Internal, Interactive, and Institutional Factors:

A Unified Framework for Understanding International Non-Governmental Organizations

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Abstract

Scholars and practitioners agree that international non-governmental organizations (INGOs) have become important actors in international relations and policymaking. But an understanding of INGOs' impact requires a step back, analyzing how and why they behave as they do. We develop a framework that sorts and links relevant factors into three interlocking layers: (1) internal traits of an INGO, (2) interactions between an INGO and other actors, and (3) the overall institutional environment that defines the boundaries of INGO action. To demonstrate the merits of the framework, we review and analyze *Internal Affairs* by Wendy Wong, *The Opening up of International Organizations* by Jonas Tallberg et al., and *Borders Among Activists* by Sarah Stroup. Locating each book within its intended scholarly context, we evaluate contributions to individual layers in our framework. We also examine ties among the books, examining how each work implicitly treats other layers. By uniting internal, interactive, and institutional factors into a holistic framework, we reveal links within existing work on INGOs and illuminate promising avenues for future work about these important actors.

Books Reviewed

Borders Among Activists: International NGOs in the United States, Britain, and France. By
Sarah S. Stroup. Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 2012. 264 pp., $39.95
hardcover (ISBN-13: 978-0-8014-5073-0).

The Opening up of International Organizations: Transnational Access in Global Governance.
By Jonas Tallberg, Thomas Sommerer, Theresa Squatrito, and Christer Jönsson.
Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013. 332 pp., $34.99 paperback (ISBN-13:
978-1-1076-4079-5).

Internal Affairs: How the Structure of NGOs Transforms Human Rights. By Wendy H. Wong.
Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 2012. 272 pp., $26.95 paperback (ISBN-13:
978-0-8014-5079-2).

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Much early work on institutions portrayed international non-governmental organizations (INGOs) as altruistic entities that counter self-serving states, follow high-minded managers, and seek to correct policy gaps in the international system (Corry 2010; Nye and Keohane 1971; Skjelsbaek 1971;). In recent years, though, scholars have moved beyond the assumptions of altruism and high-mindedness to explain more precisely INGO behavior by considering self-interest as well (Mitchell and Schmitz 2014; Prakash and Gugerty 2010; Risse 2010). Recent books by Sarah Stroup, Jonas Tallberg et al., and Wendy Wong are part of this trend, and we will discuss how each makes important contributions to understanding specific determinants of INGO activities.

But taken together, incidental ties among these books also show the need for a broader, more unified framework for comprehending non-governmental organizations' behavior, strategies, activities, or outputs. In Figure 1 we offer such a framework, which contains three interlocking layers: (1) internal traits of an INGO, (2) interactions between an INGO and other actors, and (3) the overall institutional environment that defines the boundaries of INGO action. Figure 1's triangular shape conveys the specificity of the layers. Internal organizational traits—such as managerial structure or staff ideology—are narrow "micro" phenomena involving individuals within non-governmental organizations. In contrast, the overall institutional environment—such as philanthropic culture or legal restrictions in target countries—are much wider "macro" features. Between these lies the "meso" layer: interactions with other actors involve individuals from the micro layer and feed into the wider context of the macro layer.
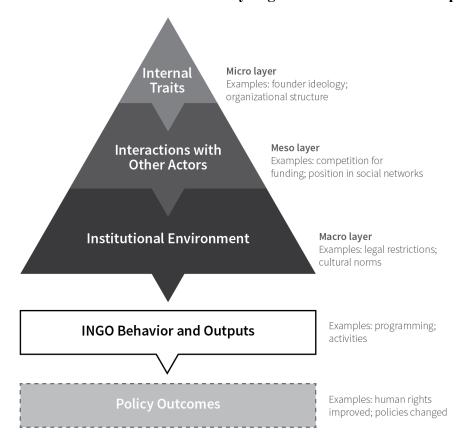
Figure 1: A Unified Framework for Analyzing INGO Behavior and Outputs

Internal Traits

Micro layer
Examples: founder ideology; organizational structure

Interactions with Other Actors

Meso layer
Examples: competition for funding; position in social networks

Institutional Environment

Macro layer
Examples: legal restrictions; cultural norms

INGO Behavior and Outputs

Examples: programming; activities

Policy Outcomes

Examples: human rights improved; policies changed

Note: The triangular shape conveys the specificity of the layers: from narrow "micro" phenomena at the internal layer to much wider "macro" phenomena at the institutional layer.

We demonstrate the framework's merits by applying it to three books in two stages. First, we evaluate each work's contributions to individual layers in the framework, locating each book within its intended scholarly context. Then we identify ties across the books, examining how each work implicitly treats the other layers of our framework. To conclude, we emphasize the resurgence of organizational and network theory in analyzing intra-organizational interactions, and we pinpoint avenues for future work on INGOs. A key implication is that practitioners and scholars need to be alert to dynamics within and across the three layers of our holistic framework—even when they choose to focus on a single layer.

A Unified Framework for Analyzing INGO Behavior and Outputs

It has become popular to examine international relations through an institutional or organizational lens. Rather than investigating the actions of monolithic and rational sovereign

states, organization theory focuses on the dynamics of sub-state organizations within the international system and analyzes their internal structure, their interactions with other organizations, and their overall institutional environment (Gordenker and Weiss 1996, 34). For example, instead of approaching foreign policy as a realist conflict between states, one could look at the organizational and bureaucratic processes behind international interactions, such as the relationships between different executive-level cabinet offices or the personal aspirations and ideologies of politicians and bureaucrats who make key decisions (Allison 1969). Similarly, we can analyze global policies as the result of a complicated multi-level game among local, national, and international political actors, each with their own multifaceted set of preferences, who confront nested institutional constraints (such as veto structures) as they interact with each other (Johnson 2014; Mayer 2010; Tsebelis 1995). Rooted in organization theory, these conceptual frameworks have been predominantly applied to organizational dynamics within states or intergovernmental organizations—traditionally seen as the primary actors in the international system (Balding and Wehrenfennig 2011; Jönsson and Tallberg 2008).

An analogous evolution of theoretical frames permeates research on non-state actors. For instance, a significant body of work has portrayed international non-governmental organizations as altruistic entities that will save the global democratic system (Slaughter 2004, 239), inculcate norms of democratization throughout the world (Putnam, Leonardi, and Nanetti 1994; Foley and Edwards 1996), or respond to policy gaps in global governance systems (Mayer and Gereffi 2006). By discussing INGOs and global civil society as a counterweight to states, scholars have attempted to trumpet the importance of non-state actors without denying the simultaneous importance of states (Ahmed and Potter 2006, 76–77). For example, trailblazing research examined how INGOs engage in leverage or accountability politics, trying to gain moral or material advantages over states or to compel states to live up to their promises and expressed norms. With the "boomerang pattern," INGOs can occupy an explicit position even in a state-centric world: civil society activists ally with sympathetic states to pressure their home governments for policy changes (Keck and Sikkink 1998, 19–25).

However, a more recent, growing body of scholarship moves beyond state-centric views and instead looks at motivators and activities of INGOs themselves. For example, some observers argue that INGOs behave like firms as they follow their own self-interest (Prakash and Gugerty 2010). Other observers add nuance, pointing out that non-governmental organizations

display instrumental concerns such as pursuit of resource-maximizing endeavors, but they also exhibit principled norms such as advocacy for human rights (Mitchell and Schmitz 2014).

Instead of focusing on an organization's interactions with traditional states, these newer works implicitly borrow from organization theory to analyze traits of an INGO itself or the array of institutions comprising its broader environment. Additionally, the crux of organization theory—that the interactions between sub-units of larger organizations shape an organization's behavior—suggests that an organization's network relations affect its outputs. Accordingly, recent contributions to the INGO literature increasingly turn to network theory and methods to analyze the ties and structures within and between organizations. This involves stepping back to look at the drivers of INGO behavior, not just the eventual policy impact of INGO activities.

Encompassing organization and network theories, we propose a parsimonious theoretical framework to explicitly organize work on INGOs and provide a structure for deeper analyses of their behavior (see Figure 1). Organization theory reveals complexities of the multi-level games underpinning INGO activities, and this helps us develop the layers of our framework: (1) the internal traits of the INGO, (2) its interactions with other actors, and (3) the overall institutional environment that defines its operating constraints. In complement, network theory delineates links between the layers of our framework. While each layer alone provides insights into INGO behavior, policy impact is impossible without outputs—and outputs flow from factors at multiple layers. In other words, dynamic network interactions both *within* and *across* these layers drive actual behavioral patterns. Therefore, although analyzing a single layer in isolation is often the only way to gain tractability for particular drivers of INGO behavior, this is insufficient for providing a comprehensive explanation of non-governmental organizations' activities, outputs, or eventual impact.

Our framework usefully sorts the theoretical foci of existing research. Much existing research on INGOs concentrates on the meso layer in Figure 1: INGOs' interactions with states, the United Nations or other intergovernmental organizations, donors, fellow non-governmental organizations, and so on. For example, researchers note that INGOs compete with one another— not only in their attempts to pressure states, but also in their scramble to corner resources offered by states, intergovernmental organizations, and other donors (Cooley and Ron 2002). Non-governmental organizations operate in a "harsh, Darwinian marketplace where legions of desperate groups vie for scarce attention, sympathy, and money" (Bob 2002). Scholars have

depicted this marketplace as a social network in which INGOs vary in terms of their connectedness to key actors and gatekeepers (Carpenter 2007, 2014; Murdie 2014). Competition with other organizations working in the same issue area can even result in perverse incentives to exaggerate crises in order to obtain external support and boost short-term gains (Cohen and Green 2012).

The two other layers of Figure 1 are also important, but they have tended to attract less thorough attention. The internal micro layer may be the most understudied—perhaps because it presents challenges for generalizability and seems far removed from eventual policy impacts. Yet this layer is crucial: the preferences, ideals, altruism, or self-interest of an INGO's own managers, employees, and volunteers shape the organization's mission, vision, values, structure, and tactics (Wong 2012). In turn, these internal traits influence an INGO's interactions with other actors, its operations within different institutional environments, its ability to produce output, and its prospects for having a tangible impact (Prakash and Gugerty 2010).

Scholars and practitioners also need to better understand the institutional environment of the macro layer. This environment—consisting of legal regulations, historical precedents, and cultural norms—is where an INGO's internal traits eventually play out, where its interactions occur, and where boundaries of its operations are defined. As such, the macro context needs fuller exploration. Some research has considered how the institutional layer affects INGOs' ultimate policy impact, for instance in the realm of human rights (Risse, Ropp, and Sikkink 1999; Simmons 2009). Other research examines the institutional mechanisms by which INGO-pushed norms become incorporated into actual domestic social policies (Linos 2013). But there still is relatively little work, for instance, on how non-governmental organizations act differently in response to the different institutional environments they face in target countries.

Our framework exposes such gaps. But in addition, it is a valuable sorting device that reveals how various pieces of scholarship build on, react against, or complement each other. To demonstrate, we examine *Internal Affairs* by Wendy Wong, *The Opening up of International Organizations* by Jonas Tallberg et al., and *Borders Among Activists* by Sarah Stroup. Although these books certainly are not the only works that can exhibit our framework, at least three considerations informed their selection. First, as recent publications, they approximate the current state of the field and permit our demonstration to encompass insights from earlier research too. Second, as books that share an appreciation for in-depth case studies, they are

broadly comparable to one another. Third, as works that hover at single layers of Figure 1, these three books contribute to each layer individually but also aid us in raising additional questions about how things work within and across layers.

Taken together, the books collectively exhibit the need for—and foundations of—our unified framework, which depicts and predicts how INGOs' internal, interactive, and institutional aspects shape activities, strategies, behavior, and outputs. The framework does not aim to privilege any particular layer, nor does it require all future work to tackle all three layers simultaneously. In fact, a division of labor, in which different research projects concentrate on different layers, is often useful for unearthing deeper truths. Thus, a major contribution of our framework is its ability to unite deep yet disparate insights. Encouraged to think about INGOs in a systematic and holistic way, scholars and practitioners now can assemble their own work within a much more comprehensive and dynamic structure. This enables elements from various layers to inform one another. In addition, it aids in spotting scope conditions on the applicability of some theoretical or empirical insights.

Interactions with Other Actors

As mentioned above, INGO scholarship traditionally emphasized Figure 1's meso layer, where non-governmental organizations interact with other actors. Jonas Tallberg, Thomas Sommerer, Theresa Squatrito, and Christer Jönsson extend this mature literature in *The Opening Up of International Organizations* (Tallberg et al. 2013). The authors examine network connections between civil society groups and intergovernmental organizations. Marveling at the speed with which INGOs, multinational corporations, and other transnational actors (TNAs) have gained access to global governance structures in the past three decades, the authors ponder why that access varies across issue areas and policy functions. They tackle these questions with four case studies, as well as quantitative analyses of a new dataset covering 50 IGOs from 1950 to 2010.

To explain the post-1990 jump in access to IGOs, Tallberg et al. consider three possible drivers: dramatic grassroots activism, growing acceptance of participatory governance, or attractive offers of assistance. The first two possibilities—dubbed "strategic legitimation" and "norm socialization"—garner only mixed support. Instead, the authors find "functional demand" to be the strongest explanation. TNA access often occurs in the presence of local operations or

noncompliance incentives, suggesting that IGOs selectively grant access to transnational actors who can help with tasks such as aid delivery or treaty monitoring. Thus, rather than a swift defensive move or a gradual normative one, opening-up appears to be a steady and proactive process that taps into TNA resources so IGOs can better pursue their existing functions.

We commend Tallberg et al. for a refreshingly eclectic, nuanced theoretical and empirical approach that delivers three substantial insights. First, by refusing to side *a priori* with either rational choice institutionalism or historical institutionalism, the authors expose the limitations of both. Enormous changes in TNA access contradict the inertia and path-dependency expected by historical institutionalism; meanwhile, the patchy effectiveness of added transnational actors belies the efficient adaptation expected by rational choice institutionalism.

Moreover, in response to descriptive statistics demonstrating a leap in TNA access in the early 1990s, Tallberg et al. provide a thorough and convincing discussion of why transnational actors had been marginalized in previous years. During the Cold War, sovereignty was more firmly entrenched in nation-states, many nation-states hosted authoritarian regimes that were hostile to civil society, citizens often used problem-solving capabilities rather than social legitimacy to estimate the value of IGOs, and IGOs needed to ward against advantaging either the Western or the Eastern bloc. The eventual relaxation of these constraints showcases the dynamism of the real world. And, by pinpointing these constraints, the authors hint at the importance of the overall institutional context even while they opt to concentrate on INGOs' interactions with intergovernmental organizations.

Finally—and perhaps most important for a general international relations audience—broad quantitative analyses and deep case studies enable the authors to persuasively discredit the often-alluring idea that interactions between IGOs and civil society groups are primarily antagonistic. The idea of antagonism arose as a challenge to state-centric views of international politics (Tallberg et al., 254). Therefore, much scholarship touts civil society groups as "wild cards" (DeMars 2005) or "a third force" (Florini 2000) that contests (O'Brien et al. 2000), shames (Risse, Ropp, and Sikkink 1999), civilizes (Kaldor 2000), democratizes (Omelicheva 2009), reframes (Joachim 2003), reconstructs (Lipschutz 1992), and transforms (Cox 1999) the way states and intergovernmental organizations conduct global governance. And indeed, civil society groups have proved important as fire alarms or tattletales who monitor, expose, challenge, and castigate IGO activities (Newman 2010). Complementing research that questions

INGOs' fulfillment of a watchdog role (Chandhoke 2005; Jaeger 2007), Tallberg et al. warn that much previous research devotes disproportionate attention to non-governmental organizations' occasional "politically spectacular" behavior and downplays their prevalent roles as cooperative implementers and enforcers of state and IGO policies (Tallberg et al., 255). The authors' conclusion strikes a balance, resisting reversion to state-centrism while also placing a caveat on popular notions about INGOs.

However, after being situated within our framework, the book's uncovered ground becomes obvious. Without denying the relevance of internal or institutional factors, *Opening Up* focuses on Figure 1's middle layer: INGOs' interactions with other actors. This provides detailed information about access to intergovernmental organizations. But it leaves questions about what that access is produced by—for instance, which internal traits enabled some INGOs to overcome myriad Cold War-era constraints and permeate global governance structures even before the 1990s (Donini 1995). Similarly, it leaves questions about what that access, in turn, produces— for instance, whether alliances with civil society groups empower intergovernmental organizations to wrest tasks away from national institutions (Newman 2010; Johnson 2014). And it does not wrestle with questions of whether non-governmental organizations would ever want to distance themselves from IGOs rather than clamoring for access (Dany 2013). In short, there still is much to learn about when scholars and practitioners should expect interactions to be deep, consequential, or even desired by INGOs.

Because no book can explore every avenue, these unanswered questions are not necessarily shortcomings. Rather, they signal where Tallberg et al. can link with existing research, or where scholars must pursue new lines of research. And they become stark once *Opening Up* is placed within a framework that unites internal, interactive, and institutional factors.

Internal Traits

Internal factors receive much more extensive treatment in Wendy Wong's *Internal Affairs* (Wong 2012). Instead of examining network connections across organizations, she demonstrates the importance of understanding connections within organizations. Specifically, she believes that variation in the political salience of specific human rights can be traced to how agenda-setting power is structured inside various human rights INGOs. Agenda-setting power

involves three parts: (1) "proposal power" is the ability to put things forward for consideration by other actors within the INGO; (2) "enforcement power" is the ability to veto and force compliance, and (3) "implementation power" is the ability to execute the agenda. According to Wong, INGOs that decentralize the first two powers produce less focused or coherent agendas. Meanwhile, organizations that centralize the third have smaller, less active, less involved networks and are less able to adapt to new opportunities or challenges. The key, then, is to centralize proposal and enforcement power, while decentralizing implementation power.

To probe these ideas about the inner dynamics of non-governmental organizations, Wong offers an extensive investigation of Amnesty International, as well as smaller case studies of six other human rights INGOs. With qualitative data analysis, interviews, and historical process-tracing, she shows that an organization's internal traits can influence the extent to which it can make a chosen issue politically salient for outside actors. INGOs that keep proposal and enforcement power in the hands of relatively few individuals, but distribute implementation power among many affiliated people, can articulate and concentrate on a particular strategic vision while empowering other actors in their internal network to carry out that vision. Amnesty International exemplifies an organization that has succeeded in making its pet issues politically salient when its internal structure centralizes the first two agenda-setting powers but decentralizes the third.

We perceive several empirical and theoretical contributions flowing from Wong's probe of our framework's understudied micro layer. Empirically, she proposes an innovative operationalization of issue salience, arguing that the number of economic sanctions connected to a human rights issue can gauge an issue's political salience. She offers detailed data on nearly 100 years of state-based economic sanctions and finds that basic human rights have been the driving motivator for nearly half of all sanctions since the 1980s—a strong indication of political salience.

A problem, however, is that Wong uses this measure in her first chapter and does not apply it in her case studies or explicitly connect it to her theory of internal managerial structure. Correlating specific sanctions with INGO activities would bolster the evidence for her theory and more clearly link internal structure with issue salience. Additionally, though it is more accurate than counting treaties or INGO press releases, Wong's measure can underestimate the political salience of human rights issues. Legislation is the result of a messy multi-level game among

many political players with various preferences, and people who hold ideological or commercial interests in the target country often derail economic sanctions. Considering only those sanctions that make it through the legislative process undercounts issues that are politically infeasible but nevertheless politically salient.

Wong's heftier contributions are theory-related. As previously discussed, scholars frequently look at interactions among actors (i.e., the meso layer of our framework) to explain INGO activities. Some draw from organization theory, others draw from network theory. Wong persuasively points out that organization theory often misses informal arrangements, while also failing to trace outward political power back to an organization's inner workings (63). Meanwhile, network theory captures the importance of relationships for promoting human rights issues, especially as particular organizations become more central and powerful in their networks. But, Wong notes that network-based explanations do not explain how INGOs attain that centrality and power. To counter these theoretical deficiencies, she repurposes network theory to look at the vertical network relationships *within* individual organizations rather than focusing on the horizontal links *between* peer organizations. This allows her to examine power distributions within an organization: internal organizational factors shape the informal network ties between individuals and groups in the organization, ultimately shaping the organization's behavior and outputs.

By explaining the role of internal structures in setting global human rights agendas, *Internal Affairs* provides important insights into the micro layer of our framework, digging into forces behind the meso layer that is so often explored. A danger, however, is that the book seems to downplay interactive and institutional influences in order to focus intensively on the internal micro layer—as a result, generalizability becomes questionable. Amnesty's success in controlling the global human rights agenda provided the impetus to study the dynamics of internal INGO structure and behavior, and Amnesty's experiences inform Wong's theory of managerial structure and issue salience. Then, the bulk of the book tests this Amnesty-informed theory on Amnesty itself, with relatively brief examinations of Human Rights Watch, Oxfam, and others. The evidence applies well to Amnesty, but deeper analyses of other INGOs would give the theory greater external validity, showing whether this mix of agenda-setting traits is as effective when filtered through a variety of interactions and institutional environments

This returns to our framework, which suggests unanswered questions regarding the importance of internal factors. An organization could strike a perfect balance among the three parts of agenda-setting power yet still fail in shaping the global agenda. This may be due to obstacles stemming from additional internal factors, such as the staff's demographics, experiences, or training. It also could be due to obstacles in the non-governmental organization's institutional environment (Bloodgood, Tremblay-Boire, and Prakash 2014) or its interactions with states, IGOs, donors, and other actors (Carpenter 2014). The book does not specify when an organization's managerial structure will provide it enough power to overcome constraints in the overall institutional environment. Similarly, the book does not explore how various internal traits empower or hinder an INGO in its relationships with other actors.

Wong helpfully demonstrates that looking at internal structure is crucial to understanding INGO behavior, but her micro view can benefit from connections to the other layers. In ongoing collaborations (e.g., Stroup and Wong 2013), she more explicitly links internal traits to interactions and institutional environments, strengthening her findings in *Internal Affairs*. Doing so recognizes that looking inside INGOs is crucial for understanding their behavior, but it is not sufficient—internal, interactive, and institutional factors all play important roles.

Institutional Environment

Institutional factors are the centerpiece of Sarah Stroup's book *Borders Among Activists*. Stroup proposes that INGOs—even those that operate around the world and claim to transcend national borders—are deeply tied to the legal and cultural environments of their place of origin. A four-part typology depicts relevant institutional influences flowing from INGOs' home countries: (1) regulations, such as legal restrictions on advocacy or donations; (2) political opportunities, such as openings to engage with governmental decision-makers; (3) resources, such as norms and practices surrounding the availability, sources, or distribution of funds; and (4) social networks, such as ties to other key actors in a particular issue area.

With this typology, Stroup develops expectations about "varieties of activism." Specifically, she anticipates that the institutional environment of the home country explains differences in INGO behavior, including issue selection, advocacy and research agendas, and fundraising strategies. Drawing from interviews and archival research, she offers case studies of humanitarian and human rights INGOs based in France, the United Kingdom, and the United

States. The case studies suggest that national origin has a particularly pronounced effect on the activities of non-governmental organizations involved in humanitarian relief.

We applaud this investigation of our framework's macro layer. Considered alongside the other two books, *Borders Among Activists* provides complementary insights: even if actors inside or outside of INGOs are taken into account, INGO behavior is influenced by the broader institutional environment in which these actors must operate. In other words, factors from the internal and interactive layers also filter through a third, "institutional" layer to shape INGOs' behavior and outputs—and ultimately, their policy impact.

Stroup's typology is a powerful tool for analyzing institutional factors. For example, she demonstrates how the historical norms of philanthropic funding in the United States and the United Kingdom directly affect the fundraising practices and government relations of CARE USA and Oxfam International. CARE's tax-free donations and government grants—rooted in the American custom of governmental support for charities—result in subtle disincentives to oppose or censure the US government. Conversely, the British government's traditional absence of charitable funding forces Oxfam to seek private donations, but it also results in more freedom for the organization to question and criticize its home government. Stroup traces these legal and cultural differences into divergent strategies and outcomes. Both INGOs provided humanitarian relief during their home governments' occupation of Iraq, but influenced by their different funding structures, CARE remained relatively silent and uncritical while Oxfam took a public political stance against the war.

In addition to this typology, Stroup joins Tallberg et al. in moving beyond the constraints of historical institutionalism, instead leveraging sociological institutionalism for the study of INGOs. Domestic institutions can have a path-dependent influence on INGO behavior: organizations founded in the US, for instance, have a historic inclination toward seeking government grants. However, Stroup argues that the mechanism for this institutional influence is not just historical inertia or the result of a careful cost-benefit analysis. Rather, it is a kind of mimetic isomorphism: following a logic of appropriateness (DiMaggio and Powell 1983), charitable organizations adopt norms and strategies that match the institutional environment of their home countries.

Yet, perhaps the most important theoretical contribution is Stroup's emphasis on the continued importance of states in international politics. Stroup argues that states and borders do

indeed matter—and matter significantly—for global civil society, as INGOs clearly internalize those borders. This finding counters the notion that transnationalism and globalization have created a global civil society that lives outside the nation-state system and is not beholden to state-based politics (Lipschutz 1992; Slaughter 2004). Even though INGOs such as Amnesty International or Médecins Sans Frontières operate in dozens of countries worldwide, Stroup's evidence shows that the laws and norms of their home countries continue to exert a strong influence over their behavior. This is a substantial theoretic point. In fact, it probably deserves even greater emphasis and investigation, moving beyond the specific area of non-governmental organizations. Stroup's findings can and should be explored as an explicit corrective to the idea of borderlessness in the broader IR theoretical literature, not only in INGO scholarship.

Considering *Activists without Borders* within our framework reveals that the book provides numerous insights into the macro layer. However, with challenges concerning generalizability, it remains unclear how insights about the institutional environment should update what scholars and practitioners know about the other two layers. At the institutional layer: Stroup's research is based on charitable organizations headquartered in three Western democracies with clear legislation and regulations enabling social advocacy and philanthropy. Given the more erratic and restrictive environments of authoritarian states, her four-piece typology does not necessarily apply to these regimes—such as Chinese organizations working in sub-Saharan Africa, or global Islamic charities based around the Persian Gulf. And moving to the meso layer of our framework, it is unclear how INGOs' network connections with organizations from other countries influence their own behavior, especially when their foundational norms conflict. If an American INGO partners with a French organization, which domestic norms will have the most influence? Finally, relating to the micro layer: little is learned about the relationship between an INGO's internal norms and attitudes and those of relevant governments. Stroup assumes that INGO managers adopt national norms out of appropriateness, but what happens when an INGO willingly breaks the isomorphic mold and goes against national norms?

These questions go beyond the book's original scope, suggesting the frontiers for future research. Looking deeply at a single dimension of INGO behavior—as Stroup has done—is incredibly useful. Yet bridging the layers of our framework can yield even more complex mechanisms and insights.

Synergies and Avenues for Future Work

Situated in our framework, these three books enter a larger dialogue, offering a more holistic understanding of the internal, interactive, and institutional factors shaping INGO behavior. Tallberg et al.'s *Opening Up* explains the demand and supply of access points for INGOs within intergovernmental organizations. The other two books look "below" and "above" those sorts of interactions. Wong's *Internal Affairs*, operating at our micro layer, argues that an INGO's internal agenda-setting structure shapes its potential for policy success even before an INGO interacts with other actors. Stroup's *Borders Among Activists*, working in our macro layer, shows how interactions with other actors can not erase the importance of characteristics that INGOs adopt in response to their home country's institutional context—characteristics that these INGOs later transport to the institutional context of various target countries.

As we have demonstrated, each book explores the factors that determine INGO behavior *within* individual layers. Yet positioning these books in our framework also facilitates insight into the relationships *across* layers. Consider *Borders among Activists*. Institutional factors determine more than just the legal restrictions and boundaries INGOs face—they directly shape an INGO's internal features and interactions with other actors. Because French norms of philanthropy emphasize voluntarism, the government accordingly provides volunteers with substantial legal protection and occasional compensation (Stroup 2012, 58). As such, French INGOs are highly decentralized, relying heavily on non-professional volunteers for both planning and operations. These norms also help determine the network relationships between INGOs. Since French volunteers without professional associations lead them, French INGOs organize themselves into complex volunteer-based umbrella organizations that allow organizations to collaborate and compete across issue areas (Stroup 2012, 66–67). This illustrates an interplay between institutional factors and the other layers of our framework.

Viewed through internal, interactive, and institutional layers, the books hint at exciting terrain that remains to be explored. To see how our framework paves the way for consequential research extensions, consider two examples: the INGO-IGO interactions explored by Tallberg et al., and the environmental adaptation explored by Stroup.

Recall that Tallberg et al. focus on Figure 1's meso layer: interactions with other actors. In particular, *Opening Up* seeks to explain variation in intergovernmental organizations' formal access points for INGOs. And within that middle layer, additional questions arise. For instance,

what predicts whether interactions will look like co-optation or cooperation, rather than competition or conflict (Gordenker and Weiss 1996)? And when INGOs permeate intergovernmental organizations (Carpenter 2014), does that also enable intergovernmental organizations to permeate INGOs?

But directions for future work do not end there. Instead, additional research can extend Tallberg et al. and consider how the micro layer feeds into the meso layer. What sorts of traits privilege particular INGOs, making them attractive potential allies for intergovernmental organizations (Johnson 2014)? What are the internal characteristics exhibited by INGOs that have won deeper or earlier access within global governance structures (Newman 2010)?

Similarly, future work can consider how the meso layer feeds into the macro layer of Figure 1. Could partnerships with civil society not just enable intergovernmental organizations to carry out existing tasks, but also to subsume new tasks that national institutions had been handling (Farrell and Newman 2014; Johnson 2015)? Does INGOs' access within international intergovernmental organizations set a precedent, resulting in expanded in-roads into the institutional landscape of particular home or target countries as well (Steffek, Kissling, and Nanz 2008)? This kind of holistic understanding of INGO behavior—and ultimately, policies that result from it—requires our broader framework, which unites internal, interactive, and institutional factors.

Stroup's work offers another example of the utility of our holistic framework. In *Borders Among Activists*, she argues that legal, historical, and cultural institutional environments within INGOs' home countries shape their behavior. More could be done with a parallel argument: that the institutional environment of host or target countries also can define INGO behavior. Norms of philanthropy and efficiency, legal barriers to activism, and sensitivity to local politics can all influence how a non-governmental organization operates in its target countries. Regardless of regime type, the political context of the host influences INGO behavior. Authoritarianism, in particular, provides an ideal setting for observing institutional and environmental influences on INGO activity.

Autocrats use a variety of democratic-appearing institutions like legislatures, elections, or domestic civil society groups to counter challengers, create popular loyalty, and maintain regime longevity (Brownlee 2007; Gandhi and Przeworski 2007; Levitsky and Way 2010). International organizations also play a role in autocrats' calculus for stability. Authoritarian regimes engage

with intergovernmental organizations and transnational civil society selectively, following international norms and permitting INGO operations only when doing so helps these regimes "shore up [their] authority and legitimacy and . . . deflect international pressures" (Hawkins 1997). Accordingly, authoritarian regimes can use INGOs as unknowing pawns in a pursuit of international legitimacy.

However, little research has shown what INGOs do to mitigate these threats. What are the mechanisms for INGO self-preservation within authoritarian target countries? What determines when INGOs accommodate target country demands, obey legal restrictions, or oppose government intrusions into organizational practices? Future work in this vein would complement Stroup's research, emphasizing the institutional environment in which an INGO operates and highlighting how the politics of target countries can directly affect organizational behavior (Heiss 2015). Countries with extensive INGO restrictions will likely see less direct—and possibly less effective—INGO action. But this new research can be informed by links within and across the layers of our framework, too. At the internal layer, strong organizational beliefs in advocacy may keep a non-governmental organization engaged in the target country despite restrictions or attempts at co-optation; at the interactive layer, an INGO's connections to more central and influential organizations may provide it with some protection or leverage against authoritarian restrictions on INGO activity.

Clearly, a stimulating and fruitful research agenda lies ahead. Individually, these three books impressively advance our understanding of INGO behavior. And once they are situated within our framework, they are better able to speak to one another. The framework makes the broader theoretical and empirical contributions of these works more evident by permitting careful analysis of the internal, interactive, and institutional factors that influence INGOs' behavior and outputs.

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