

Foreword

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I am delighted and honoured to write the Foreword to this important book. Its contributors are friends and colleagues whose work has redefined how we think about international organizations, globalization, transnational public administration, and global public policy. This journey of redefinition began scarcely over 20 years ago, a journey that I and other researchers joined as we were trying to puzzle through the impact of globalization on domestic public policy. As Sherlock Holmes remarked, ‘There is nothing more deceptive than an obvious fact.’ The ‘obvious facts’ 20 years ago were that the domestic and the international were hermetically sealed, separate compartments, that the international arena was driven by the *realpolitik* of states in pursuit of power, prestige, and sovereignty, and that international organizations were the stooges of dominant (usually American) powers. The United Nations was dismissed as an elaborate and distracting pantomime, and most international organizations (outside of core security or economic ones) were largely ignored. When I started my own work ten years ago on the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, I was surprised (with a guilty pleasure – it’s always exciting to find uncharted territory) that there was almost nothing written about it. The ‘obvious facts’ had to be challenged, and this book reflects and extends the insights that came from seeing things differently.

One key ‘obvious fact’ is how we understand the nexus of power, authority, and legitimacy in governance, both domestic and global. The simple and obvious fact was that power is the material capacity to influence and dominate, that it is wielded most conspicuously by states, and however elaborate the system of international institutions and norms, ultimately power is the basis of authority and of a (grudging) legitimacy. If we challenge this obvious fact, and see that authority and legitimacy very often reside within institutions, and that brute power is contested by norms and ideas, we instantly have a new but fruitful set of puzzles to confront. How are international institutions constructed, and why? What is the full range of those institutions, beyond the peak United Nations-related ones that focus on security and economy? Who participates in them, beyond states? What are the foundations of their authority and legitimacy, if they lack brute force? Twenty years ago, this was the emerging

research agenda, a *terra incognita* for students of global public policy. This book contributes to what is now a robust cartography of scholarship.

Another ‘obvious fact’ was that global politics was just that – high or ‘macro-politics’, the manoeuvres and feints of states as they wrestled for dominance and security. But the construction of the post-war global order, as much as it was framed by the Cold War and American economic and military hegemony, was the construction of multiple, overlapping, and often integrated policy regimes. Global *politics* had to make room for global *policy*. Agriculture, health, migration, communications, human rights, transportation, development aid, taxation – not to mention trade in goods and services and the necessary accompanying standards and dispute-resolution mechanisms – required a dense network of international organizations (and organizations within organizations), of rules and agreements and norms, of diplomats, experts, advocates, activists, and advisors. Again, it took some effort to look beyond the obvious facts of great power geopolitics to see the emerging architecture of global policy systems and the ways in which they are orchestrated through and by international organizations.

This insight alone leads to a very different understanding of both domestic and global policymaking. For example, several chapters in this book explore the field of education, something that would seem pre-eminently a matter of domestic policy. National governments have to steer national economies, and national economies compete globally. A key factor in global economic competition is human capital, and human capital is a function of education policy. What Johnny and Fatima learn in the local classroom is now a matter of intense interest in Paris and Washington, and subject to a vast global apparatus of comparative educational testing and standards. Obviously, governments participate in international organizations like the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development and the World Bank that set the standards and run the tests, but they do not determine the mechanisms or the results. The orchestration of this single policy regime is much more the terrain of experts and institutions. The same is true of global health. In both these cases and others, domestic policymaking is increasingly tightly bound to global systems and institutions, and understanding one requires understanding and taking account of the other, and in particular the international organizations at their heart.

The ‘obvious fact’ about these organizations was that they uniformly expressed the wishes of their members, and particularly the most dominant. The World Bank and the International Monetary Fund were exemplars – their agendas were driven by Western powers, principally the United States and Europe. Understanding the organizations only required an understanding of their membership and their objectives; what went on in the black box was immaterial. The outputs would ultimately be determined by these key inputs. This book is an outstanding example of opening the black box and

taking seriously what is inside, of paying attention to micro-processes and ‘micro-politics’. Almost all the chapters show, in one way or another, the internal divisions within international organizations, the multiple actors and agendas, the different professional and sometimes even ideological orientations. Moreover, many of the internal actors within an international organization will be allied with external actors (both state and non-state), creating something closer to ‘organizational fields’ with intra- and extra-organizational configurations. The intricacy of these configurations is increasingly driving research away from strictly organizational analysis towards networks and complex systems analysis, from the monochromatic of the macro to the riotous colours of the micro.

This book helps us see how far the field has come in just 20 years. Ideas and norms are taken seriously, and we can see them for what they are – the foundations of both international contestation and cooperation. Moreover, we now appreciate both the artistry and the expertise that goes into the framing of ideas, of selling them and having them accepted. The very notion of ‘expertise’ itself has been deconstructed and interrogated, and we have a much better sense of how precarious and precious reputational and cognitive credibility are in making global public policy. States matter of course, and they matter a lot. Nothing in the field or in this book questions the pivotal role of states and governments. The simple point is that to truly understand what they do at the national and the global levels, we need to understand the full tapestry of institutions and actors and the highly complicated regimes which they collectively contribute. Boarding a plane in Berlin to fly to Beijing requires the seamless integration of aviation, health and immigration standards, designed and delivered by an alphabet soup of international and national organizations and agencies. The world works in this and a myriad of other ways – from internet protocols to phytosanitary standards – because of this complex web of organizations.

This book shows both the progress we have made, and the exciting questions that still remain. I hope that reading it will help you better understand international organizations, their ideational tools and techniques, their ‘micro-politics’, and their moving parts. It will show you that the ‘obvious facts’ are not obvious at all, that we need to rethink some basic assumptions about transnational administration and global public policy.