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Transcending boundaries: A thesis on applying collective action theory on the development of intergovernmental organizations and their member states, from a historical institutionalist perspective

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Transcending boundaries

A thesis on applying collective action theory on the development of intergovernmental organizations and their member states, from a historical institutionalist perspective

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Abstract

This thesis provides a novel application and combination of rational choice theory and historical institutionalism, through applying Mancur Olson's rationalist theory of collective action from a historical institutionalist perspective. Taking on this unique point of view, this thesis investigates the scope of regime complexity intergovernmental organizations experience and the development of state membership of intergovernmental organizations. The level of observation of this research is intergovernmental organizations, specifically those organizations in the policy fields of defence and security; finance and economy; and climate action. A historical overview of the emergence of international institutions shows that significant global events such as large scale wars and rapid technical developments have played an important role in the creation of international institutions. This is also the case for the development of international institutions in the three policy fields this thesis focuses on. To test the scope of regime complexity intergovernmental organizations experience, the self-defined goals (either narrow or encompassing) of the included intergovernmental organizations, as well as the amount of relationships these organizations engage in is looked at. Furthermore the possible connection between the development of state membership of intergovernmental organizations and the policy area(s) an intergovernmental organization operates in is investigated. To analyse the regime complexity and state membership, a unique database of intergovernmental organizations is composed based on self-assigned goals of these organizations and by grouping them into one or more of the three researched policy areas. A further distinction is then made within the resulting database of intergovernmental organizations, depending on whether information on state membership of intergovernmental organizations throughout the years was available for the organizations in the database. The results of testing the expectations show that the intergovernmental organizations in the database experience limited levels of regime complexity. This is indicated by that there are almost twice as much intergovernmental organizations active in just one of the researched policy areas. However those organizations that are active in two or three of the researched policy areas engage in more relationships with other organizations. The results also show that the amount of member states of intergovernmental organizations in the database has increased rapidly over the years, but the pace in which this increase happens depends on the policy field the organizations are active in. The biggest increase in state membership is visible with organizations that are active in all three researched policy areas.

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Introduction

Intergovernmental relationships between countries are not a new phenomenon, especially in the Western world. The Congress of Vienna (1814-1815), which took place in the aftermath of the Napoleonic Wars, is probably one of the historically most significant examples of a large scale coming together of the major political powers in the world, and many international congresses followed (Kwan, 2017). It would take up until the end of the 19th century however until intergovernmental relationships were institutionalized, taking the shape of international organizations based on state membership: the first intergovernmental organizations were born. Initially these organizations were mostly centred around one specific issue. The ending of the First World War in 1918 spurred on the creation of universal membership organizations, organizations with a large amount of member states and active in several different policy areas. Since then, the number of intergovernmental organizations rapidly increased. This trend was given an impulse after the Second World War and during the Cold War. Currently it is hard to imagine a policy field or topic without an intergovernmental organization involved (Panke & Stapel, 2022).

Today the international community is experiencing a rise of nationalism and protectionism, while the issues that need to be dealt with ask for global cooperation. The shift from evermore globalization to a more nationalist and protectionist approach is in a way visible in the realm of global governance. Although within international organizations some member states try to push a more nationalist agenda, governments keep organizing in international structures as they realize that they are not able to solve current global issues on their own (Brown, 2022). However, with many intergovernmental organizations existing and operating around the globe, some are bound to overlap and maybe even obstruct each other. Additionally, not only the amount of intergovernmental organizations has grown explosively in the past decades, the number of member states these organizations represent is also increasing rapidly. This leads to the research question of this thesis:

“What is the scope of regime complexity for intergovernmental organizations and the scope of increased state membership of intergovernmental organizations?”

This thesis takes on a historical institutionalist perspective, while applying Mancur Olson’s theory of collective action to the subjects of intergovernmental organizations and their member states. This is a novel approach to the theory of collective action. The theory of collective action originally stems from the realm of economics, but is widely applied to analyse issues of political science and/or public administration. Most research on collective action issues focuses on the domestic level, where the main actors are national interest groups like labour unions or other national lobby groups. This thesis pushes the boundaries of collective action theory, by applying the theory on a supranational level, with the main actors being national governments that cooperate in intergovernmental organizations.

Another novel aspect of this thesis lies in combining collective action theory, originally a rational institutionalist theory, and historical institutionalism, a theory that takes on a more empirical approach. This research proposes that these two approaches can complement each other: collective action theory provides in the rational analysis of actor behaviour, while historical institutionalism provides the empirical context in which actors engage in certain behaviour.

The research of this thesis proceeds as follows: the theoretical framework presents the core concepts of what it means to take on a historical institutionalist perspective, as well as the basics of Mancur Olson’s theory of collective action. The theoretical framework also presents a novel way of combining historical institutionalism and the theory of collective action and how the theory of collective action can be applied in an international

context. A short overview of the emergence of global governance and international institutions in general is presented in the second chapter. This chapter further focuses on the policy fields that are of interest in this thesis, these fields being defence and security; finance and economy; and climate action. In the chapter that follows the expectations that help answer the research question are formulated. The first two expectations test the scope of regime complexity intergovernmental organizations experience, while the third expectation is concerned with state membership of intergovernmental organizations in the researched policy areas. The fourth chapter shows the methods used to analyse the expectations, as well as the selection of intergovernmental organizations that together form the database the expectations are tested with. In the chapter of analysis the expectations are either rejected or accepted. Finally, the research question is answered in the conclusion of this thesis and possibilities for further research are constructed.

Chapter 1: Theoretical framework

In this chapter first the core concepts of what it means to take on historical institutionalist perspective are presented. Then the core concepts of Mancur Olson's theory of collective action are explained. Lastly, two novel ways of applying the theory of collective action that this thesis uses are presented.

1.1 Historical institutionalism

Historical institutionalism is one of the better known new institutionalist approaches used in political science and public administration. The subject matter of historical institutionalist research mainly consists of vast and substantive questions within political science and public administration. In essence, taking on a historical institutionalist perspective means paying attention to three aspects (Pierson & Skocpol, 2002):

1. *Substantive problems*: Historical institutionalism focuses on substantive problems, on the big issues and phenomena in our social environment, such as democratization, the development of international institutions or state formation. To analyse these big societal issues, historical institutionalism requires analysis from a meso- or macro-level.

2. *Temporal processes*: When researching these substantive problems, historical institutionalists pay specific attention to certain time-frames, sequences and other temporal processes, in search of causality and long-term patterns.

3. *Attention to contexts*: While considering substantive problems within a certain time-frame, historical institutionalists pay attention to the surroundings their investigated institutions operate in. From a historical institutionalist perspective, the surrounding context influences the (shaping of) interactions between institutions.

What distinguishes historical institutionalism from other types of new institutionalist theories, is its aforementioned focus on temporal processes that influence the origins and changes of institutions in political relations. By using this approach, historical institutionalists not only try to understand the origins of key political institutions, but also their tendency to stick to a behavioural trajectory once they have set foot on a certain path (Fioretos, Falletti, & Steingate, 2016).

1.1.1 Critical junctures and path dependency

Within historical institutionalism, the behaviour of institutions is determined by the appearances of critical junctures, the subsequent path dependency of institutional behaviour and the tendency of institutions to maintain the status quo once a certain path is chosen. Not any and every historical event can be qualified as a critical juncture. A critical juncture appears when certain historical and other contextual events result in a short period of time where there is a moment of institutional indeterminism. This creates a situation in which several choices open up, more choices than usual, and there is a higher probability of individual action having actual impact on the trajectory of an institution. Powerful actors can make use of critical junctures to steer the future trajectory of institutions in a particular direction (Capoccia & Kelemen, 2007). Once an institution has ventured onto a certain path during a critical juncture, it is not easy to backtrack this decision and go down another path instead. This is the concept of path dependency: actors are almost never able to reverse the choices they made during a critical juncture, so they are stuck on a particular chosen path. The choices taken on this path lead to the creation of governance structures and institutions, such as intergovernmental organizations, that over time often become mainly interested in securing their own existence. Given enough time, it can happen that the governance structures and institutions that were created while going down a specific path have strayed far from the original intention of the decision to take a certain path during a critical juncture (Mahoney, 2001).

In short: taking on a historical institutionalist perspective means investigating substantive societal issues, over longer periods of time while paying attention to the contexts in which these societal issues take place. The behaviour of actors is then largely determined by the appearances of critical junctures and the choices actors make during these critical junctures. The subsequent decision-making room actors then have is limited by path dependency.

1.2 Mancur Olson's theory of collective action

One of the most influential and encompassing contributions on collective action theory is made by Mancur Olson (Holahan & Lubell, 2022), whose logic of collective action is referred to in this thesis when collective action theory is mentioned. At the root of collective action theory lies group behaviour. Generally, it is thought that if a group of actors has common interests, they will work together to pursue this common interest. Eventually the actors create governance structures to pursue the interests of their group more efficiently and on a larger scale: the actors' self-interests evolve into the interests of the group the newly founded governance structure represents. This sounds abstract, but this process is visible in our day to day lives. Usually governance structures of collective action take the form of action groups such as labour unions or other types of special interest groups. Common denominator of these groups is that they are based on individual membership of collective action groups (Olson, 2022).

According to Olson, special interest organizations attract or repel members by making use of selective incentives. Individuals are affected positively or negatively by the selective incentives of an organization, depending on whether the individuals are member of a specific organization and so contribute to the activities of that organization. Sticking with the example of labour unions, negative selective incentives are for example compulsory fees for labour union members to the union, in return for a voice in the decision-making process of their labour union. Positive selective incentives can be individual advantages for organization members, such as better health care insurance deals for union members, in return for membership fees (Olson, 2022).

One of the most persistent challenges with collective action lies in creating consensus about what the interests and goals of the specific collective action group are. Usually, more or less every member of a collective action groups receives the same good, level of representation or whatever it is that the collective action group provides as all other members. This means that all members in general have to agree about what product the group provides or what actions the collective action group undertakes. Reaching group consensus is usually easier if the group members are more homogenous rather than heterogenous, according to Mancur Olson (Olson, 2022).

1.3 Pushing the boundaries of collective action theory

This research applies the theory of collective action in two novel ways: more broadly by applying collective action theory with a historical institutionalist perspective, and more specifically by applying collective action theory in an international context.

1.3.1 Collective action theory from a historical institutionalist perspective

Collective action theory is classified as a rational institutionalist theory (Olson, 2022). This assumes that all actors involved act purely and solely out of self-interest. This also assumes that actors are capable of rationally considering all available options of action for them, and make a well thought through decision how to reach what is in their best interests at the lowest possible cost (Shepsle, 2008). More recently rational choice institutionalists also started to pay attention to phenomena outside of the interest-maximizing realm, such as contextual factors, the behaviour of institutions (which originally had no place in rational choice theories) and international coalition behaviour (Hall & Taylor, 1996).

Recall the great importance historical institutionalists pay to contextual factors: the nuancing development already made by rational choice institutionalists opens the door to incorporating bits and pieces of historical institutionalism into rational choice theory and vice versa. Rational choice theory however can be opened up further to be able to take on a historical institutionalist perspective. A possible merger of both approaches results in the following reasoning (Pierson, 2000): *collective action outcome X exists because it serves function Y taking into account the existence of contextual factors $Z_1 + Z_2 \dots + Z_a$* . In this instance, X is the collective action that is the result of the coming together of individuals in collective action groups. In this reasoning Y is the rational choice component, as it represents the interest-maximizing behaviour of the individuals that come together, an essential component of rational choice theory. The contextual factors that have created the environment in which Y was able to lead to collective action X are then represented with Z , which is the historical institutionalist component. There can be one significant contextual factor, but there can be more factors present as well. This is why Z can be cumulative, and so is described with Z_a . This all is visualized in the following formula:

$$X = Y + (Z_a)$$

Before applying this formula, let us look at the second novel way in which this research applies the theory of collective action.

1.3.2 Taking collective action theory to an international context

The theory of collective action has mainly been applied in a national context. The main actors of collective action theory then are individuals within a country, with similar interest, who organize into collective action groups to represent that specific group of people that have come together due to the selective incentives of these special interest organizations. While international collective action is not a totally new concept, Mancur Olson gives barely any attention to the international level in his theory of collective action. However, with increasing globalization and more and more issues that transcend national borders, the question rises whether the classic theory of collective action is also applicable in an international context.

From an international point of view, the actors taking part in international collective action are state governments, who come together to form international organizations in order to solve mutual issues state governments are not able to solve individually. Attracting and repelling members through positive or negative selective incentives is also applicable on an international level. An example of positive selective incentives for member states can be found with international organizations concerned with trade agreements, such as the European Union and the World Trade Organization. Members of these organizations provide funds in order to keep the organizations running, for which they receive trade benefits in return compared to non-members. The fees member states have to pay in order to become member of international organizations in general can then be seen as negative selective incentives, repelling those states that do not want to financially contribute to the establishment and activities of an international organization.

Moving beyond attracting member states to create or become member of international organizations, the issue of reaching consensus among members of a collective action group also rises on an international level. In this case, the interests of the member states of international organizations have to align with each other, in order for international organizations to be able to function at all. An added difficulty that arises on the international level is that usually domestic goals and interests of states have to align with the goals and interests of the international organizations states are member of (Ötker, 2014). With the ongoing power struggle at the national level between collective interest groups, national governments can struggle with creating clear national interests and translating these into policies. Changing national government structures and ideologies can also influence the national goals and interests of states, which can in turn affect the way member states

act in international organizations (Reinalda, 2009). Taking all this into account, creating consensus among the member states of an international organization can prove to be very difficult.

Remember the formula of the previous section, which depicts the basic line of reasoning for applying collective action theory from a historical institutionalist perspective. This basic formula can also be applied to collective action theory on an international level. In this case the line of reasoning would go as follows: *international organizations are created by member states (X) because this best serves the founders' best interests (Y) taking into account the existence of contextual factors $Z_1 + Z_2 \dots + Z_a$* . In this case, X still represents collective action as the outcome, only now on an international level, with collective action taking the shape of international organizations. In this case state governments come together to establish the collective action group, this research being interested in state governments coming together to establish intergovernmental organizations. The rational choice element of Y and historical institutionalist element of Z_a stay the same, with Y in this case representing the maximizing behaviour of state governments.

This concludes the theoretical part of this thesis. Having provided the theoretical building blocks of this thesis, let us dive deeper into the application of this novel intersection between collective action theory and historical institutionalism.

Chapter 2: Historical overview and narrowing down policy areas

As this research takes on a historical institutionalist perspective, some base knowledge on how international organizations developed over time is fitting. This chapter will provide a short overview of the emergence and development of international institutions throughout history. Then this chapter narrows down to the key developments of international institutions active in the three policy areas this research focuses on, namely defence and security; finance and economy; and climate policies.

2.1 The emergence of global governance and international institutions

From the Middle Ages, through the early modern period, until well into the 1800s, the international relations taking place were very regionally focused. There was limited interdependence among countries. Most countries were largely self-sufficient and had little need for and little possibilities to maintain connections with other countries over vast distances. This includes lightly used economic and political ties, even between Western countries and the overseas territories they had occupied during this time period (Baylis, Smith, & Owens, 2020). In the second half of the 19th century however, the world went through a revolution of information technology, making fast communication possible globally. It seemed that the world had become ‘smaller’ and more connected than ever before. As a result, many multinational agreements emerged and this period of time signalled the start of a global economy. This resulted into the creation of new international actors, the first wave of international organizations (Lopez-Claros, Dahl & Groff, 2020). The international organizations established in the 19th century reflect the issues and developments of that time period, such as the International Telecommunications Union (1864) and the International Bureau of Weights and Measures (1875). These organizations gained influence and importance in the practice of global governance throughout the decades (Baylis, Smith and Owens, 2020). The World Wars that followed in the 20th century proved to be a jump start for the creation of international organizations, especially the Second World War. This time period experienced the introduction of universal membership organizations: organizations with broad missions and all countries in the world as member states. Think of the creation of the League of Nations in 1920 and its successor, the United Nations established in 1945. From then the process of never before seen globalization started, and with it the creation of many more international organizations. Recently though opinions against the creation and functioning of international organizations are coming up: the structure of many international organizations would be outdated, unfit to face the current global challenges and unable to adapt to the fast changing reality they operate in (Lopez-Claros, Dahl & Groff, 2020).

2.2 Focus on three policy areas

The global community faces many challenges in a variety of policy areas, and for virtually all of these challenges international organizations have been created. This research focuses specifically on intergovernmental organizations that try to deal with three of possibly the most pressing issues of the 21st century: security challenges, economic challenges and climate challenges. Where security and defence issues, as well as global economic challenges are issues that have been on the radar of the international community for a long time, the issue of climate change is relatively new on the global agenda. Let us dive into a quick overview of the development of international institutions in the three policy areas.

2.2.1 The challenge of global defence and security

Security threats have been (and still are) very present in our day to day lives. Defence and security policies have therefore always been one of the focal points of states and global governance systems alike. Several

systems of regular congresses to resolve and/or prevent interstate wars have existed throughout history, such as the Concert of Europe and the Hague system during the 19th century. These periodical conferences initially only involved the global superpowers, but later on smaller, less powerful states also took part. One of the main contributions of the conference systems to international politics is the notion that the practice of global security is a matter for all states, regardless of their power in the global governance system. Though the success rate of these conference systems varied greatly throughout the years and depending on the incidents that had to be resolved, these multilateral conference systems laid down the groundworks of the institutionalization of global defence and security organizations (Reinalda, 2009).

The First World War resulted in unprecedented scales of death and destruction, only to be overshadowed by the horrors of the Second World War that followed just two decades later. The League of Nations was an universal membership organization, the first of its kind. It was established in the aftermath of the First World War with the goals to promote international cooperation and achieve international peace and security. The League however proved to be unable to realise these goals, and after the end of the Second World War it was dismantled and succeeded by the United Nations (Reinalda, 2009).

During the Cold war, new alliances and international organizations were formed that reflected the global divide between the East and the West. Some still exist, such as NATO, others have died out, such as the Warsaw Pact. The United Nations has struggled with peacekeeping during the process of decolonization and the collapse of the Soviet Union. Still the United Nations remains a central player in global defence and security policies, with its main tactic of preventing armed conflicts and focusing on good diplomatic ties between countries (Reinalda, 2009).

2.2.2 Global economic and financial policies

Economic cooperation is an ancient concept, with international economic and trade institutions such as the Hansa developing as early as the Middle Ages (Spruyt, 1994). The end of the 18th century was a turning point: the concept of free global trade started to develop and due to technical innovations a high mobility of produced goods became possible. To facilitate this new situation, eventually international organizations were created to make trade between countries as easy as possible. For example the International Union for the Publication of Customs and Tariffs was established in 1890, of which many industrializing states as well as their colonies were member. On a more regional scale several systems of multilateral conferences regarding economical topics started to appear, ranging from international working unions to infrastructure organizations and patent systems (Reinalda, 2009).

The First World War had an enormous impact on global economy and trade. As a universal organization, the League of Nations was also involved in international economic policy, leading to the creation of the International Labour Organization (ILO) as its only specialized agency. The United Nations continued to be a central player in global economic policy after the League of Nations was discontinued. The ILO however gained such a level of independence from the League that it continued as an organization on its own, and still exists today. During the Great Depression in the 1930s, a wave of economic protectionism engulfed the Western countries, making them apprehensive against international cooperation on economic policy. After the Second World War however, there was a resurgence of international cooperation in the shape of many new economic and financial international organizations, mainly brought to life to be able to finance rebuilding Western Europe and ensure economic cooperation in Western Europe (Reinalda, 2009).

Decolonization resulted in many newly formed countries, who during the Cold War had to choose whether to model their economy after the United States or the Soviet Union. These new countries also saw the success regional economic cooperation had in Western Europe, and founded organizations themselves to cooperate on an economic level. The collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991 came with a paradigm shift for most former Soviet countries, who now chose to model their economies more like Western countries and entered economic

international organizations they were not allowed to enter under the Soviet regime (Reinalda, 2009).

Currently the global financial policy landscape recognizes that, even though the national political environments are crucial for dealing with financial issues, the most pressing issues have to be dealt with on an international level. International organizations have a big role to play in this scenario. Focal points in global economic policy are the equitable distribution of wealth around the globe, efficiency in providing public goods, and creating a sustainable global economy for future generations to enjoy (Alonso & Ocampo, 2015).

2.2.3 Climate challenges

International environmental action dates back to the second half of the 19th century, when in 1860 a society for animal protection came together. The industrial revolution caused rapid urbanization in industrializing countries and initiated large scale infrastructure projects. This had great impact on nature and the environment as a whole, so in the 19th century private organizations emerged that were concerned with the conservation of nature. The outbreak of the First and Second World War proved an obstacle to the institutionalization of environmental protection. In the post-war period, top priority was rebuilding the global economy, and concerns about the negative impact this would probably have on nature and the environment were largely discarded. It was not until the discovery of the greenhouse effect and increasing deforestation in the 1980s that environmental problems gained the interest of global governance makers. Still the emerging international organizations concerned with environmental policy were relatively small compared to the existing international organizations concerned with global security or economic policy. Nevertheless, global environmental policy gained increasing attention, especially on the topics of nature preservation and human living environment. Along with this attention came several international organizations, of which many find their roots in the UN-system, such as the United Nations Climate Change Conferences (Reinalda, 2009).

Contrary to the policy areas of global defence and financial policies, global environmental policy is based on a highly scientific debate. Individual scientists are the key players in getting environmental issues on the international public agenda. This creates an interesting setting for international organizations concerned with global environmental policy, as they too largely rely on scientists and are still getting used to the political game in international governance. Currently climate change has globally been accepted as a real and very pressing issue, but the challenge lies in whether the current international system is able to take the step beyond promising resolutions, and actually take action (Gupta, 2014).

To conclude: in the policy areas of defence and security as well as economy and finance, the development of international institutions throughout history was relatively similar. First there was mostly regional cooperation, then systems of multilateral conferences, followed by further institutionalization and the founding of international organizations. Global environmental governance has experienced a shorter period of development, starting out as private initiatives only to relatively recently be picked up by the public sector as well, and has always been inferior in size and funding when compared to the other two policy areas.

What also comes forward from this short overview of the development of international organizations throughout the years, is that the line of reasoning presented in the previous chapter seems to be applicable in practice. International organizations like, for example the United Nations, are established by member states (X) because they think this is the best way to ensure global peace in the years to come (Y) in the aftermath of the Second World War (Z_1) and because the League of Nations has failed to realize the same goal (Z_2). The International Labour Organization was established by the member states of the League of Nations (X) because they thought this was the best way to protect the working class globally (Y) in the aftermath of the First World War (Z_1) and was able to live on because of its independent status of the League of Nations (Z_2).

In the next chapter the expectations of this research are presented, to see whether these different developments have affected the intergovernmental organizations and their member states active in these policy areas.

Chapter 3: Expectations

This chapter presents three expectations that are used to test and formulate an answer to the research question. The first two expectations are formulated to test two aspects of the scope of regime complexity intergovernmental organizations experience. The third expectation focuses on the development of state membership of intergovernmental organizations. Important to mention here is that, although the previous chapters have talked about international organizations in general to provide the necessary background information, the expectations will focus on intergovernmental organizations specifically.

3.1 International regime complexity and collective action theory

As issues are becoming increasingly complex, intertwined, and transnational, countries realise that they simply cannot deal with these issues on their own. Countries start to cooperate with each other, usually through international institutions like intergovernmental organizations. Over the past century the amount of intergovernmental organizations has grown rapidly. Due to the sheer amount of intergovernmental organizations, institutional overlap amongst these organisations is inevitable. This phenomenon is referred to as international regime complexity. The overlap between organizations can be in regards to policy field and/or the territory the organization operates in. High levels of overlap between organizations can make it difficult for them to perform their self-imposed tasks (Alter & Raustiala, 2018). As a result of increasing issue complexity and organization density in global governance systems, intergovernmental institutions become more interdependent on each other to be able to function (Brosig, 2011). Member states of intergovernmental organizations often react to increasingly complex global issues by expanding the policy areas existing international institutions operate in, and grant these institutions the sovereignty needed to be able do deal with current issues (Haftel & Lenz, 2021).

Mancur Olson's theory of collective action follows a similar line of reasoning. Remember that through the process of collective action, organizations are founded on the basis of similar interests and members being attracted or repelled by the selective incentives these organizations use. Additionally, collective action theory, albeit implicitly, touches on regime complexity in the sense of policy overlap and whether institutions actively participate in upholding relations with other institutions. Collective action theory distinguishes encompassing organizations from more narrow organizations, defining the former as organizations representing large populations within different policy areas and defining the latter as organizations representing a smaller population on a (small portion of a) specific policy area. According to collective action theory, most organizations in a country can be defined as narrow organizations. The level of encompassment of organizations affects the way they interact with other organizations. More encompassing organizations represent a larger, more diverse population, and have to take this into account with all of their actions. It is in their better interest to act in such a way that is rewarding for society as a whole, and in doing this they are forced to engage in relations with other organizations. Organizations that are more narrow defined, generally do not have to deal with these considerations, as long as the population they represent are satisfied with the performance of the organization. Often narrow defined organizations have no need for much interaction with other organizations (Olson, 2022).

When applying the theory of collective action in an international context, the reasoning goes as follows. The dichotomy of encompassing and narrow organizations can also be applied on international organizations. Compared to organizations on the national level, there will be a higher amount of encompassing defined organizations (international organizations active in multiple policy field), to be able to deal with rising issue complexity in international governance. There however will be more narrow defined international organizations than encompassing organizations if the theory of collective action is to uphold. This then is the first expectation:

» **Expectation 1:** There are more narrow defined intergovernmental organizations than encompassing intergovernmental organizations.

The assumption collective action theory makes about organizations engaging in relationships with other organizations can be applied on an international level, in this research specifically intergovernmental organizations, as well. Following the theory's line of reasoning, more encompassing defined intergovernmental organizations will actively engage in relations with other intergovernmental organizations, as they represent large portions of the world population and have to consider what is best for the entire world. This notion is taken to the extreme by the existence of universal membership organizations, like the United Nations, that represent literally the entire world population. Many narrow defined intergovernmental organizations exists as well, who are not expected to participate as actively in inter-organizational relationships if the theory of collective action also upholds on an international level. This then is the second expectation:

- » **Expectation 2:** Encompassing intergovernmental organizations participate in more in relationships with other organizations than narrow defined intergovernmental organizations.

3.2 Increasing number of member states of intergovernmental organizations

Basically all internationally recognized states are member of one, and more often than not more than one intergovernmental organizations. Being a member of international organizations is not a prerequisite for (mostly newly formed) states to be recognized as a state, but becoming member of organizations like the United Nations does influence the international credibility of states (United Nations, n.d.). With the assumption that all states are member states of at least one international organization, this means that states either choose to join existing organizations or found new organizations themselves. There are pros and cons to both options. Joining existing organizations is often the less costly option, and new members can benefit and learn from the current members. However when joining existing organizations, there can be a discrepancy between the needs of new members and what the organizations actually are able to offer. This issue is avoided when states decide to found a new international organization, as this organization can be entirely catered to their specific needs. Creating new organizations is a costly endeavour however, which can be a hurdle states choose not to take (Poast & Urpelainen, 2013). Focusing on when states decide to join existing organizations, specifically intergovernmental organizations, states do this because they expect some sort of benefit for them by joining an intergovernmental organization. States can join many intergovernmental organizations hoping that membership of some of these organizations will result in significant benefits for them. In reality states act more strategically and look at features such as institutional structure and current member states before they decide if they want to become a member as well (Boehmer & Nordstrom, 2008). Large scale decolonization after the end of the Second World War and the collapse of the Soviet Union resulted in many countries gaining their independence during the second half of the 20th century (The World Factbook, n.d.). The increasing amount of countries in the world means that since the second half of the 20th century there are more countries that are able to become members of international organizations in the first place, which, because of reasons stated earlier, is an attractive thing to do for these countries.

In Mancur Olson's theory of collective action, quite some attention is given to the amount of members there are in organizations that were established through collective action. According to collective action theory, the smaller and the more homogenous the actors that make up an organization are, the easier they will be able to reach group consensus and act as an organization. Smaller groups experience more individual influence and individual benefits from their membership of an organization. With every additional member, the influence of each individual on the decision making of the organization decreases a little. Collective action theory also poses that the benefits individuals in an organization experience decrease as more individuals become member of that organization. However, more members in an organization can also translate into an organization having more resources at their disposal, as each new member brings in human capital as well as actual capital. So depending on the goals of the organization, every organization needs to find a balance in the ideal number of members (Olson, 2022).

When looking at the practice of states joining intergovernmental organizations with the theory of collective action as laid down by Mancur Olson, they seem to contradict. From a state's point of view it is usually in their best interest to join international organizations: they can learn from other member states, gain international credibility, and above all benefit from being part of the international organization. From an organizational point of view an evermore growing number of member states can negatively impact the decision-making power of the organization. Hypothetically, this can lead to current member states of organizations trying to prevent future members from entering the organization too quickly, to prevent the organization from becoming ungovernable. In a way this happens by organizations setting up requirements states have to adhere to before they can become a member state. Adhering to these requirements guarantees that states have reached a certain level of readiness and homogeneity with the current member states, that can ensure the functioning of international organizations.

As the effectiveness of intergovernmental organizations is very difficult to measure, this research focuses on the increasing and/or decreasing membership rate of intergovernmental organizations. Countries' policies on each of the three researched policy areas can differ greatly, which in turn can affect their behaviour in whether or not they become member states of intergovernmental organizations. If this is true, this should be reflected in state memberships rates of intergovernmental organization based on what policy area they are active in. This then is the third and last expectation:

- » **Expectation 3:** State membership rates of intergovernmental organizations differ depending on what policy area or area's the intergovernmental organizations are active in.

Chapter 4: Methods

This chapter explains the way the database used in this research is composed and what its sources of information are. Then the modes of analysis of the database is elaborated on, followed by a reflection on the validity and reliability of this research.

4.1 Data collection

Let us take a look at the databases used to compile the database for this research and the way organizations that are subject of this research have been selected.

4.1.1 Yearbook of International Organizations

The dataset of the Yearbook of International Organizations is the starting point for the database of this research. This is the most up to date dataset available that provides comprehensive information about all kinds of international organizations. The Yearbook includes information about organizations ranging from universal membership organizations, to international funds or banks, and even systematic information on treaties. For most organizations the Yearbook includes general information such as the founding date, the location of its headquarters, member countries, main decision-making organs, relations with other organizations in the Yearbook, main subjects of the organizations and information on many more categories (Union of International Associations, n.d.).

Due to the scope and feasibility of this research, this research specifically focuses on intergovernmental organizations. The Yearbook of International Organizations is filtered in such a way that only the intergovernmental organizations remain, including those that are dormant or dissolved. This resulted in 300 intergovernmental organizations. A complete description of the filters used to come to this number of organization is available in Appendix 1.

In the Yearbook of International Organizations for almost all intergovernmental organizations information about the goals and objectives of these organizations is available. These goals and objectives have then been linked to one or more corresponding United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Based on the description of all SDGs (United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, n.d.), five SDGs are chosen that correspond the best with the three policy areas this research focuses on. Table 1 shows what SDGs (including their description) are chosen that best fit each policy area.

Table 1

Researched policy areas and their corresponding SDGs

Defence and security	Economy and finance	Climate
SDG 16: Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels	SDG 8: Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all	SDG 12: Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns.
	SDG 9: Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization and foster innovation.	SDG 13: Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts.

After selecting those intergovernmental organizations whose subject and/or goals correspond with one or more of the selected SDGs as categorized by the Yearbook of International Organizations, 189 intergovernmental organizations remain. In Appendix 2 all intergovernmental organizations included in the database for this research are listed.

4.1.2 Correlates of War datasets

The Correlates of War project aims to collect reliable quantitative data in the field of international relations. Several comprehensive datasets on varying topics, such as war data, data on global alliances and world religion data are amongst the results of this project (Correlates of War, n.d.). This research uses the Intergovernmental Organization dataset, specifically the State Unit dataset (third version). This dataset gives information on what country was member of what intergovernmental organization in what year, measured between 1815 and 2014. The Correlates of War Project includes only those intergovernmental organizations that possess the following three characteristics:

1. An intergovernmental organization must consist of at least three members of the correlates of war state system.
2. An intergovernmental organization must hold regular plenary sessions at least once every ten years.
3. An intergovernmental organization must possess a permanent secretariat and corresponding headquarters.

Not all of the 189 intergovernmental organizations that came forward from the Yearbook of International Organizations are included in the State Unit dataset of the Correlates of War project: 93 intergovernmental organizations are included in both the Yearbook of International Organizations and the Correlates of War datasets. In Appendix 1 all analysed intergovernmental organizations are listed, the ones only represented in the Correlates of War dataset are marked with a '*'. In the analysis of expectations in the next chapter it will be indicated whether the results stem from the set of 189 or 93 intergovernmental organizations.

4.2 Modes of analysis

To analyse the intergovernmental organizations that remained after applying previously mentioned filters in the Yearbook of International Organizations, the main technique used is clustering the organizations based on their goals that correspond with the SDGs as indicated in the Yearbook. As explained earlier in this chapter, most of the organizations in the Yearbook of International Organization have one or multiple SDGs listed under them. If at least one of the SDGs showed in table 1 is listed with an intergovernmental organization in the Yearbook of International Organizations, this organization is included in the database for this research. In the next chapter the results of this clustering will be elaborated on during the analysis of the expectations.

To test the expectations basic statistical techniques are used, such as calculating the total increase of member states from organizations, calculating annual increase of member states of organizations and the means from these numbers. The results of these calculations are then visualized in either tables or figures, to facilitate an easy and clear understanding of the analyses.

4.3 Reflection on generalizability and reliability

This research provides novel ways of applying collective action theory to the subjects of intergovernmental organizations and their member states. Some interesting results come forward, as we will see in the next chapter, but the generalizability of this research is quite small. There are two reasons for this. First, several choices had to be made to keep this research feasible in both size and subject. It is imaginable that if other kinds of international organizations, such as international funds, private international organizations or non-governmental organizations where the subject matter of research there would be different results. Second, it is

possible that if other policy areas of interest are chosen to research, the results would be different if the same tests were conducted. Also if a different way of clustering organizations to fit into a specific policy field would have been used, for example by looking at the goals laid down in their establishment charters, maybe other organizations would have made up the database. Still, this does not retract from this research, as this research provides insightful information on the behaviour of intergovernmental organizations and their member states in the three researched policy areas, as well as new opportunities to apply the theory of collective action while taking on a historical institutionalist perspective.

With regards to the reliability of this research, all data used to compile the database of intergovernmental organizations stems from renowned sources, as do the literary sources that are used. All data is used with the utmost scrutiny to present results that are as reliable as possible.

Chapter 5: Analysis

In this chapter the expectations formulated in chapter 3 are analysed. First the two expectations regarding regime complexity will be looked at, then the focus shifts to state membership rates of intergovernmental organizations in relation to the policy fields these organizations operate in. Each of the expectations will be either accepted or rejected.

5.1 International regime complexity and collective action theory

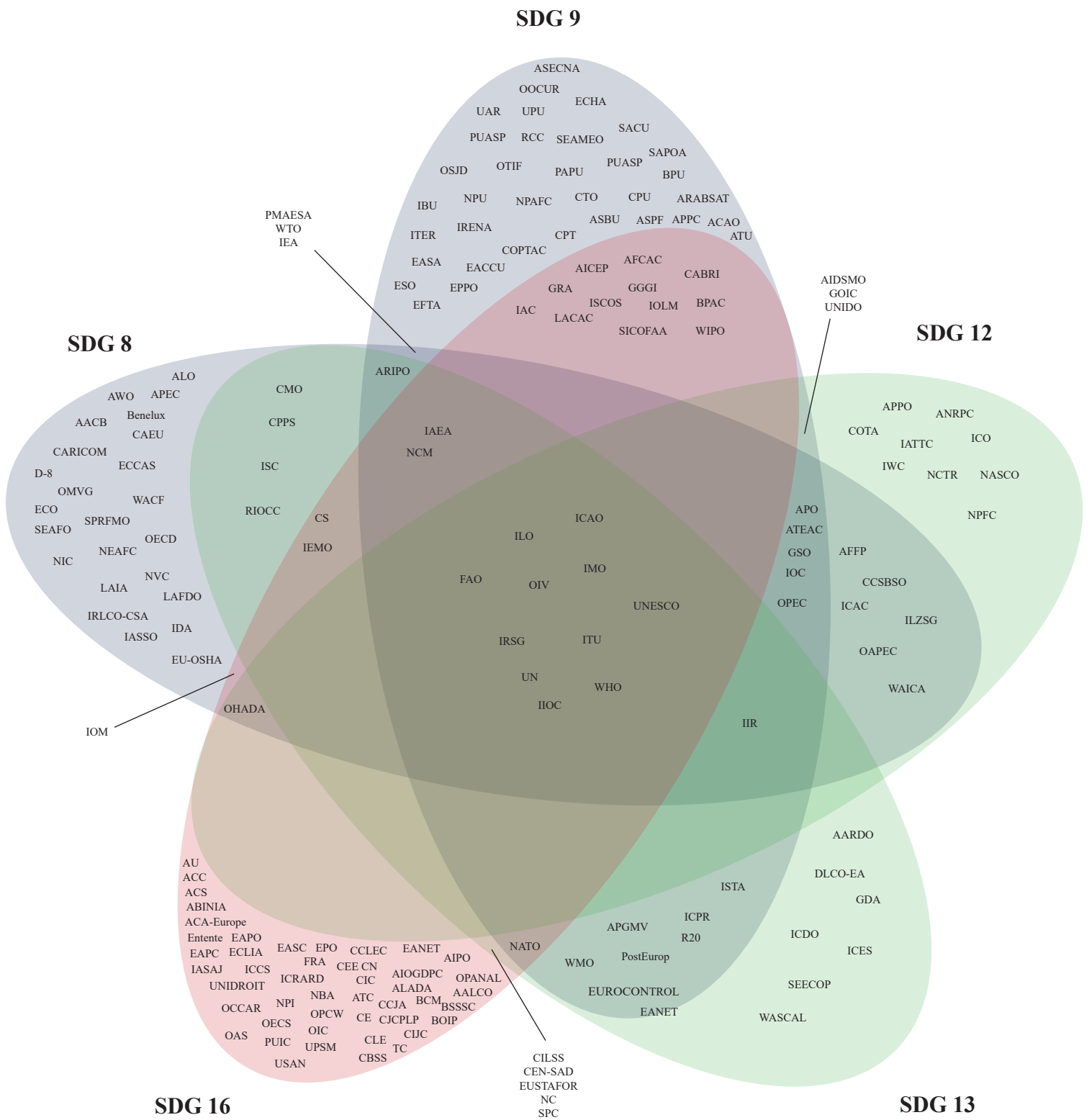
Recall the definition of international regime complexity as inevitable institutional overlap among intergovernmental organizations when the amount of organization increases. Also recall the dichotomy the theory of collective action makes between narrow defined organizations and encompassing defined organizations. When applying the theory of collective action in the context of intergovernmental organizations, it is expected that there are more narrow defined intergovernmental organizations than there are encompassing intergovernmental organizations.

To be able to make any statements about this first expectation, the scope of institutional overlap among the intergovernmental organizations in the database needs to be mapped out. For this expectation all 193 intergovernmental organizations listed in Appendix 2 are included. As explained in Chapter 4, the goals and activities of all included organizations are linked to one or more corresponding SDGs by the Yearbook of International Organizations. When clustering the intergovernmental organizations based on their corresponding SDGs, the Venn diagram in Figure 1 (visible on the next page) shows the scope of institutional overlap of the intergovernmental organizations included in the database.

Looking at the Venn diagram in figure 1, at first glance it looks like a large number of intergovernmental organizations have goals corresponding with either SDG 8, 9, or 16, and a smaller amount of organizations corresponding with SDG 12 or 13. Figure 1 also shows that some SDG combinations are not present at all in the database of organizations. For example: there are no organizations in the database that correspond with both SDGs 12 and 16. At a closer look, only a small amount of researched intergovernmental organizations have goals corresponding with both SDG 16 and any of the other SDGs, whereas mutual SDG combinations with all SDGs other than SDG 16 are present more frequently. The diagram in figure 1 leads to the concluding observations that there is some level of institutional overlap among the intergovernmental organizations included in the database, mostly amongst organizations concerned with economy and finance (SDGs 8 and 9) and climate (SDGs 12 and 13). There is less institutional overlap present for the organizations concerned with defence and security (SDG 16).

Figure 1

Venn diagram of intergovernmental organizations' policy overlap based on corresponding SDGs



Let us move back back to the first expectation regarding the amount of narrow defined and more encompassing defined intergovernmental organizations. This dichotomy translates into the clustering of intergovernmental organizations based on corresponding SDGs as follows: intergovernmental organizations that only have SDGs corresponding within one of the researched policy areas will fall into the category of narrow defined intergovernmental organizations. Intergovernmental organizations that have SDGs corresponding with two or three of the researched policy areas will fall into the category of encompassing defined organizations. Let us now take a look at Tables 2 and 3.

Table 2

Amount of narrow defined intergovernmental organizations based on their corresponding SDGs

Policy area	Corresponding SDGs	Corresponding SDGs	Corresponding SDGs	Total
<i>Defence and Security</i>	<i>Corresponding SDG: 16</i>	<i>n.r.</i>	<i>n.r.</i>	
Amount of IGOs	47			47
<i>Economy and finance</i>	<i>Corresponding SDG: 8</i>	<i>Corresponding SDG: 9</i>	<i>Corresponding SDGs: 8 & 9</i>	
Amount of IGOs	24	37	2	63
<i>Climate</i>	<i>Corresponding SDG: 12</i>	<i>Corresponding SDG: 13</i>	<i>Corresponding SDGs: 12 & 13</i>	
Amount of IGOs	10	7	0	17
Total				127

Table 3

Amount of encompassing defined intergovernmental organizations based on their corresponding SDGs

IGOs active in policy areas	Amount of IGOs
Active in two policy areas	45
Active in all three policy areas	17
Total	62

Tables 2 shows how many intergovernmental organizations correspond with one or, when applicable, two SDGs in the same policy area. This table shows that the largest amount of intergovernmental organizations are solely active in the policy area of economy and finance, followed by defence and security, and the smallest amount of intergovernmental organizations are solely active in the policy area of climate action. These numbers add up to a total of 127 intergovernmental organizations being active in only one of the three policy areas. Table 3 then shows the amount of intergovernmental organizations active in two or more policy areas. The precise distribution across SDGs is too comprehensive to put into an easily legible table, so only the totals of organizations active in two or three policy areas are included. This adds up to a total of 62 intergovernmental organizations active in two or three of the researched policy areas, which is almost half when compared to the amount of intergovernmental organizations active in only one of the researched policy areas.

» To conclude: 127 intergovernmental organizations are active in only one of the three researched policy areas and are therefore categorized as narrow defined organizations. 62 intergovernmental organizations are active in two or three of the researched policy areas, and are therefore categorized as encompassing defined organizations. These numbers lead me to accept the first expectation: there are more narrow defined intergovernmental organizations than encompassing defined intergovernmental organizations in the database.

5.2 Mutual relationships among intergovernmental organizations

According to the theory of collective action, when there are many actors involved in a governance system, they can compete with each other in order to be able to provide their good or service. However, they can also choose to work together. Taking this to realm of intergovernmental organizations, this would mean that intergovernmental organizations can compete with each other, but can also choose to collaborate and engage in relationships with other intergovernmental organizations. This research is interested in the latter part: the scope of mutual relationships amongst intergovernmental organizations. This is tested by looking into the database of intergovernmental organizations and determining whether the organizations in the database are listed under the 'Relations with Inter-Governmental Organizations' -section in the Yearbook of International Organizations. The results this yielded are visible in table 4 and figure 2 (visible on the next page), that both show the frequency of any amount of mutual relations amongst the intergovernmental organizations in the database.

Table 4

Frequency of mutual relations among intergovernmental organizations

Amount relations	Frequency
n.d.	11
0	29
1	30
2	25
3	14
4	16
5	14
6	10
7	6
8	4
9	3
10	4
11	4
12	3
13	5
15	2
16	1
18	1
19	1
23	1
24	2
25	1
26	1
27	3
33	1
43	1

Figure 2

Frequency of mutual relations among intergovernmental organizations

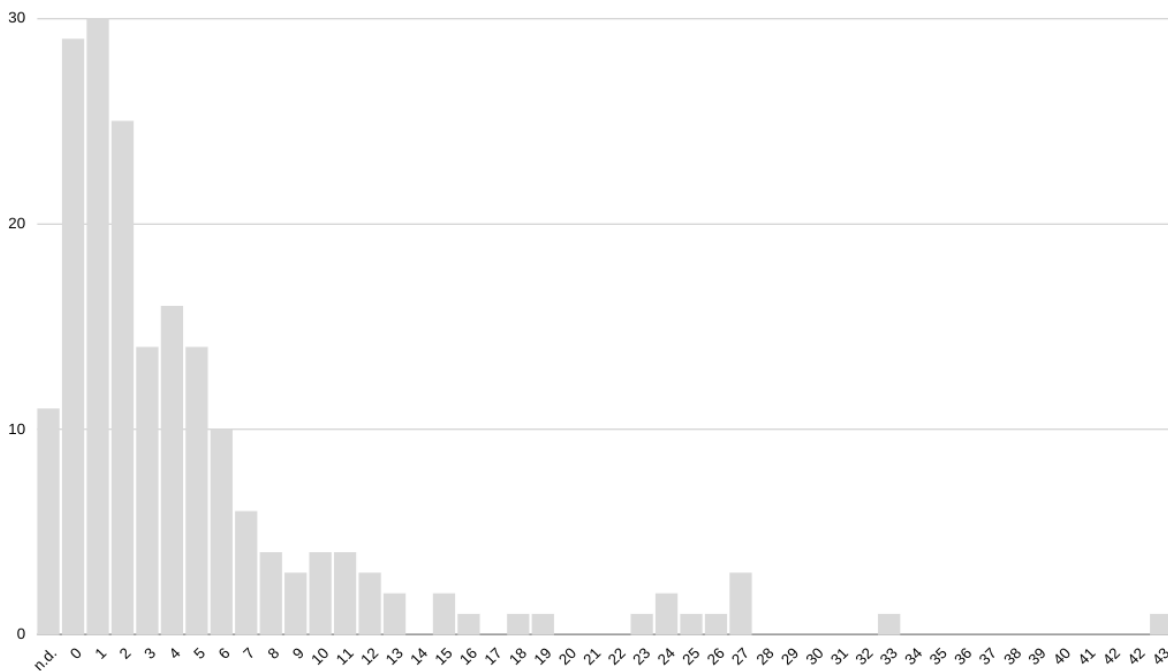


Table 4 and figure 2 provide some interesting information. First, they show that there is missing data on intergovernmental relationships from 11 of the researched organizations. Second, they show that 29 organizations have no mutual relationships with any of the other organizations in the database. It is possible that these organizations do engage in relationships with other intergovernmental organizations, but that these organizations are not included in the database used for this research. This leaves 153 organizations that have one or more mutual relationships with other organizations in the database.

Collective action theory proposes that encompassing defined organizations are more likely to engage in relationships with other organizations than narrow defined organizations. To test whether this statement holds up for intergovernmental organizations as well, let us go back to the dichotomy of encompassing versus narrow defined organizations to take a look at the frequency of mutual relations that are present. Remember that encompassing organizations represent a larger and more diverse population, which in this research is reflected by intergovernmental organizations operating in either two or three of the researched policy areas. Narrow defined organizations represent a smaller population, usually within a specific topic, which in this research is reflected by intergovernmental organizations that are active in just one or the researched policy areas. The results are visible in figure 3 (visible on the next page):

Looking at figure 3, it is immediately visible that in this database narrow defined intergovernmental organizations often have less mutual relations with other organizations than encompassing defined organizations. However, there are almost twice as much narrow defined organizations in the database than there are encompassing defined organizations, so this figure can be misleading. In order to get a more representative number, the total of mutual relations with organizations is calculated for both categories, and then the mean of those mutual relations. The results of these calculations are visible in table 5 (visible on the next page).

Figure 3

Frequency of mutual relations among intergovernmental organizations based on the categorization of the organizations

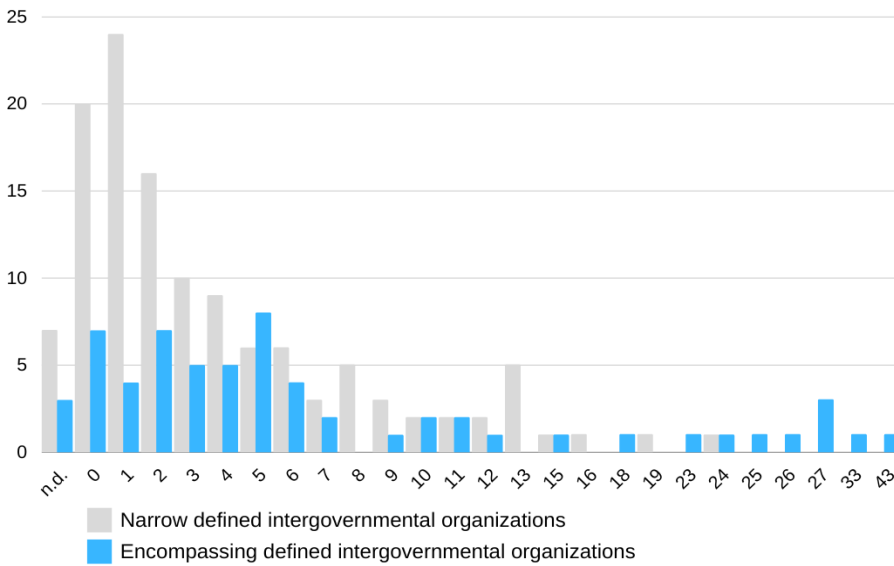


Table 5

Total and mean of mutual relations among intergovernmental organizations

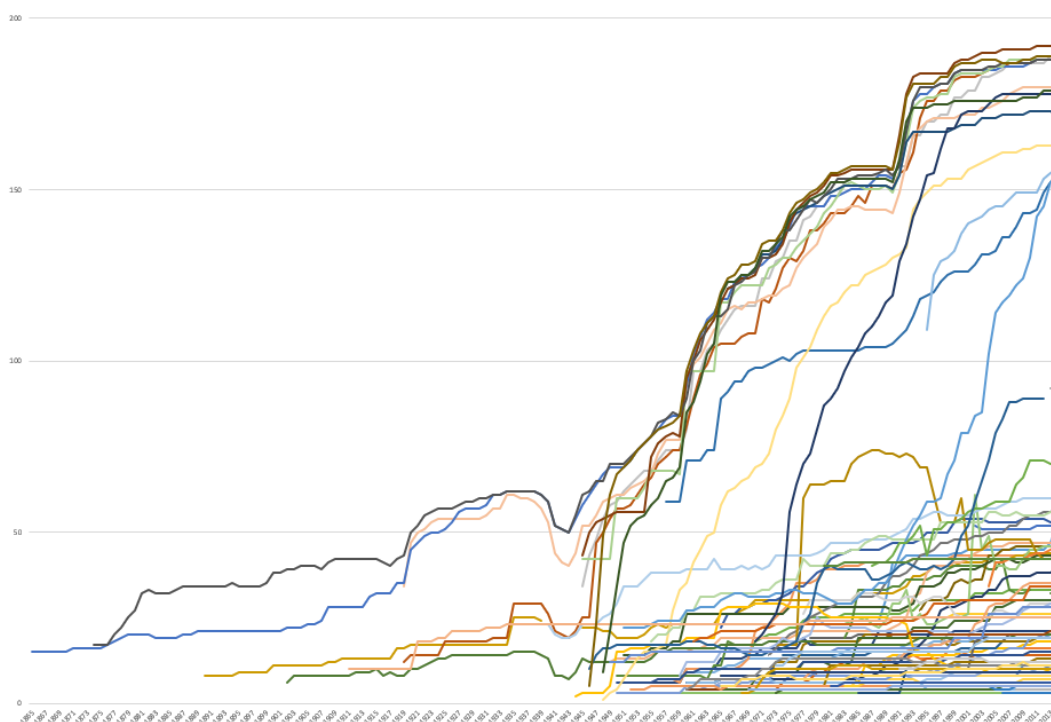
IGO type	Total mutual relations	Mean mutual relations
Narrow defined IGOs	451	≈ 4
Encompassing defined IGOs	481	≈ 8

When adding up all the mutual relations for both categories of organizations, the encompassing defined intergovernmental organizations have more mutual relations, even though there are almost half the number of organizations in this category. This is also reflected in the mean amount of mutual relations of intergovernmental organizations: encompassing defined intergovernmental organizations have twice as many mutual relations with other intergovernmental organizations in the database compared to narrow defined organizations.

» To conclude: The total sum as well as the mean amount of mutual relations of encompassing defined intergovernmental relations is higher than the total sum and mean amount of mutual relations of narrow defined intergovernmental organizations. This is in line with the second expectation that encompassing intergovernmental organizations participate in more relationships with other organizations than narrow defined organizations. The second expectation then is accepted.

5.3 State membership of intergovernmental organizations

To test the third and last expectation, information from the Correlates of War Intergovernmental dataset is used. This part only includes the intergovernmental organizations marked with ‘*’ in Appendix 2, as the other organizations were not included in the Correlates of War dataset. Before we dive into testing the last expectation, let us first take a look at Figure 4 (visible on the next page).

Figure 4*Intergovernmental organizations' state membership development throughout the years*

In figure 4 each line represents an intergovernmental organization. Where the line starts represents the date of establishment for each organization. The height of the line corresponds with the amount of member states the intergovernmental organization had in that specific year. At first glance this figure seems quite chaotic, but it provides some useful information. Firstly it shows that the amount of intergovernmental organizations has grown fast over the years, especially since the 1940s. There is great variation visible in the date of establishment across the intergovernmental organizations, with some organizations dating as far back as the second half of the 19th century. Secondly figure 4 shows that the amount of members each intergovernmental organizations has, has grown at a high rate as well. Again since the 1940s, a significant increase in member state counts of the intergovernmental organizations is visible. Table 6 provides more detailed information on the growth rate of state membership per intergovernmental organization.

Table 6*Total and annual percentage of member state increase of intergovernmental organizations*

Intergovernmental Organization	Total increase percentage	Annual increase percentage
European Free Trade Association	-33,33	-0,75
African Union	0	0
Amazonian Cooperation Council	0	0
Benelux Economic Union	0	0
Benelux Organization for Intellectual Property	0	0
Caribbean Postal Union	0	0
D8	0	0
Eurasian Paten Organization	0	0
International Renewable Energy Agency	0	0
Nordic Council of Ministers	0	0

Nordic Patent Institute	0	0
North Pacific Anadromous Fish Commission	0	0
Northeast Atlantic Fisheries Commission	0	0
Association of Caribbean States	4	0,2
Latin American Civil Aviation Commission	5	0,18
Arab Industrial Development and Mining Organization	5,26	0,14
Pan African Postal Union	7,5	0,21
Council of the Baltic Sea States	10	0,43
International Lead and Zinc Study Group	11,54	0,3
Niger Basin Authority	12,5	0,24
North Atlantic Salmon Conservation Organization	20	0,59
Organization of Eastern Caribbean States	20	0,55
Regional Commonwealth in the Field of Communications	20	0,8
Economic Community of Central African States	22,22	0,77
African Intellectual Property Organization	23	0,55
African Petroleum Producers Association	25	2,51
Entente Council	25	0,14
Nordic Council	25	0,36
Southern African Customs Union	25	0,5
Agency for the Safety of Aerial Navigation in Africa and Madagascar	28,57	0,72
International Organization for Vine and Wine	35,29	3,07
Gulf Organization for Industrial Consulting	40	1,13
United Nations Industrial Development Organization	42,15	0,74
World Trade Organization	43,12	1,9
Conference of Telecommunications Administrations of Central Africa	50	1,36
Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation	66,67	2,06
Nordic Council for Tax Research	66,67	1,25
Euro Atlantic Partnership Council	70,37	2,7
Port Management Association of Eastern and Southern Africa	72,73	5,2
International Tropical Timber Organization	75	2,09
Association of Natural Rubber Producing Countries	83,33	1,39
Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development	88,89	1,21
International Association of Supreme Administrative Jurisdictions	100	2,26
Latin American Fisheries Development Organization	111,11	10,07
Association of Central African Banks	116,67	2,11
Southeast Asian Ministers of Education Organization	120	1,62
Asian Productivity Organization	122	1,52
North Atlantic Treaty Organization	133,33	1,31
Agency for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons in Latin America	135,71	1,92
Arab Labour Organization	137,5	1,78
Commonwealth Secretariat	140,91	1,81
Desert Locust Control Organization for East Africa	150	1,78
International Commission on Civil Status	150	1,44
Postal Union of the Americas, Spain and Portugal	150	0,89
Latin American Integration Association	160	2,85
International Institute for the Unification of Private Law	160,87	1,3
International Atomic Energy Agency	161,02	1,7
Organization for the Petroleum Exporting Countries	175	1,89
International Coffee Organization	180	2,04

African Regional Intellectual Property Organization	200	2,93
European and Mediterranean Plant Protection Organization	207,14	1,8
International Organization for Legal Metrology	211,11	1,94
Economic Cooperation Organization	233,33	6,94
International Council for the Exploration of the Sea	233,33	1,08
Organization of Arab Petroleum Exporting Countries	233,33	2,65
Arab Permanent Postal Commission	250	2,07
Caribbean Community	250	3,1
International Olive Oil Council	262,5	2,37
Council of Europe	291,67	5,62
Commonwealth Telecommunication Organization	300	2,19
International Civil Defence Organization	307,14	3,4
United Nations	346,51	2,19
United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization	374,62	0,41
European Patent Organization	400	4,45
International Rubber Study Group	400	2,33
International Labour Organization	429,41	1,77
Central Office for International Railway Transport	450	1,38
Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations	455,88	2,52
Asian-African Legal Consultative Committee	514,29	3,18
Inter-American Tropical Tuna Commission	533,33	2,93
EUROCONTROL	550	3,53
International Organization for Migration	595,45	3,13
Asian Pacific Postal Union	650	3,95
World Health Organization	721,74	3,19
World Meteorological Organization	752,38	3,35
International Whaling Commission	790	3,37
World Intellectual Property Organization	888,89	5,35
Universal Postal Union	1005,88	6,19
International Telecommunications Union	1153,33	1,71
International Civil Aviation Organization	1466,67	5,65
International Maritime Organization	5333,33	6,34

The first column depicts the total growth rate of member states in percentages throughout the years. However some organizations have existed much longer than other organizations, as was visible in figure 4, giving these organizations more time to gain new member states. The numbers in the first column then can paint a distorted picture. That is why the second column depicts the annual percentual increase or decrease of the amount of member states of an organization from its founding date until 2014. Notable results are that out of all researched organizations, only one organization has experienced a decrease in state membership. Twelve organizations experienced no increase or decrease in membership, although some of them have seen some variation in membership count throughout the years. The other 78 organizations all experienced an increase in state membership.

To test the third expectation, the intergovernmental organizations have been clustered based on the policy area they operate in. Then the mean percentages of the total increase in state membership as well as the mean percentages of the annual increase of state membership of intergovernmental organizations have been calculated. The results are visible in table 7 (visible on the next page).

Table 7*Percentages of member state increase clustered based on policy area*

Policy area(s)	Number of IGOs	Mean total increase %	Mean annual increase %
Defence and security	19	100.92	1.31
Economy and finance	31	139.45	1.54
Climate	11	223,98	1.99
Two policy areas	16	218,78	1,74
Three policy areas	13	847.01	2,48

Table 7 gives some interesting results. The mean percentage of increase in state membership is the highest for intergovernmental organizations active in all three of the researched policy areas. Perhaps this is the result because this category includes the organizations that have existed the longest and the universal membership organizations, as the mean percentage of annual increase in state membership is not that high relative to the mean total increase of state membership.

Looking at the increase of state membership of the intergovernmental organizations solely active in one policy area, the number of organizations active in the policy area of economy and finance is the highest. The mean total increase as well as the mean annual increase of state membership is however the highest for intergovernmental organizations active in the policy area of climate change. This is an interesting find, because these organizations generally have had less time and less funding to develop compared to the organizations in the other two policy areas.

» To conclude: For the three policy areas that are researched in this thesis, the total state membership of intergovernmental organizations has increased. The mean total increase as well as the mean annual increase is the smallest for organizations concerned with defence and security policies, and the highest for organizations active in all three researched policy areas. Looking at the mean total increase and mean annual increase of state membership of intergovernmental organizations, the increase differs depending on what policy area is looked at, with quite some difference between the policy areas. This leads me to accept the third expectation.

Conclusion

This thesis started out on a venture to push the boundaries of Mancur Olson's classic theory of collective action. In doing this, we have taken on a historical institutionalist perspective to apply the theory of collective action to the realm of intergovernmental organizations and their member states. This new perspective resulted in the following line of reasoning: *collective action outcome X exists because it serves function Y taking into account the existence of contextual factors $Z_1 + Z_2 \dots + Z_a$* , which turned out to be applicable to the development of international organizations quite well. One consideration that has to be made while applying this line of reasoning is that it consists of some broadly interpretable elements, which makes it broadly applicable as well. However, it can be a starting point in systematically analysing collective action, the goals with which certain collective action groups have been established and contextual factors that have made this establishment possible.

The research question of this thesis was as follows:

"What is the scope of regime complexity for intergovernmental organizations and the scope of increased state membership of intergovernmental organizations?"

Three expectations have been formulated to aid answering this research question, of which the first two measured two aspects of regime complexity, while the last expectation measured the scope of increase in state membership of intergovernmental organizations.

The first expectation that there are more narrow defined intergovernmental organizations than encompassing defined intergovernmental organizations in the database is accepted. This means that most organizations in the database do not experience a high level of policy overlap with the other organizations in the database, which translates to quite a low level of experienced regime complexity. The second expectation that encompassing defined intergovernmental organizations participate in more relationships with other organizations in the database than narrow defined intergovernmental organizations is accepted. With regards to regime complexity, this indicates that more encompassing defined intergovernmental organizations experience higher levels of regime complexity, which calls for more frequent and intensive relationships with other intergovernmental organizations than narrow defined intergovernmental organizations. The answer to the first part of the research question is then as follows: the intergovernmental organizations in the database do not experience high levels of regime complexity. The more encompassing defined intergovernmental organizations however experience higher levels of regime complexity than the narrow defined intergovernmental organizations in the database.

The third expectation that the increase of state membership rates of intergovernmental organizations differ depending on what policy area(s) the organization operates in, is accepted as well for the organizations in this database. The largest increase of member states in organizations active in one of the three researched policy areas is visible with intergovernmental organizations active on the subject of climate action, followed by organizations concerned with economy and finance and lastly defence and security. The largest increase of state membership is however visible with organizations active in all three of the researched policy areas. This then answers the second part of the research question: the overall state membership of intergovernmental organizations in the database has increased significantly over the years.

How do these results circle back to pushing the boundaries of collective action theory? The expectations have been formulated with the line of reasoning of collective action theory from a historical institutionalist perspective as the starting point. All three expectations are accepted with the analysis of the database used for

this research, which indicated that the theory of collective action also holds up on the international level, or at least for these intergovernmental organizations. These expectations have shown that the theory of collective action can be opened up to incorporate other theoretical perspectives, such as historical institutionalism, and so be applied to a broader set of cases than Mancur Olson originally had thought out for his theory.

This research can be a starting point for other research ventures. For example, the same research can be conducted with other intergovernmental organizations active in other policy areas in the database. Perhaps there will be different results if the researched policy areas are different, such as social and health policies, or educational policies.

Another interesting topic to test would be the relationship between increased state membership of intergovernmental organizations and the effectiveness of those organizations. Mancur Olson's theory of collective action theorizes that the more members there are in a collective action group, the harder it will be to reach group consensus, making organizations less effective when they gain more members over time (Olson, 2022). The effectiveness of intergovernmental organizations is however hard to measure. One way to measure effectiveness would be to calculate the growth rate of the amount of decisions issued by intergovernmental organizations, a measurement used in a recently published article (Sommerer, Squatrito, Tallberg & Lundgren, 2022).

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Appendix 1: Filters used in the Yearbook of International Organizations

This appendix provides an overview of the filters used in the Yearbook of International Organizations. This resulted in 300 intergovernmental organizations that then have been filtered according to the policy field they operate in and ultimately make up the database used in this research. Below the used categories in type I and type II filters are presented:

Type I categories: regarding the ‘internationality’ and status (active or dissolved) of an organization.

Organization type	Description	Membership
A	Federations of international organizations	Includes at least 3 international organizations.
B	Universal membership organizations	From either at least 60 countries or at least 30 countries in at
C	Intercontinental membership organizations	From at least 10 countries in at least 2 continents with a well-balanced geographical distribution
D	Regionally defined membership organizations	From at least 3 countries within one continental or subcontinental region

Type II categories: adds a second level of structure to the hierarchical typology of type I classification.

- g = intergovernmental organizations.

Appendix 2: Intergovernmental organizations database and their corresponding abbreviations

This table lists all the intergovernmental organizations used to analyse the expectations in this thesis. All of the listed intergovernmental organizations make up the dataset based on the Yearbook of International Organizations. The organizations marked with a ‘*’ are represented in both the dataset based on the Yearbook of International Organizations, as well as the used Correlates of War dataset.

Acid Deposition Monitoring Network in East Asia	EANET
African Civil Aviation Commission	AFCAC
African Intellectual Property Organization*	AIPO
African Petroleum Producers’s Organization*	APPO
African Regional Intellectual Property Organization*	ARIPO
African Telecommunications Union	ATU
African Union*	AU
African-Asian Rural Development Organization	AARDO
Agence Panafricaine de la Grande Muraille Verte	APGMV
Agency for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons in Latin America and the Caribbean*	OPANAL
Agency for the Safety of Aerial Navigation in Africa and Madagascar*	ASECNA
Amazon Cooperation Treaty Organization*	ACTO
Arab Civil Aviation Organization	CAAO
Arab Federation of Fish Producers	AFFP
Arab Industrial Development, Standardization and Mining Organization*	AIDSMO
Arab Labour Organization*	ALO
Arab Permanent Postal Commission*	APPC
Arab Satellite Communications Organization	ARABSAT
Arab Sea Ports Federation	ASPF
Arab States Broadcasting Union	ASBU
Arab Women Organization	AWO
Asian Productivity Organization*	APO
Asian-African Legal Consultative Organization*	AALCO
Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation*	APEC
Asian-Pacific Postal Union*	APPU
Asia-Pacific Satellite Communications Council	APSCC
Asociación Iberoamericana de Organismos Gubernamentales de Defensa y Protección Civil	AIOGDPC
Asociación Latinoamericana de Derecho Aeronautico y Espacial	ALADA
Associação dos Operadores de Correios e Telecomunicações dos Países e Territórios de Língua Oficial Portuguesa	AICEP
Association of African Central Banks*	AACB
Association of Asian Constitutional Courts and Equivalent Institutions	ACC
Association of Caribbean States*	ACS
Association of European Public Postal Operators	PostEurop
Association of Ibero-American States for the Development of National Libraries	ABINIA
Association of Natural Rubber Producing Countries*	ANRPC
Association of Telecommunication Enterprises of the Andean Community	ATEAC
Association of the Councils of State and Supreme Administrative Jurisdictions of the European Union	ACA-Europe

Baltic Council of Ministers	BCM
Baltic Pilotage Authorities Commission	BPAC
Baltic Postal Union	BPU
Baltic Sea States Subregional Cooperation	BSSSC
Benelux Organization for Intellectual Property*	BOIP
Benelux Union*	Benelux
Caribbean Community*	CARICOM
Caribbean Customs Law Enforcement Council	CCLEC
Caribbean Meteorological Organization	CMO
Caribbean Organization of Tax Administrators	COTA
Caribbean Postal Union*	CPU
Caribbean Telecommunications Union	CTU
Central and Eastern European Citizens Network	CEE CN
Collaborative Africa Budget Reform Initiative	CABRI
Comisión Permanente del Pacífico Sur	CPPS
Comité Intergubernamental Coordinador de los Países de la Cuenca del Plata	CIC
Comité permanent inter-Etats de lutte contre la sécheresse dans le Sahel	CILSS
Commonwealth of Independent States Anti-Terrorism Center	ATC
Commonwealth Secretariat*	CS
Commonwealth Telecommunications Organisation*	CTO
Community of Sahel-Saharan States	CEN-SAD
Conférence européenne des administrations des postes et des télécommunications	CEPT
Conference of Constitutional Jurisdictions of Africa	CCJA
Conference of Posts and Telecommunications of Central Africa*	COPTAC
Conferência das Jurisdições Constitucionais dos Países de Língua Portuguesa	CJCLP
Conferencia Iberoamericana de Justicia Constitucional	CIJC
Consejo Centroamericano de Superintendentes de Bancos, de Seguros y de Otras Instituciones Financieras	CCSBSO
Cooperation Council of Turkic Speaking States	TC
Council of Arab Economic Unity	CAEU
Council of Europe*	CE
Council of Legal Education	CLE
Council of the Baltic Sea States*	CBSS
D-8 Organization for Economic Cooperation*	D-8
Desert Locust Control Organization for Eastern Africa*	DLCO-EA
East African Community Customs Union	EACCU
Economic Community of Central African States*	ECCAS
Economic Cooperation Organization*	ECO
Entente Council*	Entente
Eurasian Patent Organization*	EAPO
Euro Atlantic Partnership Council*	EAPC
EuroAsian Interstate Council for Standardizations, Metrology and Certification	EASC
European Agency for Safety and Health at Work	EU-OSHA
European and Mediterranean Plant Protection Organization*	EPPO
European Chemicals Agency	ECHA
European Confederation of Local Intermediate Authorities	ECLIA
European Free Trade Association*	EFTA
European Organization for Astronomical Research in the Southern hemisphere	ESO
European Patent Office*	EPO

European Patent Organisation*	
European State Forest Association	EUSTAFOR
European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights	FRA
European Union Aviation Safety Agency	EASA
Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations*	FAO
GCC Standardization Organization	GSO
Global Dryland Alliance	GDA
Global Green Growth Institute	GGGI
Global Research Alliance on Agricultural Greenhouse Gases	GRA
Gulf Organization for Industrial Consulting*	GOIC
Ibero-American Social Security Organization	IASSO
Inter-American Tropical Tuna Commission*	IATTC
Inter-Governmental Standing Committee on Shipping	ISCOS
International Association of Supreme Administrative Jurisdictions*	IASAJ
International Atomic Energy Agency*	IAEA
International Civil Aviation Organization*	ICAO
International Civil Defence Organization*	ICDO
International Coffee Organization*	ICO
International Commission for the Protection of the Rhine	ICPR
International Commission on Civil Status*	ICCS
International Committee on Regulatory Authority Research and Development	ICRARD
International Cotton Advisory Committee*	ICAC
International Council for the Exploration of the Sea*	ICES
International Development Association	IDA
International Economic Association Interatomenergo	IEA
International Emergency Management Organization	IEMO
International Fusion Energy Organization*	ITER
International Institute for the Unification of Private Law*	UNIDROIT
International Institute of Refrigeration*	IIR
International Labour Organization*	ILO
International Lead and Zinc Study Group*	ILZSG
International Maritime Organization*	IMO
International Olive Oil Council*	IOC
International Organisation of Vine and Wine*	OIV
International Organization for Migration*	IOM
International Organization of Legal Metrology*	IOLM
International Red Locust Control Organization for Central and Southern Africa	IRLCO- CSA
International Renewable Energy Agency*	IRENA
International Rubber Study Group*	IRSG
International Seed Testing Association	ISTA
International Sericultural Commission	ISC
International Telecommunication Union*	ITU
International Tropical Timber Organization*	ITTO
International Whaling Commission*	IWC
Intersputnik International Organization of Space Communications	IIOSC
Interstate Aviation Committee	IAC
Islamic Broadcasting Union	IBU
Latin American Civil Aviation Commission*	LACAC

Latin American Fisheries Development Organization*	LAFDO
Latin American Integration Association*	LAIA
Niger Basin Authority*	NBA
Nordens välfärdscenter	NVC
Nordic Council*	NC
Nordic Council of Ministers*	NCM
Nordic Immigration Committee	NIC
Nordic Patent Institute*	NPI
Nordic Postal Union	NPU
Nordic Tax Research Council*	NCTR
North Atlantic Salmon Conservation Organization*	NASCO
North Atlantic Treaty Organization*	NATO
North Pacific Anadromous Fish Commission*	NPAFC
North Pacific Fisheries Commission	NPFC
North-East Atlantic Fisheries Commission*	NEAFC
Organisation for Cooperation between Railways	OSJD
Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development*	OECD
Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons	OPCW
Organisation intergouvernementale pour les transports internationaux ferroviaires	OTIF
Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States*	OECS
Organisation of Islamic Cooperation	OIC
Organisation pour la mise en valeur du fleuve Gambie	OMVG
Organisation pour l'Harmonisation en Afrique du Droit des Affaires	OHADA
Organisations of Caribbean Utility Regulators	OOCUR
Organization of American States	OAS
Organization of Arab Petroleum Exporting Countries*	OAPEC
Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries*	OPEC
Pacific Community	SPC
Pan African Postal Union*	PAPU
Parliamentary Union of the OIC Member States	PUIC
Port Management Association of Eastern and Southern Africa*	PMAESA
Postal Union of the Americas, Spain and Portugal*	PUASP
Red Iberoamericana de Oficinas de Cambio Climático	RIOCC
Regional Commonwealth in the Field of Communications*	RCC
Regions of Climate Action	R20
Sistema de Cooperación entre las Fuerzas Aéreas Americana	SICOFAA
South East Atlantic Fisheries Organization	SEAFO
South Pacific Regional Fisheries Management Organisation	SPRFMO
Southeast Asian Ministers of Education Organization*	SEAMEO
South-East European Consortium for Operational Weather Prediction	SEECOP
Southern Africa Postal Operators Association	SAPOA
Southern African Customs Union*	SACU
Southern African Service Centre for Climate Change and Adaptive Land Management	SASSCAL
Unión de Parlamentarios Sudamericanos y del MERCOSUR	UPSM
Union of African Railways	UAR
Union of South American Nations	USAN
United Nations*	UN
United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization*	UNESCO
United Nations Industrial Development Organization*	UNIDO

Universal Postal Union*	UPU
West African Alliance for Carbon Markets and Climate Finance	WACF
West African Insurance Companies Association	WAICA
West African Science Service Center on Climate Change and Adapted Land Use	WASCAL
World Health Organization*	WHO
World Intellectual Property Organization*	WIPO
World Meteorological Organization*	WMO
World Trade Organization*	WTO