

POLITICAL ECONOMY OF INSTITUTIONS AND DECISIONS

Series editors

Randall Calvert, Washington University, St. Louis
Thrainn Eggertsson, Max Planck Institute, Germany, and University of Iceland

Founding editors

James E. Alt, Harvard University
Douglass C. North, Washington University, St. Louis

Other books in the series

Alberto Alesina and Howard Rosenthal, *Partisan Politics, Divided Government,
and the Economy*

Lee J. Alston, Thrainn Eggertsson and Douglass C. North, eds., *Empirical Studies
in Institutional Change*

Lee J. Alston and Joseph P. Ferrie, *Southern Paternalism and the American
Welfare State: Economics, Politics, and Institutions in the South, 1865-1965*

James E. Alt and Kenneth A. Shepsle, eds., *Perspectives on Positive Political
Economy*

Josephine T. Andrews, *When Majorities Fail: The Russian Parliament,
1990-1993*

Jeffrey S. Banks and Eric Allen Hanushek, eds., *Modern Political Economy: Old
Topics, New Directions*

Yoram Barzel, *Economic Analysis of Property Rights, 2nd Edition*

Yoram Barzel, *A Theory of the State: Economic Rights, Legal Rights, and the
Scope of the State*

Robert H. Bates, *Beyond the Miracle of the Market: The Political Economy of
Agrarian Development in Kenya, 2nd Edition*

Charles M. Cameron, *Veto Bargaining: Presidents and the Politics of
Negative Power*

Kelly H. Chang, *Appointing Central Bankers: The Politics of Monetary Policy in
the United States and the European Monetary Union*

Peter F. Cowhey and Mathew McCubbins, eds., *Structure and Policy in Japan
and the United States: An Institutionalist Approach*

Gary W. Cox, *The Efficient Secret: The Cabinet and the Development of Political
Parties in Victorian England*

Gary W. Cox, *Making Votes Count: Strategic Coordination in the World's
Electoral Systems*

Gary W. Cox and Jonathan N. Katz, *Elbridge Gerry's Salamander: The Electoral
Consequences of the Reapportionment Revolution*

Continued on page following index

DELEGATION AND AGENCY
IN INTERNATIONAL
ORGANIZATIONS

Edited by

DARREN G. HAWKINS
DAVID A. LAKE
DANIEL L. NIELSON
AND MICHAEL J. TIERNEY



CAMBRIDGE
UNIVERSITY PRESS

CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS
Cambridge, New York, Melbourne, Madrid, Cape Town, Singapore, São Paulo

Cambridge University Press
The Edinburgh Building, Cambridge CB2 2RU, UK

Published in the United States of America by Cambridge University Press, New York

www.cambridge.org
Information on this title: www.cambridge.org/9780521680462

© Cambridge University Press 2006

This book is in copyright. Subject to statutory exception
and to the provisions of relevant collective licensing agreements,
no reproduction of any part may take place without
the written permission of Cambridge University Press.

First published 2006

Printed in the United Kingdom at the University Press, Cambridge

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

ISBN-13 978-0-521-86209-7 hardback
ISBN-10 0-521-86209-4 hardback
ISBN-13 978-0-521-68046-2 paperback
ISBN-10 0-521-68046-8 paperback

Cambridge University Press has no responsibility for
the persistence or accuracy of URLs for external or
third-party internet websites referred to in this book,
and does not guarantee that any content on such
websites is, or will remain, accurate or appropriate.

Contents

<i>List of figures</i>	page vii
<i>List of tables</i>	viii
<i>Notes on contributors</i>	x
<i>Preface</i>	xv
 Part I: Introduction	 I
1 Delegation under anarchy: states, international organizations, and principal-agent theory DARREN G. HAWKINS, DAVID A. LAKE, DANIEL L. NIELSON, AND MICHAEL J. TIERNEY	3
 Part II: Variation in principal preferences, structure, decision rules, and private benefits	 39
2 Who delegates? Alternative models of principals in development aid MONA M. LYNE, DANIEL L. NIELSON, AND MICHAEL J. TIERNEY	41
3 US domestic politics and International Monetary Fund policy J. LAWRENCE BROZ AND MICHAEL BREWSTER HAWES	77
4 Why multilateralism? Foreign aid and domestic principal-agent problems HELEN V. MILNER	107
5 Distribution, information, and delegation to international organizations: the case of IMF conditionality LISA L. MARTIN	140

Contents

6	Delegation and discretion in the European Union MARK A. POLLACK	165
 Part III: Variation in agent preferences, legitimacy, tasks, and permeability		
7	How agents matter DARREN G. HAWKINS AND WADE JACOBY	199
8	Screening power: international organizations as informative agents ALEXANDER THOMPSON	229
9	Dutiful agents, rogue actors, or both? Staffing, voting rules, and slack in the WHO and WTO ANDREW P. CORTELL AND SUSAN PETERSON	255
10	Delegating IMF conditionality: understanding variations in control and conformity ERICA R. GOULD	281
11	Delegation to international courts and the limits of re-contracting political power KAREN J. ALTER	312
 Part IV: Directions for future research		
12	The logic of delegation to international organizations DAVID A. LAKE AND MATHEW D. MCCUBBINS	339
 <i>References</i>		369
<i>Index</i>		394

Figures

1.1	International delegation decision tree	page 11
2.1	Types of agency relationships	45
2.2	Social percent of MDB projects, 1980-1999 (three-year rolling average)	55
2.3	Social preferences for the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (World Bank), 1980-1999 with alternative models of the principal	64
3.1	Chain of delegation	79
4.1	Percentage of multilateral aid committed relative to total ODA committed	113
4.2	Public opinion in the EU net percentage with greater confidence in multilateral than bilateral organizations	121
5.1	State and staff preferences over stringency of conditionality	143
8.1	Implications of variation in institutional neutrality	248
8.2	Preference distributions regarding military intervention	251
9.1	Institutional design and IO slack	263
10.1	Change in the number and type of binding conditions, 3-year moving average	299
12.1	Delegation with communication	351
12.2	The knowledge condition	357
12.3	The conditions for successful delegation	359
12.4	Delegation with multiple principals	362

problems among multiple and collective principals.¹⁹ Given the turmoil they note, agents employing the strategies we have emphasized could try to bribe or offer excludable side payments to some members of their own collective principal in order to get them to set the terms the way the agent wants them set. Of course, there are limits to this strategy. If free-rider problems within collective principals are substantial, then even small agent-source problems might lead principals to end their delegation at the first future opportunity. This logic should act as a check on the troublesome agents introduced early in the chapter: after all, a housekeeper who loafs is bad, one who steals is worse, but one who sows dissension between the principals in the household will be the last housekeeper those principals ever hire.

¹⁹ And as Martin (this volume) suggests, as coordination costs rise, agencies also gain discretion.

*Screening power: international organizations
as informative agents*

ALEXANDER THOMPSON

INTRODUCTION

The 2003 military intervention against Iraq inspired numerous commentators to lament the failure of the United Nations (UN) Security Council during the episode. Supporters of the Bush Administration policy argued that the Council's unwillingness to explicitly endorse military action amounted to a failure to confront threats to international order and exposed the organization as weak, or even "irrelevant" and "impotent."¹ Less predictably, some members of the international law community offered a critique on legalistic grounds. The Security Council, they argued, did not stop the United States from intervening unilaterally, thereby failing to fulfill its role as defender of international law and promoter of international peace. In a talk before the American Society of International Law, for example, Richard Falk (2004: 2) judged the Security Council "deficient" with respect to the "war prevention goals of the Charter." In a more sweeping critique, international law scholar Michael Glennon (2003: 16) laments the "rupture of the UN Security Council," which failed "to subject the use of force to the rule of law."

I would like to thank the editors of this volume, as well as Kenneth Schultz, Peter Gourevitch, and participants in the conference on Delegation to IOs at the University of California, San Diego, for very helpful comments on earlier drafts. Portions of this chapter appeared previously in the journal *International Organization* (Thompson, 2006).

¹ President Bush himself warned in his September 2002 speech before the General Assembly that failure to deal emphatically with Iraq would render the UN "irrelevant." Conservative columnist Charles Krauthammer (2003) pronounced the UN "impotent" for its failure to effectively disarm Iraq, and predicted the organization's demise. See also Perle 2003.

These criticisms can be challenged on their own terms: After all, the Security Council did not endorse the war, and its mandated inspections appear – especially in retrospect – to have been very useful in containing and defanging Iraq. But they also rely on a narrow and largely inaccurate view of the Security Council's role in coercive military intervention. The notion of failure only makes sense in relation to some metric for defining success, and the above critiques depend on certain (often implicit) assumptions about the primary functions of the Security Council. In particular, both sets of critiques rely on a vision of the body as a coherent actor whose job is to maintain peace by enforcing rules and dictating the behavior of states. This is a literal interpretation of the Security Council's role – as responsible for identifying threats and applying military force against them if necessary – envisioned in the Charter.²

Treating almost any international institution in this way, as quasi-governmental, is unrealistic; it sets too high a bar for judging success. This chapter provides a more fundamental defense of the Council's actions in the recent Iraq war by offering a different perspective on its role, and the role of other international organizations (IOs), in episodes involving the use of force. As Darren Hawkins, David Lake, Daniel Nielson, and Michael Tierney (Hawkins et al.) note in the introduction to this volume, principals have incentives to delegate to agents when the latter specialize in performing certain tasks. Powerful states, not IOs, specialize in applying military force, and thus the international community must typically rely on them to deal with collective threats. However, the international community – including both leaders and their domestic publics – faces uncertainty when it comes to “hiring” these coercive agents to act on their behalf. This uncertainty creates an important role for IOs. I argue that in the context of a potential military intervention, IOs specialize in providing information about the coercing state's intentions and the likely consequences of its policy, information that helps the international community decide whether to support the intervention. This specialization creates an incentive for the international community to rely on IOs as their agent to “screen” interventions worthy of

² Chapter VII of the Charter endows the Security Council with the power to identify threats to international peace and security, to respond with diplomatic and economic sanctions, and if necessary to mandate military action. While the framers of the Charter realized that the Security Council would be largely dependent on member states for military forces, they viewed these forces as being at the disposal of the Security Council (Articles 45 and 47). In practice, however, the Security Council does not perform a command and control function.

international support from those which are not. Thus the international community, as a collective principal, relies on two sets of agents: powerful states to apply coercion and IOs to screen these coercers.

The screening function also provides an incentive for states to subject themselves to the constraints of an IO – as an alternative to working unilaterally or with an ad hoc coalition – when they pursue the use of force. The international support that results from the screening process is desirable for even a powerful coercing state since it determines the political costs of a given policy and in some cases affects the policy's long-term success. Absent the information generated by IO approval – that is, when the policy is rejected by an IO or when an IO is not involved – the international community is less likely to respond favorably. It is important to note that, in such cases, the IO agent has succeeded equally well in performing its screening function.

Once a coercing state is authorized to carry out an operation, the international community typically has little control over its actions; the potential for slippage and undesirable outcomes is high. This is the same problem faced by employers, who, upon hiring a new employee, may find it difficult to dismiss the employee even if performance is poor (Spence 1973: 356).³ Therefore, ex ante efforts at screening and selection are of paramount importance, and problems of adverse selection rather than moral hazard and commitment are the primary focus of this analysis.

This chapter addresses several arguments raised in the editors' introduction. Two are worth highlighting from the start. First, Hawkins et al. draw attention to screening and selection issues but provide a limited view of the possibilities. They argue reasonably that states want to avoid delegating to IOs that will not faithfully carry out the intended tasks and will therefore invest in choosing IO agents that are “sympathetic” in terms of their leadership and preferences. The problem of asymmetric information between principal and agent is obviously central to my argument, although in my account potential coercing states, not IOs, are the relevant agents with hidden information, with IOs playing an intervening role as screening mechanisms. Thus with respect to the screening hypothesis, my findings are consistent with the framework chapter, although refinements are required in the context of the substantive issue I investigate.

³ The authority granted by IOs to coercing states is revocable, although IOs and other states have few mechanisms of ongoing control once an intervention has begun.

My argument also complements the discussion of preference heterogeneity by Hawkins et al. They argue that a set of heterogeneous states are less likely to delegate to an agent than are like-minded states, an insight that helps explain why endorsement of interventions by certain IOs might be especially important. Precisely because IOs with a heterogeneous membership are less likely to agree on whether and how to authorize intervention, their successful decisions to do so are more informative and meaningful. Building from informational theories of legislative committees, I argue that IOs with a diverse membership are able to send more information to the international community regarding a potential coercer and its policy than are more homogeneous institutions, such as regional organizations and ad hoc coalitions. In the spirit of the Hawkins and Jacoby chapter, I thus focus explicitly on variation in the characteristics of IO agents.

This chapter proceeds by presenting the theoretical argument on how IOs serve as informative agents of the international community in the context of military coercion. The third section presents a case study of the 1990–91 Iraq conflict, which serves to illustrate the screening function of IOs. I then extend the logic of the argument to shed light on how coercing states “forum shop” across institutional alternatives. Among other implications, the relevant tradeoffs demonstrate why the Security Council is uniquely effective as a screening agent. The concluding section returns to theoretical themes raised in this volume.

THE SCREENING FUNCTION OF IOS

Across the range of international institutions, formal IOs uniquely have the capacity to act independently of state interests and influence.⁴ It is the *neutrality* of IOs, in particular, that allows them to serve as informative agents of the international community, supplying information that an individual state – in our case, a potential coercer – could not credibly supply. Because they cannot be controlled by individual states, and because they are standing bodies with (more or less) diverse member interests, they have two advantages as information generators: first, they are able to impose constraints on a coercer, making signaling of limited ambitions possible, and second, they act as representatives of the

⁴ Abbott and Snidal 1998. For further conceptualization of IO independence, see Haftel and Thompson 2006; Thompson and Haftel 2003; and various chapters in this volume, including the introduction, Alter, Cortell and Peterson, and Hawkins and Jacoby.

international community, allowing them to generate information on policy consequences that is regarded as neutral and thus credible. Both types of information are important to leaders and their publics as they assess the coercer and its intervention policy, in other words, as they attempt to overcome their adverse selection problem.

To help us understand what makes IOs informative, we can conceptualize them in the same terms as legislative committees, one function of which is to supply information to the legislature (their principal). Like these committees, comprised of legislators, IOs are composed of a subset of states in the international system. Driven mainly by the works of Thomas Gilligan and Keith Krehbiel, informational theories of legislative organization propose that committees are designed to serve as sources of policy-relevant information for the legislature as a whole (Gilligan and Krehbiel 1989, 1990; Krehbiel 1991). The most important design feature is their composition in terms of member preferences, which largely determines how informative the signals sent by committees are. Specifically, a committee that is heterogeneous (that is, whose membership is diverse and “bookends” the median preference of the floor) sends more information than a homogeneous committee; and a committee composed of “preference outliers,” whose membership has extreme preferences relative to the floor median, is less informative than one with a more moderate composition. Only when they are diverse and representative can committees transmit information that is seen as credible and therefore informative to the legislature as a whole.

These principles of information transmission by institutional agents can be usefully applied to the realm of international institutions. It is instructive to consider the properties of IOs in comparison to the primary multilateral alternative in the context of coercive interventions: ad hoc coalitions. Whereas IOs are standing bodies, multilateral coalitions are by definition composed of like-minded states, as the phrase “coalition of the willing” reflects. In the language of the legislative signaling literature, they are homogeneous and composed of preference outliers. Because the ideal point of the median member of such a coalition is likely to be very close to the ideal point of the coercer with regard to the question of intervention, the coalition is not likely to impose substantial constraints and support from the coalition is not informative to the median member of the international community. Among the most robust findings in theories of strategic information transmission is that actors with more similar preferences can send more informative signals to each other (Crawford and Sobel 1982; Lupia and McCubbins 1994b: 368; Krehbiel

1991). Therefore, by itself, multilateral support of a coercer conveys little information to the international community.

As informative agents, IOs send two types of information to the international community, one directed at state leaders and the other at publics. In the remainder of this section, I outline these information transmission mechanisms in more detail.

Information on intentions and policy consequences

I assume that state leaders are relatively well informed about policy alternatives and consequences and that IO member states do not have a meaningful information advantage over other states in terms of expertise or knowledge about an issue. Other leaders do, however, lack information regarding the intentions of the coercing state's leadership and are concerned that the coercer, in confronting a collective threat, will pursue a policy that is more aggressive or ambitious than the international community prefers. Such behavior is a form of agency slack (in the form of "slippage") that might undermine the interests of other states by producing undesirable outcomes.

Both the international community and states considering coercion are faced with a dilemma. In a use of force context, it is difficult for powerful states to reassure others that their goals are limited and unthreatening. And yet the international community must rely on such states as agents to intervene militarily when there are genuine collective threats. An IO with neutral preferences can send a highly informative signal because it imposes costs on a coercer that a more aggressive state (i.e. one with intentions that threaten third-party states) would be unwilling to pay. The IR literature certainly recognizes that international institutions impose costly constraints on states, usually in the context of credible commitment arguments, but conceptualization and identification of these precise costs is not well developed (Lake 1999; Martin 1992a). At least four overlapping costs may be imposed when coercion is channeled through an IO.

First, a state's freedom of action is almost always limited when a policy is channeled through an IO, thereby reducing the discretion of a coercing agent. Other member preferences contribute to defining the limits of possible coercive measures and a coercer is accepting these limits when it chooses to work through an IO. Indeed, once a state chooses to act through an IO, it is faced with generating some support and is thus constrained to bring a limited and defensible set of goals to

the table. For example, early US drafts of Resolution 1441 – which eventually re-established an inspections regime in Iraq and threatened "serious consequences" in the absence of cooperation – were watered down to eliminate provisions that would have been rejected by other Security Council members, such as a more specific authorization of "enforcement" and a provocative requirement that any Permanent 5 state could send representatives as part of an inspections team (Blix 2004: 76–79).

Second, coercers face organization costs – including the costs of communicating, bargaining, and reaching common positions – when they work through an IO (Olson 1965: 47). These are a form of transaction costs. Any multilateral approach to foreign policy increases the costs of decision-making and of implementing policy. These are compounded by political factors and "influence costs," as each actor seeks to shape the organization's decision to his own benefit.⁵ For years in Bosnia, the Europeans and United States struggled to implement a coherent plan as each government sought to shape the policy in its own interests. In the end, as one analyst of the bargaining concludes, "U. S. administrations typically compromised with or accommodated the Europeans, adopting policies at odds with their own policy preferences" in order to retain NATO's imprimatur (Papayouanou 1997: 92). Side-payments may be another cost of organizing consensus in the context of an IO.

The third type of cost, delay, is partly a product of the first two. In contrast to a less formal multilateral approach, IO approval involves votes and a structured decision-making process, which require a willingness to engage in diplomacy and wait for approval of the policy. Fourth and finally, working through an IO increases the level of scrutiny to which an intervening state is subject. Since IOs increase transparency and require a more public accounting of actions, the international community is able to track the behavior of a state that chooses to work under their auspices, as they both prepare and conduct an intervention. Moreover, the exchange of information and discourse that takes place within an IO tends to reveal information about states' preferences and intended actions, leading to more effective monitoring and higher-quality signaling at the international level (Wallander 1999; Keohane 1984). The diversity of IO members is key. Unlike a unilateral effort or an ad hoc coalition with similar interests, most IOs include states with disparate

⁵ On "influence costs," see Milgrom and Roberts (1990: 58).

interests who will be watching the coercer with a critical eye. This scrutiny almost axiomatically leads to more sincere signaling (Lupia and McCubbins 1994b: 368).

These various costs, which I refer to generally as the *costs of constraint*, allow the coercer to send a meaningful signal when it chooses to work through an IO. The coercer has shown restraint and a willingness to cede some control, something a more threatening “type” would not be willing to do. This reassures third-party states, which are in turn less likely to retaliate politically and to oppose the intervention.

However, even if other state leaders determine that supporting the coercive policy is in their national interest, they may face domestic barriers to doing so; they must convince their own publics that supporting another state’s use of force is justified. IO approval helps overcome this additional obstacle by sending policy-relevant information to domestic publics abroad.

While IR scholars have paid increasing attention to how domestic publics influence state interests and policy,⁶ the role of domestic publics *abroad* is not well understood and should be considered as an important strategic player. Members of publics are poorly informed relative to their leadership. They have uncertainty regarding the reasons for a given policy and the relationship between the policy and potential consequences. In the context of coercion on the part of another state, they do not know if the policy is justified and serves multilateral interest or whether it involves selfish goals with undesirable international consequences. Because international issues often lack salience, and because each individual has negligible influence on foreign policy, members of the public have little incentive to gather information on foreign affairs and to engage in careful calculation regarding international events. It is perfectly rational, therefore, for individuals to remain largely ignorant of international policy matters.

Ignorance, however, does not imply indifference. Publics are looking for “information shortcuts” to assess international issues, and IO endorsements can perform this function (Popkin 1991). Since the claims of IOs are more neutral and representative of the international community than claims of individual governments, or of ad hoc coalitions, the signals they convey regarding a policy are more credible and thus more informative. This is the fundamental principle behind the informational

⁶ For a good example in the context of coercion, see Schultz 2001.

rationale for committee heterogeneity in legislatures: “In the presence of uncertainty,” write Gilligan and Krehbiel (1989: 463), “diversity of interests on the committee promotes informational efficiency.” Individual citizens, like legislators, respond to new information they receive about the reasonableness and effects of policies, and they update their beliefs in sensible ways (Shapiro and Jacobs 2000: 224).

Through this process of information transmission, which helps domestic publics identify intervention policies worthy of support, IO approval makes it easier for leaders to offer support. As one Canadian diplomat notes, “The average Canadian doesn’t know the details and the nittygritty [of foreign policy]. It comes down to symbols. With IO approval, you hardly need to make the case [for supporting an intervention].”⁷ In the language of the two-level games literature, the information transmitted to domestic publics by the IO agent increases the size of the domestic “win-set” for leaders throughout the international community by minimizing domestic opposition (Putnam 1988). More generally, this information logic may provide an alternative to standard norm-based explanations for why publics favor multilateralism – especially centered around an IO – over unilateralism.

THE SECURITY COUNCIL AND IRAQ, 1990–1991

The 1990–1991 Persian Gulf conflict serves to illustrate the screening function of IOs during episodes of military intervention. Following the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait in August of 1990, the United States went to great lengths to work through the UN in order to apply pressure and ultimately to expel Iraq from Kuwait, seeking Security Council resolutions at every stage. Resort to force came only after 12 resolutions condemning Iraq’s behavior and imposing sanctions, including the passage of Resolution 678, which authorized UN member states “to use all necessary means.” In the end, support was widespread and the United States suffered no serious diplomatic setbacks as a result of the war. Thirty-seven countries contributed personnel to the coalition and about twenty provided military hardware. Financial contributions of \$54 billion were also made to the United States.⁸

⁷ Author’s interview with a senior Canadian diplomat, November 14, 2003 (location withheld to preserve anonymity).

⁸ On military contributions, see Lake (1999: 208–10); Matthews (1993: 313–15). On financial contributions, see Terasawa and Gates 1993, and Freedman and Karsh (1993: 358–61).

Most observers of Gulf War diplomacy agree that by turning to the Security Council and acting with its approval the United States was able to achieve greater legitimacy and support for its use of coercion. But this observation begs important questions. Why and how was the UN able to perform this function? Why did UN involvement in what was fundamentally a US-led effort change how other states perceived and reacted to events? The logic of screening and information transmission helps us address these questions.

During the early stages of the episode, the international community did indeed face an adverse selection problem and was uncertain about whether it should “hire” – that is, offer tacit or direct support to – the United States as its coercive agent. Initially, most governments and publics were deeply torn on the question of American intervention. Many Arabs viewed Saddam as a hero, and Arab public opinion loathed the idea of Western troops entering the region (Lesch 1991; Heikal 1992: 225–26). Even King Fahd of Saudi Arabia, who faced the most immediate threat of continued Iraqi aggression, was highly reluctant to accept US help, as Mohamed Heikal makes clear: “Never in his eight years on the throne had King Fahd faced a decision as difficult. . . . Saudi instincts rebelled against pressure to accept American help” (Heikal 1992: 213). Non-Arab leaders were no more eager. Gorbachev faced strong domestic opposition to supporting the United States and told Bush during Desert Shield that he “was nearly as eager to get U. S. troops out of Saudi Arabia as he was to get Iraqi troops out of Kuwait” (Beschloss and Talbott 1993: 262). France had been Iraq’s foremost Western ally and, like many other countries, faced substantial losses due to the cessation of trade and the oil embargo (Terasawa and Gates 1993: 182–83).

In sum, it was not at all obvious to leaders and publics that potential US military action was in the interest of the international community. The case shows that the Security Council process imposed costly constraints on the United States that served to diminish concerns over US ambitions among foreign leaders, and that UN approval helped overcome domestic opposition in various countries, facilitating their governments’ support of the intervention.

Screening US intentions

As the United States contemplated the use of coercion to push the Iraqi army out of Kuwait, it had to take into account probable reactions to the introduction of the only superpower’s military might into a politically

sensitive region of the world. States in the Gulf region had a genuine concern for their sovereignty and the encroachment of US military influence, and states outside of the region were worried about the precedent being set and their own interests in the Gulf. For many leaders, American muscle flexing was inherently threatening and undesirable. When the United States sought approval and relinquished some decision-making to the UN, this sent a strong signal to the international community that the United States had the limited, status quo goal of reversing the Iraqi invasion.

By channeling its coercion through the Security Council, the United States suffered costs that helped to signal its intentions. Aside from the operational and logistical difficulties that arose from putting together a multinational force, American political and military leaders faced a number of very real constraints in the form of policy changes and delays, as well as in the extent of the coercive goals pursued. US behavior was also subject to a high level of transparency and scrutiny. All of these limitations were generated or enhanced by working through the UN. The Bush Administration was constrained by the Security Council and the slow and methodical decision-making process that resulted from seeking approval during each phase. As one senior Bush administration official lamented, “When you try to bring people on board, you have to listen to them” (*Newsweek*, October 1, 1990: 20). This reflects the influence costs of seeking IO approval.

At two stages in particular US policies were delayed and modified in order to mollify the Security Council: the decision to enforce the initial embargo on Iraq and the decision to launch Desert Storm. Resolution 661, passed on August 6, imposed a trade embargo on Iraq. But the first enforcement measures did not take place until August 31. Though the United States – and Britain, whose navy was also actively patrolling the Persian Gulf – was willing and able from the start to enforce the UN embargo on shipments to Iraq, these ships were allowed to pass through the naval blockade for several weeks. US decision-makers faced a dilemma, as National Security Adviser Brent Scowcroft describes:

The question was, do we move unilaterally to stop them, or do we wait and try to get additional authority from the UN? We had lengthy discussions with the British about it and of course [Margaret] Thatcher said go after the ships . . . [James] Baker was insistent that we wait. He convinced the President we would lose the Soviets (who were still adamantly opposed to using force) and perhaps the chance for a positive vote in the Security Council on enforcement if we went ahead unilaterally. (Bush and Scowcroft 1998: 351–52)

Colin Powell and Dick Cheney agreed that, for political reasons, they should wait for UN approval (Woodward 1991: 284). The French and Soviets had argued that 661 alone could not be used to authorize enforcement; the latter in particular were a major obstacle and delayed a new resolution approving force (*Toronto Star*, August 25, 1990: A1). Ultimately, this approval came in the form of Resolution 665, passed by the Security Council on August 25, which authorized the use of force to disable ships destined for Iraq that refused to stop for inspection.

Waiting for UN endorsement in order to enforce the embargo was costly for the United States, apart from the fact that supplies were getting through to Iraq in the meantime. To begin with, there was a credibility issue, as hesitation might raise questions about US resolve (Freedman and Karsh 1993: 147). Moreover, waiting for another resolution raised the prospect that the United States and Britain would lose flexibility, a fear expressed by Thatcher that proved well founded (Thatcher 1993: 821). Afraid that US enforcement actions could trigger war, China, the Soviet Union, and France insisted on strict wording for the resolution that did not simply state that “minimum use of force” could be used – the Americans’ preferred syntax, which had almost unlimited interpretations – but rather spelled out that only measures “commensurate to the specific circumstances as may be necessary” could be employed. Moreover, there is some evidence that these three countries explicitly sought Resolution 665 as a way to imposed limits on the American use of force.⁹ As one journalist noted at the time, “the Soviet Union wanted to get as many constraints as possible on U.S. military action in the Gulf” (*The Independent*, August 27, 1990: 7).

For US decision-makers, the next great debate – and delay – was over the launching of Desert Storm. Once again, Thatcher argued to Bush that going back to the UN was too risky; she worried that it would constrain the United States and Britain unduly. In seeking a further resolution, she argued, “We risk amendments,” therefore it was preferable to “go to war on our own terms” (Bush and Scowcroft 1998: 384). In the end, the United States waited four months from the date of the invasion until Resolution 678 authorized the use of force on November 29. Considerable diplomacy and consultations took place before the United States could even propose language for a resolution. Though Shevardnadze and Baker had agreed on acceptable wording for the resolution

⁹ For more on the passage of Resolution 665, see Freedman and Karsh (1993: 143–50).

as early as November 8, and though Gorbachev told Bush at a November 19 meeting that he would vote in favor of the resolution, the Soviets insisted on more time for diplomacy throughout the month (Freedman and Karsh 1993: 230–32). Even when a date for a Security Council vote was settled, while the United States hoped to set a relatively prompt deadline for Iraqi withdrawal, the Soviet Union and France insisted on a “pause for peace” as a condition of the Resolution’s passage. The Soviets asked for a January 31 deadline; the French compromise of January 15 was selected. The very idea of an “announced” war represented a constraint, as US policy-makers had preferred a more flexible approach (*New York Times*, November 14, 1990: A1).

Delay was costly for US military planners and policy-makers for two reasons. First, it allowed Saddam to prepare for hostilities. Bush expressed his concern very clearly in early January, worrying that, “Each day that passes, Saddam’s forces also fortify and dig in deeper into Kuwait. We risk paying a higher price in the most precious currency of all – human life – if we give Saddam more time to prepare for war.”¹⁰ Though part of this waiting period was needed by the US military to move troops and equipment into position, its duration probably exceeded by weeks the optimal length of time. The second potential cost of delay came in the political realm. The anti-war movement was rapidly developing momentum in January, including within Congress. Thus delay was the last thing Bush wanted from a domestic political standpoint, and it almost cost him dearly (Mueller 1994: 59–60). Internationally, some feared that it would be hard to maintain a coalition over time. In a *Washington Post* editorial, Henry Kissinger warned that the “psychological basis” for war would wane over time as the initial emotion over Iraq’s invasion faded, and that the extensive diplomatic efforts that were taking place would “undermine the military option by consuming time” (*Washington Post*, November 11, 1990: B7).

Nevertheless, the wait was politically important: It satisfied European countries that hoped to further explore diplomatic solutions and it allowed Arab leaders to investigate “Arab solutions.” It also signaled that the United States was willing to be constrained and was approaching the conflict in a manner that accommodated the interests of others.

When the United States declared a cease-fire on February 28, reactions were mixed. Saddam was still in power and another day or two of

¹⁰ George W. Bush, Radio Address to the Nation on the Persian Gulf Crisis, January 5, 1991. Available at <<http://bushlibrary.tamu.edu/research/papers/1991>>.

fighting would have led to the destruction of far more Iraqi equipment and the capture of thousands more Iraqi troops. These signs of failure led to postwar accusations that the coalition had not even succeeded. US leaders limited their goals in this way partly because they felt constrained by the UN mandate and did not want to risk forfeiting it. Bush knew it would be costly to adhere to the UN mandate, as prewar polls showed a strong public desire to remove Saddam (Mueller 1994: 41–42, 545). According to Bush: “I firmly believed we should not march into Baghdad. Our stated mission, as codified in UN resolutions, was a simple one – end the aggression, knock Iraq’s forces out of Kuwait, and restore Kuwait’s leaders. To occupy Iraq . . . would have taken us way beyond the imprimatur of international law bestowed by the resolutions” (Bush and Scowcroft 1995: 464). George W. Bush confirms that his father felt constrained by the resolutions only to force Saddam from Kuwait (Woodward 2002: 329). To shed the aegis of the UN by pursuing more ambitious goals would have been to risk alienating states around the world, and a more expansive set of goals – which were considered early on but rejected when the UN pathway was chosen – would have been interpreted as aggressive and threatening.

UN involvement, and the signal it sent, was important in different ways to different third-party states. Arab leaders, who were especially preoccupied with US and Israeli influence following the end of the Cold War, reacted to the prospect of Western intervention with “deep fear and suspicion of ulterior motives,”¹¹ including the exploitation of local resources and a desire to strengthen political dominance in the region.¹² As David Lake points out (1999: 235–36), those states most immediately affected, such as Kuwait and Saudi Arabia, were being asked to forfeit an independent foreign policy and to effectively submit to protectorate status for the duration of the American military presence. Moreover, war aims that included the overthrow of Saddam were entirely unacceptable to other Arab regimes. Self-imposed restraint and limited aims were thus key for the United States to avoid a political backlash by states in the region.

States outside of the region were concerned for somewhat different reasons. The French hoped that Saddam’s regime would remain in power

and that Iraq would not be unduly weakened so that their trading relationship could ultimately remain intact. After losing Europe to the West, the Soviets had genuine political and strategic apprehensions over US motivations and long-term goals in the Middle East, a major Cold War battleground (Alexandrova 1991: 233–34). As one Foreign Ministry official complained early in the standoff, “There are no guarantees that the United States will leave Saudi Arabia after the crisis is over” (*New York Times*, August 31, 1990: A13). The United States thus granted the Soviet Union considerable control over decision-making, via direct diplomacy and especially the Security Council (Baker 1995: 396–410). Forfeiting some autonomy to the Security Council sent an important signal to the broader international community that US preferences made it a trustworthy coercive agent.

Overcoming public opposition

From the time American troops began arriving to defend Saudi Arabia, leaders throughout the international community faced tough domestic political questions in deciding whether to support a potential US-led invasion. By November, all of the US’s European allies (except the UK), Canada, and all Arab members of the emerging coalition had made a Security Council resolution a condition for supporting the use of force. This would help them “sell” support of the war to their own domestic audiences. It is clear that US policy-makers had foreign publics in mind when they chose to work through the Security Council. Scowcroft believed that the UN “could provide a cloak of acceptability to our efforts and mobilize world opinion behind the principles we wished to project” (Bush and Scowcroft 1998: 491).

Domestic audiences were most skeptical in the Arab and Muslim world. Western military involvement in the Middle East was a sensitive issue, stimulating memories of colonialism and drawing attention to the Arab–Israeli conflict. This made it very difficult for many Middle East leaders to openly support US intervention. Indeed, even before the initial invasion, as Iraq amassed troops on the Kuwaiti border, Arab leaders pleaded with the United States to take a low profile. They feared that the relatively strong US reaction would only inflame the situation (Freedman and Karsh 1993: 51). Following the Iraqi invasion, no Arab regime dared to call publicly for Western assistance; even Kuwait’s desperate call for international help was qualified with an explicit preference for an “Arab solution.”

¹¹ Khalidi (1991: 167). See also *Los Angeles Times*, August 31, 1990: A6.

¹² Azzam (1991: 481). For example, Saudi Arabia’s King Fahd suspected the United States of wanting to establish additional military bases (Heikal 1992: 212).

Among the Arab public, even those who disapproved of Iraq's invasion saw the US role as a separate matter and were strongly opposed (Heikal 1992: 239). "For many Arabs," explains one regional expert, "the prospect of a U. S. military presence shifted the political argument from the issue of Iraqi aggression to the issue of Western neocolonialism" (Lesch 1991: 37). Equally important for Arab leaders was the mobilization of opposition groups, mostly Islamist in orientation, whose position was initially strengthened by US involvement (Azzam 1991: 478-79). Saddam fanned these sentiments by portraying the struggle as anti-American and anti-Israel. Arab leaders who were convinced that US intervention did not pose a threat and hoped to offer support were therefore torn between international and domestic politics. A study of Arab public opinion during the Gulf War concludes that Arab governments were in fact constrained by domestic attitudes and calibrated their policies accordingly (Pollock 1992).

Nevertheless, despite significant opposition, "predictions that the presence of Western forces in the Gulf would set the 'Arab street' ablaze largely fizzled" (Lake 1999: 243, fn. 173). Once a few key Arab states, such as Egypt, Syria, and Saudi Arabia, decided that the risks to the region of a belligerent and even more powerful Iraq were too great to countenance, and that Western intervention was sufficiently unthreatening, their leaders followed the American lead and launched a "coordinated information campaign" centered around the multilateral nature of the intervention (Telhami 1993: 194). UN cover allowed Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak to argue to his citizens that Saddam "is one man against the world," and his policy of supporting the intervention was supported by 84 percent of the population.¹³ Pro-coercion governments were able to prevent Saddam from imposing his own interpretation of events – as an Iraq versus US conflict. Notably, even those governments that supported Saddam throughout most of the crisis still endorsed UN sanctions and welcomed UN involvement.

The domestic political challenges facing leaders outside the region were qualitatively different but no less important. The Soviet Union, in particular, was a key partner – indeed, it may have been the only country whose consent was absolutely required for the United States to proceed.

¹³ *New York Times*, November 8, 1991: A1; "Poll Shows Majority Egyptians Back Government Policy," Xinhua Overseas News Service, January 20, 1991 (accessed via Lexis-Nexis), citing a poll conducted by the American Chamber of Commerce in Cairo.

And yet Gorbachev and his Foreign Minister, Eduard Shevardnadze, faced myriad domestic challenges, leading them to insist that any decisions on possible military action be taken by the Security Council (*Washington Post*, November 9, 1990: A1). Gorbachev was under immense pressure from the right to dissociate Soviet policy from the appearance of excessive US influence (Fuller 1991: 58). The prospect of supporting military coercion against Iraq also triggered a fierce debate between the Arabists in the Soviet foreign policy establishment and Shevardnadze, who was portrayed by them as pro-American (see Alexandrova 1991: 232-33; Fuller 1991: 58). Especially since the Soviet Union and Iraq had been close allies during the Cold War, the Soviet public was not convinced that an invasion of Iraq was in their national interest, and diplomatic efforts by the United States to get the Soviet Union on board were frustrated as much by domestic opposition as by any international factor (Baker 1995: 282; Beschloss and Talbott 1993: 247). Speaking to Baker, Gorbachev put a fine point on the problem: "You are asking the Soviet Union to approve the use of American force against a long-time ally of the Soviet Union."¹⁴ The bottom line was that no group in the Soviet Union could envisage supporting an "American" military campaign.

In the end, Gorbachev and Shevardnadze were able to maintain just enough domestic support by pointing to Security Council approval and by framing the operation to the public as a collective mission. The UN became the focal point of Soviet policy. For example, almost as soon as Desert Shield was announced, the Soviet Foreign Ministry spokesman observed that: "The experience of many years shows that the most correct and sensible way of acting in conflict situations is through collective efforts and the utmost use of UN mechanisms. . . . We are for the Security Council to tackle this most urgent issue [of the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait] now" (quoted in Freedman and Karsh 1993: 125). Framing the coercion of Iraq in reference to the UN helped mitigate domestic opposition by showing that collective interests were at stake, thus enabling a key state to support the policy.

Various Western leaders also relied on the UN to make support politically possible. According to one observer, "France would not have been drawn into the Gulf except under the aegis of the UN" (Connaughton 1992: 106-107). Though Mitterrand felt that Article 51 should

¹⁴ BBC Television, Washington Version, January 17, 1992, quoted in Freedman and Karsh (1993: 231).

have been sufficient from a legal perspective, he did not feel that it could justify coercion to his domestic audience. "Article 51 doesn't mind public opinion," he explained to Baker. "Fifty-five million French people are not international lawyers. We need that resolution [to authorize the use of force] to ensure the consequences it will entail" (Baker 1995: 315). Germany and Japan both faced cultural and constitutional barriers to supporting military action. In order to justify their support of the coalition, in terms of both law and public opinion, their governments framed the intervention as a collective effort under the aegis of the UN.¹⁵

A useful comparison of international public opinion can be made to the 2003 Iraq war, conducted with no Security Council mandate. While 70 percent of Western Europeans supported intervention in the first Gulf War,¹⁶ only 19 percent of Europeans polled in January 2003 supported the second.¹⁷ UN authorization seems to have been a key variable in the latter case. When asked if the United States should intervene militarily in Iraq without UN approval, a plurality in only one European country (Slovakia) out of 30 agreed. When asked if their country should participate in a military intervention *with* Security Council approval, the number of pluralities jumps to 15.¹⁸ A Gallup International poll also conducted in January 2003 showed that few populations were in favor of war. When asked if their country should support a war, majorities in only the United States and Australia responded positively; in the remaining 37 countries there was not majority support. The prospect of UN authorization, however, raised favorable attitudes toward the war by 30–50 percent in most EU countries, and by 46 percent in Canada, 56 percent in Australia, 52 percent in New Zealand, 29 percent in India, and 35 percent in Nigeria.¹⁹

In both wars, even when government leaders had decided that supporting the intervention was in their country's interest, they often faced domestic opposition. As one newspaper characterized the situation in Europe in late August 1990, while unanimous condemnation of Iraq was unprecedented, "domestic political difficulties and wariness about jumping aboard a U. S. bandwagon are still causing division on the issue

¹⁵ *The Daily Telegraph*, September 10, 1990: 12; Purrington and A. K. (1991: 318).

¹⁶ Gallup poll conducted in October 1990, summarized in the *Washington Post*, October 25, 1990: A31.

¹⁷ EOS Gallup Europe, "International Crisis Survey," available at <www.eosgallupeurope.com/int_survey>.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ "Iraq Poll 2003," available at <www.gallup-international.com/surveys.htm>.

of military action outside a UN umbrella" (*The Independent*, August 25, 1990: 7). The Security Council's imprimatur was the most powerful tool for convincing these publics that the coercive policy was justified and worthy of support. As one Turkish government official notes, contrasting the 2003 Iraq war with the first, "a resolution gives us something to work with domestically; we just didn't have that in the second case."²⁰

The passage of various UN resolutions in the 1990–91 episode allowed leaders to portray the intervention to publics around the world as a reasonable response to a common threat. The heterogeneity of the Security Council – the non-permanent members at the time were Canada, Colombia, Ethiopia, Finland, the Ivory Coast, Cuba, Malaysia, Romania, Yemen, and Zaire – allowed Bush to credibly point out that "diverse nations are drawn together in common cause" (State of the Union speech, January 29, 1991). Other state leaders used the same themes in their public statements and publics reacted to this information by offering widespread support for using force against Iraq. By lending its neutral approval, the Security Council helped publics screen a desirable intervention policy from an undesirable one.

INSTITUTIONAL VARIATION AND FORUM SHOPPING

Of course, the international community has little control over whether a potential coercing state chooses to work through an IO at all – the coercer may operate unilaterally or with a coalition of the willing. Moreover, the coercer sometimes has a choice among IOs. These choices by themselves send information and have implications for the ability of the international community to screen coercive policies. In this section I extend the logic of the theoretical argument to address two questions. First, under what conditions will a potential coercing state choose to operate through an IO? Second, when IO-based action is chosen, how do coercers choose among the available organizations?

I have so far described formal IOs as possessing some neutrality from state interests, which explains their ability to act as informative agents. However, we can more accurately think of institutional neutrality as varying across all institutions, including among IOs themselves. While there are clearly other important variables, including voting rules, bureaucratic autonomy, and informal sources of leverage by states, I define institutional neutrality in terms of the distribution of preferences among

²⁰ Author's interview with a Turkish diplomat, New York, November 13, 2003.

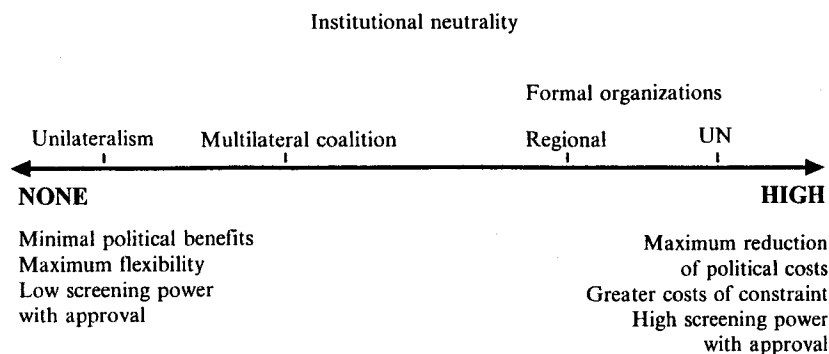


Figure 8.1. Implications of variation in institutional neutrality

its membership. I argue that the screening power of an institution during episodes of military coercion depends importantly on its independence with respect to the interests of the potential coercing state, on the one hand, and how representative it is of international community interests, on the other.

From the perspective of the coercing agent, as the neutrality of institutions increases, so do the constraints – the policy is more likely to be delayed, modified, or blocked altogether. These costs are mirrored commensurately by political benefits: The greater the neutrality of the institution, the more informative is that institution to the international community principals and the lower are the political costs of using force. Variation among institutions in terms of preference distributions thus helps answer the additional question of forum shopping, with each institutional choice offering a mixture of costs and benefits (here I treat multilateralism as an informal institutional form).

Figure 8.1 portrays the tradeoffs associated with achieving authorization from institutions that are more or less neutral, with unilateralism representing a complete absence of independent authorization. Unilateralism allows a coercer to retain full autonomy but does not help reduce international political costs since the choice to go-it-alone tells the international community that the coercive policy is motivated by selfish goals. This can be thought of as a *negative* screen. Thus, we expect to see unilateralism either when coercing states require maximum flexibility or when they anticipate the international political costs of coercion to be low, or both. Ad hoc multilateralism is a middling strategy: Like-minded states do not constrain the coercer as much and are not viewed

as impartial representatives of the international community, thus “coalitions of the willing” produce only modest political benefits. Formal IOs are most neutral due to their standing memberships and are therefore the most informative institutions with respect to the international community. They are the most effective *positive* screening agent. From the coercer’s perspective, involving formal IOs reduces international political costs but (and largely because) it also imposes constraints.

These tradeoffs are captured in two *ceteris paribus* propositions that establish the more general conditions under which coercers will seek IO approval over other options. First, *the lower the value they place on flexibility (i.e. the less sensitive they are to the costs of constraint), the more likely coercers are to turn to IOs*. Second, *the higher the anticipated international political costs, the more likely coercers are to turn to IOs*. When both conditions are met, states are most likely to channel policies through IOs. Two examples – the 1989 Panama invasion (conducted *unilaterally* and without IO approval) and the 2003 Iraq war (conducted *multilaterally* and without IO approval) – illustrate this logic and provide contrasting cases to the 1990–91 Gulf War.

Unilateralism in Panama can be explained by the high value that was placed on flexibility and the modest concern over political costs. Turning to an IO or a multilateral coalition would have been too costly given strategic objectives – to arrest Manuel Noriega, retrieve an imprisoned CIA operative, and overwhelm the Panamanian Defense Force before it could organize – that required surprise and rapid action. Secrecy was of paramount importance, making diplomacy and deliberation impractical (Woodward 1991: 178; Powell 1995: 428). Moreover, the most obvious IO option, the OAS, had proven slow to move. While it had passed a resolution condemning the May 1989 elections, which were marked by fraud and then nullified by Noriega, the organization could not succeed over the next several months in pressuring Noriega to step down and ultimately could not agree on more concrete action (Felton 1989: 2223). The cost of these constraints was simply too high to countenance. In any case, the United States expected reactions to its intervention to be relatively muted. Outside the region, most governments were content to let the United States operate with a free hand in its own sphere of influence.²¹ Latin American countries reacted negatively

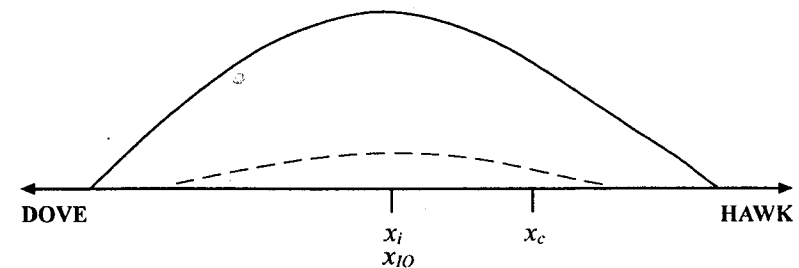
²¹ In general, US policy-makers operate on the assumption that intervention in the Western hemisphere will be less politically costly. Author’s interview with a State Department official, Washington, DC, January 11, 2000.

to the intervention but were too dependent on the United States to retaliate in a meaningful way. As one scholar notes, "the Bush Administration was prepared to weather the inevitable protests since the complainants were either unable or unwilling to make Washington pay any tangible price" (LeoGrande 1990: 619).

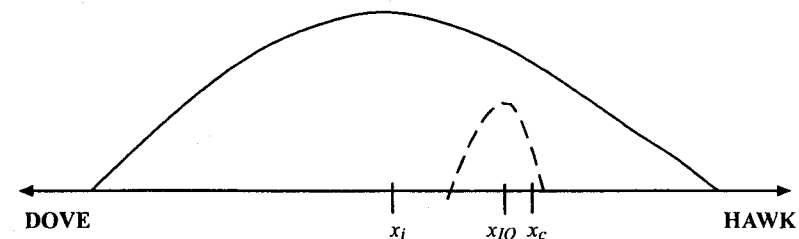
The Middle East, on the other hand, is a more sensitive region for the United States. In the lead-up to the 2003 war, policy-makers were indeed concerned about an international backlash and spent months trying to achieve an explicit Security Council endorsement. However, the United States was not willing to forgo flexibility – in terms of delay and limits on its goal to overthrow Saddam – and this made Security Council approval impossible in the end. The aversion to IO-imposed constraints likely came from two sources. First, there was the lesson from the most recent prior intervention, Kosovo, where NATO members bickered constantly and lowest-common-denominator policies were consistently chosen (ICISS 2001: 59). Second, the effect of the September 11, 2001, attacks was to heighten the US sense of vulnerability. As David Malone notes, "This led to greater hostility in Washington towards attempts at the UN and elsewhere to constrain US power" (Malone 2003: 76). Even in Afghanistan, the Bush Administration had declined an explicit Security Council authorization to intervene "in order to retain as much freedom of action in its response as possible" (Malone 2003: 76). While the concern over international political reactions was still high, as they were at the time of the Gulf War, the United States was not willing to sacrifice flexibility. Unwilling to achieve an IO mandate, the White House focused its efforts on building a coalition and stressing its size and involvement in order to achieve some political cover.

As figure 8.1 illustrates, choices among IOs themselves, at the right end of the continuum, represent a microcosm of the tradeoffs confronted across the continuum. Building again on theories of committee signaling in legislatures, figure 8.2 graphically presents three variations in IO member composition. Assuming that the coercing state is more pro-intervention than the median member of the international community (whose preferences are shown distributed in a roughly normal fashion), the coercer's choice among IOs will determine how much information is sent to foreign leaders and publics. Figure 8.2a represents a situation where the IO membership is both heterogeneous and representative, reflected in a median preference that matches the median preference of the international community. In security matters, the Security Council best matches these characteristics. The distance between the IO's median

a. Heterogeneous IO with representative (moderate) preferences



b. Homogeneous IO with outlier (hawkish) preferences



c. Homogeneous IO with outlier (dovish) preferences

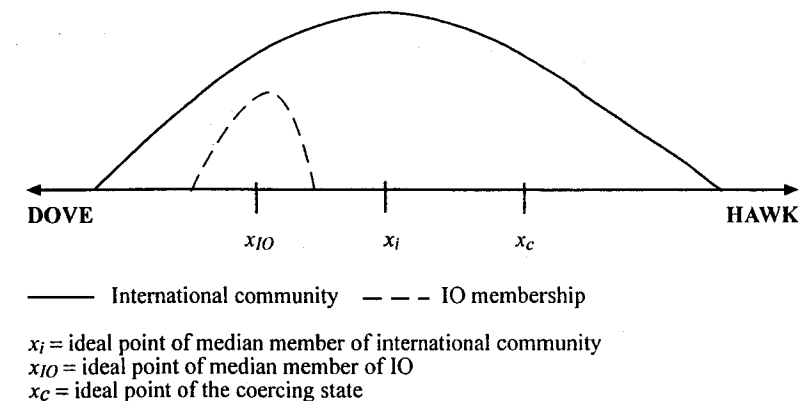


Figure 8.2. Preference distributions regarding military intervention

preference and the coercer's ideal point suggests that the IO is independent with respect to the coercer; the proximity of x_{IO} and x_i implies that information transmission to third parties is efficient, that is, that the IO serves as an informative agent of the international community. Channeling coercion through this IO will likely entail costly constraints – including the possibility of having the policy blocked altogether²² – but will also produce high quality information regarding intentions and policy consequences. In short, the coercer is relinquishing the most authority in return for the greatest political benefits resulting from the IO's screening power.

Figure 8.2b represents another typical case. The IO membership is relatively homogeneous and, though they are less hawkish on average than the coercer, their median preference is much closer to the coercer's than to the median principal's.²³ Because they are less neutral and representative than the IO in figure 8.2a, the coercer is able to retain more flexibility and is more likely to achieve an outcome closer to its ideal. While some information will be transmitted to the international community if coercion is channeled through such an IO, this choice of forum is less effective as a mechanism for lowering international political costs. This explains why regional bodies, such as the OAS and NATO, have a limited ability to legitimize US interventions (Slater 1969). Authorization of the 1983 Grenada invasion by the obscure Organization of East Caribbean States did not prevent widespread condemnation of the action by US allies and through a General Assembly vote. As the Kosovo example shows, regional IOs tend to be chosen when a coercer cannot achieve Security Council approval, when the anticipated political costs are quite low (the humanitarian goals of the Kosovo intervention provided a widely accepted justification), and when a relevant IO is available.

Finally, figure 8.2c represents an unusual (but plausible) case and an exception to the rule regarding committee composition. In the context of legislatures, Krehbiel recognizes the possibility that a homogeneous

²² Indeed, even the United States, the Council's most powerful member, has been blocked by vetoes or threats thereof on multiple occasions, most recently in Kosovo and Iraq. In the latter case, the United States also would not have achieved the nine-vote threshold for a resolution to pass, a reflection of the body's diversity and independence.

²³ A graphic representation of a multilateral coalition would look most like the IO in figure 8.2b, though with less variance in preferences and an ideal point closer to the coercer's.

committee composed of preference outliers might make a claim that goes against expectations. In this case, the signal is exceptionally informative and the potential to screen effectively is very high. For example, if an agriculture committee proposes to reduce subsidies or if a defense committee proposes to cut military spending, this sends clear information to the floor that these policies are reasonable (Krehbiel 1991: 83). An analogy in IR might be a case where the Arab League endorses intervention against an Arab state.

The coercer's choice among institutional alternatives – from unilateralism, to ad hoc multilateralism, to a choice among IOs – is ultimately determined by its goals and the circumstances of the case, which influence how sensitive the coercer is to the costs and benefits outlined above. It is important to note, however, that the coercer may be constrained by the limited availability of appropriate IOs in a given case.²⁴ Given the alternatives available, a coercer will seek to work through an institution that is as neutral as necessary, but no more.

CONCLUSION

The central political role for IOs during episodes of military intervention is to act as a screening mechanism for leaders and publics around the world. IOs act as an agent of the international community whose function is to transmit information about coercing states and their proposals to use force. I have offered a theoretical argument for how this information transmission works and for why, and under what conditions, powerful states channel their coercive policies through IOs – as an alternative to unilateralism or ad hoc multilateralism – despite the costs of doing so.

With respect to their informative properties, a key institutional feature of international institutions is their membership composition. IO memberships that are heterogeneous and broadly representative are able to provide information that is viewed as more credible to the international community, allowing them to perform the screening function more effectively. Regional organizations and coalitions of the willing, by contrast, are not as neutral and therefore not as informative. These agent characteristics help explain the widely observed phenomenon that the

²⁴ Hawkins et al. (this volume) make a similar point when they note the paucity of IO agents from which state principals can choose.

Security Council plays a uniquely powerful role as a “legitimizing” of state policies involving the use of force (Voeten 2005; Hurd 2002; Thompson 2006). As my case study demonstrates, by working through the Security Council in the 1990–91 conflict with Iraq, the United States was able to send information regarding its intentions to other state leaders and to send policy-relevant information to publics abroad, information that increased international support for the intervention.

Applications of principal-agent theory to international organizations have tended to focus on a few “usual suspects” in the landscape of IOs, many of which are represented in the contributions to this volume – e.g. European Union institutions, the World Bank, the IMF, and certain UN agencies. These organizations are intrinsically important and clearly worthy of study, but they are not representative insofar as they have unusually large and influential bureaucracies. Hawkins et al. explicitly argue that IOs are best understood as bureaucracies.²⁵ And in most treatments of IOs as informative agents – including Lisa Martin and Mark Pollack’s contributions to this volume – their ability to supply information depends on the expertise of an independent staff. However, as this chapter illustrates, we need not focus on bureaucracies to understand IOs as agents. This is an important point since many IOs have no meaningful staff, let alone an autonomous bureaucracy. My theoretical discussion of membership composition and preference heterogeneity points to different sources of IO influence and should serve to broaden our theoretical understanding of delegation to IOs.

²⁵ On bureaucracies as a source of IO autonomy, see Barnett and Finnemore 1999.

Dutiful agents, rogue actors, or both? Staffing, voting rules, and slack in the WHO and WTO

ANDREW P. CORTELL AND SUSAN PETERSON

These days, IOs seem to have few friends and many critics. Their detractors alternately portray them as witless tools of the United States and other powerful states (Mutume 2005; Oatley and Yackee 2000) or as rogue actors who, in escaping the control of the states that created and comprise them, threaten national sovereignty (Miller 2005). Like most of the chapters in this volume, we reject such oversimplifications. The institutional design of some IOs allows them to engage in behavior undesired by their member states, while others are highly constrained and incapable of such independence. Nevertheless, even those agents capable of slack usually act as their principals intend. In 2003, the World Health Organization (WHO) took the unprecedented step of directly warning travelers away from countries with significant outbreaks of Sudden Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS). Both before and after this radical step, however, and for much of its history, the WHO staff eschewed actions that violate its contract with its members. In recent years, similarly, the World Trade Organization’s (WTO) Appellate Body (AB) granted non-state actors standing in the WTO dispute settlement process, despite clear evidence that the member states saw the IO as overstepping its authority. Like the WHO actions, however, WTO behavior proved the exception to the rule; the WTO most often carries out its delegated functions in much the way its members intend.

We thank the editors and other participants in the project and especially the following colleagues: Karen Alter, Martha Finnemore, Erica Gould, Darren Hawkins, Wade Jacoby, David Lake, Lisa Martin, Jonathan Mercer, Daniel Nielson, Heather Scully, and Michael Tierney.