Third Edition

INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS

PERSPECTIVES ON GOVERNANCE
IN THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY

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PEARSON
Prentice Hall

UPPER SADDLE RIVER, NEW JERSEY 07458
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I wrote this book out of passion and frustration. International organizations are fascinating objects of study. They are almost organic entities—evolving, changing, adapting, even dying. However, many texts on international organizations tend to view the lives of international organizations through liberal lenses. Liberal lenses are not exactly rose-colored, but they are colored by the implicit assumption that international organizations are inherently "good" and that their "good" efforts are often thwarted by organizational weaknesses, world politics, or self-interested governments. Liberalism has contributed much to our understanding of global politics, but it has its blind spots. Examining international organizations solely from a liberal vantage does a disservice to the study of international organizations and to its development as a discipline. It unnecessarily narrows analysis; worse, it suggests that just one view of the world exists. This text brings other theoretical perspectives to bear on the study of international organizations. It integrates international organizations with international relations theory by showing how international organizations matter in the worlds of the realist, the Marxist, and the feminist, as well as the liberal.

International organizations are in a period of transition. Since the publication of the second edition of this book, the United Nations (UN) has been wounded by the U.S. invasion and occupation of Iraq without Security Council authorization. The reputation of the UN has been sullied by the “Oil-for-Food” scandal, and political discord has thwarted reform efforts to strengthen its role in human rights and humanitarian affairs. The World Trade Organization has yet to hold a successful round of trade negotiations, and France and the Netherlands have rejected the European Union constitution. Nongovernmental organizations have seen their coffers and operations swell as a result of post-conflict reconstruction, the Asian tsunami, and the earthquake in Pakistan. They have also experienced increased scrutiny and criticism of their actions. Multinational corporations continue to experience difficulties operating globally in an unstable post-September 11, 2001, world. Hence, the optimism that permeated analyses of international organizations in the 1990s has given way to more cautious explanations of their roles and contributions to contemporary world politics. The third edition of this book
accounts for the political and structural changes occurring in world politics and in related international organizations. In addition to the usual updating and correction of errors that accompany a new edition, this text focuses more attention on the politics of international organizations, especially that surrounding reform of the United Nations.

Several people have contributed to the development of the third edition of this book. First, I thank the anonymous reviewers of the second edition who provided valuable insights and criticism. I would also like to thank Ms. Kristin Armstrong, a talented international relations major at Webster University, for her help in making the third edition more accessible to undergraduate students, and also thank the following reviewers for their helpful suggestions: William M. Batkay of Montclair State University; Darren Hawkins of Brigham Young University; and Houman A. Sadri of the University of Central Florida. I would also like to acknowledge Webster University, which provided some financial assistance for research through its Faculty Research Grant Program.