for the OIC is how to respond to Islamic terror. The Taliban, when they governed Afghanistan, only had observer status in the OIC because only three states (Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates) recognized them. On October 9, 2001, the then secretary-general of the UN, Kofi Annan, called upon the OIC to take a central role in devising a strategy to combat terrorism (SG/SM/7989). The OIC condemned the 2001 attacks on the United States, but Iran, Iraq, and Syria also condemned the U.S. military response in Afghanistan. Other OIC members wanted to see the evidence against Osama bin Laden and the Al Qaeda network. A communiqué issued on October 10, 2001, stated that “the conference also expressed its concern that confronting terrorism could lead to casualties among innocent civilians in Afghanistan and asserted the importance of assuring the territorial integrity of Afghanistan and its Islamic character” (http://www.oic-oci.org/english/conf/fm/All%20Download/frmex9.htm). The OIC also warned against the targeting of other Muslim states. The U.S. invasion and continued occupation of Iraq further exacerbated tensions. The OIC is in the difficult position of trying to balance a desire to have
a cooperative working relationship with the West and the UN with anti-U.S., anti-Western sentiments among large sections of the Muslim population.

The African Union

The African Union (AU) is a 53-member regional organization created in 2002 to replace the Organization of African Unity (OAU). Like most multipurpose IGOs, whether regional or global, the AU is serviced by organs that deal with peace and security (The Peace and Security Council); quasi-legislative functions (The Pan-African Parliament); bureaucratic administration/secretariat (The African Commission); legal matters (the African Court of Justice), and economic and social matters (The Economic, Social and Cultural Council).

The intent behind the AU was to correct the shortcomings of the OAU, which suffered from a lack of resources and little political unity and was often derided as a “dictators club.” African states wished the AU to approximate the relative success of the EU in promoting stability and economic growth.

The geopolitical makeup of the AU and the relative poverty of member states suggest that the AU has a long way to go. Dictatorships still abound, and the democratic models of South Africa and Kenya have recently experienced troubling internal instability. The AU continues to be publically critical of the International Criminal Court’s (ICC) indictment of President Bashir of Sudan on charges of crimes against humanity, war crimes, and genocide. Bashir is still able to travel to AU meetings and many AU functions without fear of arrest or extradition. The AU and the OIC sent representatives to Bashir’s 2010 inauguration after he won a tainted election in Sudan. Still, it is noteworthy that the fledging organization’s first foray into international peacekeeping was in Sudan. The AU was the first organization to deploy peacekeeping troops to the Darfur region and while the original number of AU peacekeeping troops was insufficient for stabilizing the region, they were the first IGO to tangibly commit to trying to manage the problems in Darfur.

The Association of Southeast Asian States

The Association of Southeast Asian States (ASEAN) was formed in 1967 and is currently a ten-member body that is committed to promoting international peace and stability among members and fostering economic integration. It is similarly structured to the other IGOs discussed earlier. In 2007, ASEAN member states held a widely anticipated summit meeting for the purpose of furthering the institutionalization of the organization. The Charter was changed to explicitly provide ASEAN with international legal personality and include a plan for creating an economic bloc similar to the EU. At the same time, ASEAN retained the notion of the sovereign equality of states and the principle of nonintervention.

The principal goal of the 2007 ASEAN summit was to create a free trade zone by 2015. Unlike the EU, however, ASEAN was unable to agree as to whether to put conditions on members for joining, such as improved human
Nongovernmental Organizations

In 2008, Cyclone Nargis hit Myanmar killing tens of thousands. The Myanmar government refused to allow international assistance even though the international media, as well as numerous NGOs, reported that millions of people were at risk. ASEAN once again refused to put pressure on the government, deferring to Myanmar’s sovereign right to accept or reject aid. Prominent ASEAN members, such as Thailand, Indonesia, and Malaysia, have and continue to experience their own internal difficulties regarding democracy and human rights. They are reluctant to set a precedent that would allow outsiders to interfere in what they consider a domestic affair. This does not bode well for the creation of an ASEAN customs union or for a common currency as these initiatives required states to yield many of sovereign prerogatives to international organizations.

NONGOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS

NGOs are, for the most part, private, nonprofit organizations that have transnational as well as subnational ties. When the first NGO was founded is a matter of considerable debate. Some observers date the first NGO back to 1674 when the Rosicurian Order, an educational fraternal order, was founded (Jacobson 1984, 10). Others date the first NGO back to 1846 with the formation of the World Evangelical Alliance (Feld et al. 1994, 25). Still others think bigger, arguing that the Catholic Church, with its associated orders, represents the first NGO. Whatever the founding date, classifying NGOs is exceptionally difficult by virtue of their multiple origins, purposes, and resources. Some NGOs might be social welfare organizations, such as World Vision and Doctors Without Borders; or they might be professional organizations, such as the International Studies Association and International Chamber of Commerce. NGOs can serve specific purposes, such as the International Olympic Committee and Amnesty International, or they can be multipurpose organizations, such as the Catholic Church. NGOs, whose membership can be either compulsory or voluntary, currently number more than 100,000. Their financing comes from private sources, including membership dues, income from investment earnings, and charitable contributions from individuals and businesses. NGOs may also receive financing from public sources, such as government agencies, and IGOs,
which usually comes in the form of contracts and/or grants. Some NGOs, such as Doctors Without Borders or World Vision, command budgets in excess of $200 million (Donini 1996, 91).

NGOs interact with a variety of international actors, ranging from states to IGOs and MNCs. NGOs attempt to influence the activities and the decision making of these actors with a view to getting their help in achieving some or all of the goals of NGOs. This means that NGOs may employ both direct and indirect lobbying techniques. Direct lobbying techniques involve contacting officials (and their staffs) in order to persuade them to adopt appropriate initiatives or policies. Such contacts can also involve attempting to educate officials and staff. This entails addressing the IGO, state, or corporate agency directly or submitting relevant documentation. Indirect lobbying techniques involve multinational advertising campaigns aimed at shaping or mobilizing public opinion. These techniques also include executing grassroots campaigns that take place at the international and national levels. Such campaigns consist of encouraging members and others to write letters or otherwise contact national and international public officials (e.g., Graubart 2008). NGOs even use national courts to achieve their aims. They may bring cases directly, file briefs, or provide legal representation to individuals or groups. NGOs utilize both human and capital resources to further their respective aims. Success tends to depend on NGO objectives and resources. NGOs with more resources and narrower goals tend to be more effective than those having fewer resources or those seeking to change policy in some broad or fundamental way. Those that lack resources or seek substantial change may even employ alternative participation strategies such as civil disobedience, which involves peaceful but illegal behavior, and violence.

NGOs play three interrelated roles in world politics. The first revolves around information-related activities and issue advocacy. Many NGOs are actively engaged in gathering information, as they have people on the ground who are directly involved with an issue or a problem. In addition, NGOs share information with states, IGOs, MNCs, and each other. Fact-finding is crucial for identifying and managing problems. Another aspect of NGO information activity is providing expert analysis. NGOs often employ highly qualified individuals who are widely recognized experts in their respective fields. They bring their education and experience to bear on defining and addressing global issues. This involves publishing studies and articles and issuing documentation. NGOs are even responsible for establishing standards, guidelines, and regulations. Environmental NGOs are especially noted for moving state actors toward stronger domestic environmental regulations and more cooperative international efforts to combat environmental problems (Betsill and Corell 2008).

A second role of NGOs in world politics involves carrying out the policies of states and IGOs. Implementing policy is largely the domain of social-welfare NGOs, which are, in effect, “subcontractors.” Working in conjunction with states and IGOs, many social-welfare NGOs serve as vehicles for delivering immediate humanitarian assistance to persons displaced by natural disaster, civil disorder, violent conflict, or war. In addition to responding to crises and
emergencies, these NGOs work on a continuous basis with populations mired in poverty and afflicted by disease and starvation. They distribute medicines and medical care. Some NGOs are specifically involved with women’s health issues. They provide information on birth control methods, dispense contraceptives, and deliver pre- and postnatal care. Many NGOs are also involved with elementary and secondary education as well as providing technical and skills training. In many respects, the web of social-welfare NGOs and IGOs provides the only safety net that many people have. The work of NGOs is so important that many have formal consultative status with the UN.

The nongovernmental delivery of social-welfare services encounters numerous obstacles, which can emanate both from governments and from nongovernmental, domestic groups. For example, NGO relief activities in war zones can run afoul of government wishes, and NGO access to populations at risk can be restricted (Duffield 1998, 139–147). NGOs are, for the most part, respectful of sovereign prerogatives, but problems can arise when a government does not control all the territory within a state. NGOs that deliver humanitarian assistance to populations in rebel-held territory can easily be seen as subversive, in effect “giving aid and comfort” to the enemy. Negotiating NGO access to war-torn areas is an arduous and tedious process—one that involves strategic and military calculations as well as humanitarian concerns.

Religious groups in both developed and developing countries may oppose NGO activities relating to reproductive rights. They may see NGOs’ activities in this area as sinful or disruptive of traditional family values. NGOs that monitor human rights compliance are seen as threatening the sovereignty of states and undermining governmental stability. As with all international issues and problems, disagreements about definition and implementation exist. NGOs seeking to deliver social-welfare services may actually be exacerbating or creating problems rather than solving them.

A third role that NGOs play in world politics revolves around private interactions. International relations is no longer solely the domain of states. NGOs are involved in a variety of private international transactions that bring together groups and individuals. This includes student and faculty exchanges and study-abroad programs. NGOs often host conferences that facilitate the exchange of ideas. In many cases, such conferences are held jointly with conferences sponsored by IGOs. Some NGOs, such as the Ford or Rockefeller Foundations or the Pew Charitable Trusts, award huge grants for the research and development of projects that promote international cooperation. Many observers see the dramatic increase in private NGO interaction as critical to the formation of a global civil society (Pishchikova 2006; Yamamoto 1996). This civil society is based on shared ideas and values that can be quite removed from governments and IGOs. NGOs are seen as “the conscience of the world,” influencing the moral development of states and IGOs, as well as civil society (Willetts 1996).

While NGOs can play constructive roles in world politics, their activities, like the activities of other international organizations, can generate
controversy. NGOs often represent particular interests that can conflict with other powerful interests. NGO antiglobalization efforts in Seattle, Prague, Davos, Genoa, and Washington and their willingness to challenge status quo politics have made them targets of criticism by businesses, governments, and IGO officials (McFeely 2000, 14). NGOs can also complicate the policy- and decision-making processes of governments and IGOs. NGOs have long sought transparency in, and access to, UN agencies. However, when granted access to agencies and conferences, problem identifying and problem solving often become intractable. For example, when the World Trade Organization (WTO) invited NGOs to comment on a trade dispute between Canada and France (regarding a French ban on a type of asbestos), the dispute settlement process of the WTO was reduced to a muddled mess (The Economist Dec. 9, 2000, 6). Apparently many developing states claimed that the WTO had overstepped its authority and demanded that it must rescind its invitation, which the WTO did, based on an obscure technicality. The result was a lack of confidence in the WTO on the part of NGOs and developing nations.

Are NGOs “friends or foes”? The answer to the question depends on your worldview. Some complain about “pretender NGOs” (see Fowler 1991, cited in Foreign Policy 2001, 18). One such type is a CONGO, a commercial NGO, which is “set up by businesses in order to participate in bids, help win contracts, and reduce taxation” (Foreign Policy 2001, 18). Businesses then claim that they are participating in cooperative partnerships and are being good global and local citizens. Another type of “pretender NGO” is called a MANGO: a mafia NGO that provides services “of the money laundering, enforcement, and protection variety; prevalent in Eastern Europe” (Foreign Policy 2001, 18). Still another type is the PANGO, or party NGO, which is an “aspiring, defeated or panned political party or politician dressed as an NGO; a species of Central Asia and Indo-China” (Foreign Policy 2001, 18). Many businesses, government officials, and social conservatives complain that many of the NGOs accredited by the UN are either radical, leftist, feminist, pro-abortion, pro-environment, or pro-homosexual, whose politics are disruptive and unrepresentative of the mainstream. In other words, the so-called civil society can be decidedly uncivil.

Regardless of the divergent views, NGOs are becoming more prominent as international actors and as objects of study (see, e.g., Heins 2008; Ohanyan 2009; Vedder 2007; Weiss and Gordenker 1996). These private, nonprofit international organizations serve as information gatherers and providers; they help carry out the policies of states and IGOs; and they serve as the building blocks of global civil society. NGOs offer vehicles for individuals and groups to participate in international politics outside of their respective nation-states. In other words, NGOs enable a broader range of participation beyond the usual foreign policy elites. NGOs allow the average individual the opportunity to shape and influence the international political landscape, albeit in small, incremental, and often controversial ways.
MNCs are private, for-profit organizations that have commercial operations and subsidiaries in two or more countries. As Gilpin (1987, 231) so aptly states, no aspect of the political economy has generated more controversy than the global expansion of multinational corporations. Some consider these powerful corporations to be a boon to mankind, superseding the nation-state, diffusing technology and economic growth to developing countries, and interlocking national economies into an expanding and beneficial interdependence. Others view them as imperialistic predators, exploiting all for the sake of the corporate few while creating a web of political dependence and economic underdevelopment.

These views of MNCs, while contradictory, indicate the significance of MNCs to world politics. These international organizations command huge resources and can influence entire national economies. In subsequent chapters of this text, we explore why these divergent views of MNCs exist. But for our purposes here, we define MNCs and look briefly at their historical evolution.

The origins of the first MNC are difficult to pinpoint in part because of the confusion attending their definition. Many companies engage in international activities. They may import goods or buy raw materials from foreign sources. They may export products and engage in a variety of trading activities abroad. MNCs are different from companies that engage in international transactions in that ownership, management, and sales activities of MNCs extend beyond several national boundaries. They are usually headquartered in one country with subsidiaries in secondary countries. The expansion of MNCs into other national jurisdictions is called foreign direct investment (FDI). FDI is distinguished from other types of investments because MNCs retain ownership and managerial control over subsidiaries. The principal economic objective of MNCs is to produce goods and services for world markets at the least possible cost (Gilpin 1987, 232). MNCs, at least in economic theory, seek to maximize their profits and their shareholders’ returns. MNCs may also engage in portfolio investments in which they purchase shares in national companies and other MNCs.

One of the earliest MNCs was the East India Company, which was founded in the late seventeenth century. Involved with the production and distribution of tea, spices, jewels, and textiles on a global basis, the East India Company was headquartered in London, with offices and operations in the Netherlands, the Americas, China, Southeast Asia, and India. It was a private, joint stock company that was chartered by the British Crown (Ralph et al. 1991, 628). In fact, the Company helped the British government administer much of India when it was a colony during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The Company’s trading posts evolved into political administrative units used by Great Britain to govern India (and to protect Company interests).
Today, more than 35,000 MNCs exist. This proliferation of MNCs has changed the nature of international trade and international relations in general. MNCs fall into five broad categories. The first category includes MNCs involved in agriculture and extractive industries. Multinational agribusinesses, like Archer Daniels Midland (ADM) and Dole, produce and process a wide variety of agricultural products for stores and supermarkets around the world. MNCs engaged in extractive industries control and process natural and raw materials used for manufacturing. This extractive category also includes powerful petroleum MNCs such as BP (formerly British Petroleum), Royal Dutch Shell, Exxon, and Amoco. These MNCs control not only the means of access to the vast majority of the world’s oil supply, but the processing and refining of crude oil as well.

A second category of MNCs centers on the provision of financial services. Financial MNCs include multinational banks, brokers, and insurance companies. Multinational banks provide hundreds of billions of dollars in venture capital and loans to businesses and governments. They engage in international currency exchange and trade. International brokers buy and sell securities in most of the world’s stock markets. Global insurance companies insure everything from the legs of international supermodels to loans made by multinational banks. International financial services are the grease on the axles of the global economy.

A third category of MNCs is industrial corporations. These MNCs are involved in the manufacture of durable and other kinds of goods. The most famous of the industrial MNCs include General Electric, Motorola, Sony, and IBM. Included in this category are the global automobile manufacturers such as Ford, Volkswagen, General Motors, Toyota, Honda, and Daimler-Chrysler. Industrial corporations have workforces that number in the hundreds of thousands, and they own production facilities and sales activities that extend all over the world. A subcategory is retail corporations such as the Coca-Cola Company, the GAP, TieRack, and Eddie Bauer.

A fourth broad category of MNCs is general service companies. These companies sell everything from fast food to telephone and Internet services. The golden arches of McDonalds are symbols of the global expansion of MNCs. Burger King, Pizza Hut, and Starbucks are common in urban areas everywhere. AT&T, Sprint, and MCI are global telecommunication giants, providing local, cellular, and long-distance telephone services to individuals around the world, however remote their locations. America Online, CompuServe, and Prodigy provide Internet access to both individuals and firms. Information and technology firms link the world with instantaneous communication capabilities.

Finally, the last category is the retail MNC, also known as the “big boxes.” These MNCs include Walmart, Tesco, Carrefour, and Target, and they are unique because market share allows them to offer the products and services of the other multinationals, all under one roof. This gives them an enormous amount of leverage over other firms because they can demand that they meet their price point in exchange for important shelf-space.
The proliferation of MNCs has been accompanied by a “trimming down” of certain kinds of operations and the “megamergers” among others. In addition, MNCs have entered into intercorporate alliances with other firms in order to spread risk and gain access to national markets (Gilpin 1987, 255). Most MNCs are headquartered in developed countries, and their national origins tend to be American, European, or Japanese. Their owners are shareholders from all over the world, although the vast majority are from the advanced industrialized countries. They are one of the many different kinds of international organizations that participate in and are affected by world politics.

CONCLUSION

Today’s international organizations are diverse and complex. IGOs are organizations for states. Some IGOs, like the UN or the OIC, promote cooperation among sovereign nation-states. Others, like the EU, foster the economic, political, and social integration of diverse societies. But world politics involves more than just the affairs of states. The activities of NGOs and MNCs show the interconnectedness of private and public international relations. The activities of IGOs, NGOs, and MNCs overlap, complementing and challenging one another. Their activities influence the lives of billions of people.

International organizations do not exist in a vacuum. They are part of a complex political world that is shaped by a variety of actors, processes, and events. Scholars and observers of international politics disagree about which actors, processes, and events are important for understanding the world. Consequently, they disagree about the nature, the roles, and relative importance of international organizations. These differences are the result of divergent worldviews, which condition their knowledge of the world. In Chapter 3, we examine the mainstream theoretical approaches to international relations—realism and liberalism. These approaches approximate widely held worldviews about the central influences of international politics and the role of international organizations within those politics.

KEY TERMS

Congress of Vienna 15  nonintervention 22
the League of  the European
Nations 16 Union 25
the United Nations 17 the European
the General Assembly 17 Commission 26
the Security  the European
Council 19 Parliament 27
the Secretariat 21 the European
the International Court  of Justice 19 Court of
Justice 27
the Economic and Social nonuse of force 22
Council 20
the Trusteeship Council 21
sovereign equality 22
peaceful settlement of disputes 22
### SUGGESTED READINGS

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