# CONTENTS

Illustrations  xi  
Acknowledgments xv

1  Membership and International Cooperation  1  
   1.1 Defining IGO Membership  9  
   1.2 Membership in International Relations Theory  12  
   1.3 Geopolitical Alignment as Basis for IGO Cooperation  21  
   1.4 Chapter Overview  28  
   1.5 Conclusion  35  

2  Flexibility by Design: Rules for Accession  37  
   2.1 IGO Accession as Club Membership  40  
   2.2 International Society and Ending IGO Membership  48  
   2.3 Data on IGO Accession Rules  53  
      2.3.1 Founding Charter Documents  54  
      2.3.2 Participation Mandate  56  
      2.3.3 Conditionality Terms  61  
   2.4 Toward a Broader Understanding of Accession  68  
   2.5 Conclusion  69  

3  Membership Patterns in Economic Institutions  71  
   Christina L. Davis and Tyler Pratt  
   3.1 Geopolitics and Economic Cooperation  73  
      3.1.1 Testable Implications for Membership Patterns  74  

vii
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3.2</td>
<td><strong>Empirical Analysis of IGO Membership Patterns</strong></td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3.2.1 Data on Membership in Multilateral Economic Organizations</td>
<td>76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3.2.2 Logistic Regression Analysis of Membership</td>
<td>79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3.2.3 Finite Mixture Model of Weighted Decision-Making</td>
<td>85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>Conclusion</td>
<td>89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Accession to the GATT/WTO</td>
<td>92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>Christina L. Davis and Meredith Wilf</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.1</td>
<td><strong>Supply and Demand of Membership</strong></td>
<td>96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4.1.1 Discretionary Rules for GATT/WTO Accession</td>
<td>98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4.1.2 The Geopolitical Basis of the Multilateral Trade Regime</td>
<td>99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4.1.3 Examples of Accession Negotiations</td>
<td>101</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.2</td>
<td><strong>Empirical Analysis of Entry into GATT/WTO</strong></td>
<td>109</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4.2.1 Data on GATT/WTO Application and Accession</td>
<td>109</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4.2.2 Geopolitical Alignment and Trade Regime Membership</td>
<td>113</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.3</td>
<td>Conclusion</td>
<td>119</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>The OECD: More Than a Rich Country Club</td>
<td>123</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.1</td>
<td><strong>Vague Rules and Selective Enlargement</strong></td>
<td>127</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.2</td>
<td><strong>Selecting for Similar Type in the OECD</strong></td>
<td>129</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5.2.1 The OECD Accession Process</td>
<td>129</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5.2.2 The Price of Admission</td>
<td>132</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5.2.3 Why Bother? Understanding Demand for Membership</td>
<td>133</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5.2.4 Seeking Status through Association</td>
<td>136</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.3</td>
<td><strong>Common Features of the Like-Minded Club</strong></td>
<td>139</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.4</td>
<td><strong>Statistical Analysis of OECD Accession</strong></td>
<td>145</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
5.5 Case Studies of OECD Accession

5.5.1 Mexico 149
5.5.2 Korea 152
5.5.3 Eastern Europe 158

5.6 Brazil as a Nonmember Partner 160

5.7 Conclusion 173

6 Japan’s Multilateral Diplomacy 177

6.1 Japan’s Membership in International Organizations 180

6.2 Entry into International Society 185

6.2.1 Communicating with the World: UPU and ITU 186

6.2.2 International Bureau of Weights and Measures 191

6.3 Acting like a Great Power: Japan in the League of Nations 194

6.3.1 Joining the League 194

6.3.2 The International Labour Organization 197

6.3.3 Exiting the League and ILO 199

6.4 The Return to International Society 202

6.4.1 GATT Entry 204

6.4.2 OECD Entry 209

6.5 Leadership in East Asia 214

6.5.1 The Tale of Two Banks: ADB and AIIB 214

6.5.2 From Follower to Leader: Japan in TPP 226

6.6 Japan and the International Whaling Commission 246

6.7 Conclusion 253

7 Club Politics in Regional Organizations 257

7.1 Defining Regions 259

7.2 Evolving Membership Patterns 265

7.3 EU: The Security Prerequisite for Entry 280

7.4 ASEAN: Noninterference Elevated to Security Principle 300
Member selection forms one of the defining processes of social organization. Whether it be individuals joining a sports team or a social club or countries joining international organizations, the choice of membership imposes categories on who we are and what we do. Group membership determines status. Theories of socialization and institutional commitment depend on our understanding the full context of rules. Even the fundamental difference between types of government derives from the selection process for leaders. Without understanding who takes part in governance, one cannot understand the effectiveness of the organizations that we study. Certainly we know that few organizations are formed around a random sample of actors—self-selecting, screening for talent, and selling access to the highest bidder represents some of the many ways through which groups form.

How does member selection occur at the international level? The concern with selection bias has long confounded research on the effectiveness of international institutions because it is difficult to know whether the conditions leading to membership or the constraints of membership shape behavior. Few international organizations offer automatic admission. Even an organization like the United Nations that espouses universality encounters controversy over membership—North and South Korea were unable to join until 1991, Switzerland did not opt to join until 2002, and Palestine and Taiwan remain outsiders today. Nor do we see consistent enforcement of performance criteria with screening for quality. Indeed, some countries join organizations without making significant policy changes. How can we explain Turkey as a founding member of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
(OECD) in 1961 and communist Poland joining the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) in 1967? Even regional organizations constitute more than a geographic category, as seen by the British experience in joining the European Economic Community in 1973, 16 years after formation and its most recent decision to exit. Far from being automatic or technocratic, membership decisions are deeply political. States evaluate the benefits of joining the organization and their relationship with other members. Rather than treat biased entry into organizations as a nuisance for research on the effects of institutions, we must seek to understand the complex process by which states coalesce into groups that become members of an institution.

This book develops a theory about international organizations as discriminatory clubs of states. A core of like-minded states with common security interests choose to cooperate on other issues through joining together in international organizations. Their geopolitical alignment shapes who wants to join an organization, whether they are accepted into the club, and the price of entry. In contrast to theories that explain cooperation in terms of market failure within an issue area, my argument shows the channel by which security interests form the basis for cooperation and status. Geopolitical alignment generates the willingness to recognize the authority of another state as a rule-maker in global governance. Approving joint membership in international organizations allocates status. The empirical evidence highlights systematic biases in the patterns of states that enter international organizations. But this is not an argument about screening for compliance—states eschew the narrow selection criteria expected by a contractual approach in favor of discretionary selection as part of broad strategies of economic statecraft. Blackmail, side payments, and favoritism are rife in the accession politics of international organizations.

Despite the emphasis on public goods as the core problem for cooperation, many policy problems present impure public goods for which clubs can provide the benefits to a limited number while excluding others. Most international organizations include provisions for defining membership as a way to restrict cooperation to a subset of states. Moreover, international organizations are discriminatory because members care not only about provision of the cooperative good but also about the identity of other members. Rather than screening for states with the highest capacity, the process of joining international organizations often resembles entry into a social club that admits friends and excludes rivals. Where social clubs may rely on race or socioeconomic status as the basis for discrimination, states use geopolitical alignment as the basis for discrimination in decisions over organizational membership.
The discriminatory politics of membership embed within international society patterns of interaction. For example, not only NATO and other alliances, but also the European Union (EU), OECD, and international economic institutions like the GATT established boundaries of cooperation for a coalition of states that share a common security interest. The group of states commonly referred to as “the West” during the Cold War was defined by these overlapping memberships in institutions more than by a geographic location or liberal ideology. As a rising power, China pursues a strategy that first brings countries together under its umbrella for cooperation in institutions. From its co-leadership with Russia of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation starting in 2002 to formation of the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank in 2016, China unites like-minded states in institutions as a way to build a sphere of influence. Weaker states also use institutional agglomeration as a step toward unified action. The formal rules of membership draw lines to establish who is expected to act together, which is a critical component of social norms.

The argument places security first in the sequence of cooperation. Yet the security interests that motivate coalition-building through shared memberships in institutions are more diffuse than specific threats to survival. Joining organizations is a tool of soft power diplomacy—organizational membership represents an investment in relationships with other states. In some cases, states offer preferential entry to a potential cooperation partner as a reward and bribe intended to entice them toward closer relations. Here institutions broaden and deepen the ties among states that are not allies. In other cases, shared membership helps states to consolidate alliance ties through expanding the range of issues for cooperation beyond security. Finally, rivalry manifests itself through excluding enemies from organizations as a strategy to deny access to both material benefits and relational networks.

This sequential enlargement privileges early entry by allies and gradual enlargement to include others after the rules and membership coalition of allied states have already been consolidated. When allowed to enter, non-allied states may pay a higher price through larger reform commitments relative to the easy path to entry given to allies. Yet overexpansion may arise if too many join. The need to reconfigure which groups of states are willing to work together has become a factor driving the fragmentation of global governance across multiple overlapping international organizations.

The theory looks beyond great power politics. Major powers are at the forefront of establishing institutions and serving as gatekeepers over membership, but they are not the only ones to use this strategy. Coalitions form through a
joint decision by states to form a group, and security interests shape not only the motives of powerful states who lead but also the willingness of others to participate. If anything, smaller states have greater need to use institutions as a way to expand ties and establish their position within the social hierarchy of the international system. For marginal states seeking to normalize relations after a rupture, entry into organizations signals commitment to joint actions and mutual recognition.

The question of whether to join or leave a major international organization goes to the highest levels of authority within a state—these are not decisions left to mid-level diplomats. The Brexit referendum on UK membership in the EU absorbed national politics for years. But even for less high-profile cases, the decisions are taken very seriously. The Mexican debate over joining the GATT offers an interesting example. Having declined to join the original GATT agreement in 1948—the Finance Minister denounced it as a threat to national industries—the government began talks about joining in 1979. Working party negotiations were going well, with GATT members agreeing to allow flexibility for Mexico to preserve many of its core developmental state policies. Alongside those negotiations, Mexican president José López Portillo conducted a domestic evaluation on the merits of GATT accession, with input from economic analysts and in consultation with industry and labor groups. The question was covered in front-page media commentary (Ortiz Mena, 2005, pp. 221–222). Critics portrayed accession as a move toward dependence on the United States as well as a threat to economic sovereignty and the development model writ large. The final vote of the cabinet in March 1980 opposed accession. López Portillo announced the postponement of GATT accession on the forty-second anniversary of Mexico’s expropriation of U.S. oil companies, framing rejection of the GATT in terms of Mexican nationalism and anti-American policy (Story, 1982, p. 775).¹ Eventually the government did join the GATT in 1986, after relations with the United States had significantly improved and economic reform held new urgency (Davis and Wilf, 2015).

The foreign policy process at the domestic level reinforces the security framing of membership decisions. The executive leadership and foreign

¹ Story (1982) contends that the desire to show independence from the United States perversely pushed López Portillo to decline joining after receiving strong pressure from the United States that it should become a member. López Portillo’s relations with the Carter administration were poor at this time.
ministry prioritize security, and they are the lead actors who set the agenda to seek membership. Later, during ratification, other domestic actors must accept or decline membership as a package deal. Broad foreign policy identity augments the attractiveness of an organization that confers status by means of deepening association with other like-minded states. Or, as in the example of Mexico in the GATT, foreign policy tensions could reduce the appeal of joining. Actors who may have little understanding or interest in the details of the rules will pay attention to the high politics of joining an organization.

Outside the scope of specific policy reforms and institutional constraints, membership plays a role in defining how states fit within international society. When protests erupted in Ukraine in 2013 over the choice between joining a customs union with Russia or signing a trade agreement with Europe, the issue represented more than any terms contained in the agreement—it signaled the future direction of Ukraine: to be a European democracy or to remain within the sphere of Russia. The brutal war to come saw its origins in this turning point. Further back in history, Japan joined the founders of the International Labour Organization in 1919 as part of its foreign policy goal to follow world trends and achieve major power status as a permanent member of the League of Nations, while the government expressed grave concerns about the possibility of foreign imposition of restrictions on labor policies. Neither the trade interests of Ukraine nor the labor policies of Japan would account for their membership choices. Through membership in international institutions, they sought to shape their association with other states. States join organizations as much for the benefit of status gained by their association with a particular group of states as for the need to cooperate on a particular set of policies.

Ending membership represents the ultimate sanction because it breaks all association with the other actor. Russia’s invasion of Ukraine provoked proposals to exclude it from international organizations—in 2014, after the first invasion, accession talks for Russia to join the OECD were put on hold, and Russia was removed from the G8; the second invasion in 2022 led the OECD to terminate the Russian accession process, while the Council of Europe voted to end Russia’s membership in the organization. An emergency session of the World Tourism Body was called to hear a proposal to expel Russia from its

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2. Many inside and outside of Ukraine portrayed the decision as putting its reputation at stake even when the actual levels of economic integration would not have changed in significant ways. Rejection of the association agreement in September 2013 triggered street protests and shook investors’ confidence in Ukrainian sovereign debt (Gray and Hicks, 2014, pp. 331–332).
membership, and some called for suspending its membership in the International Monetary Fund (IMF), World Bank, and World Trade Organization (WTO). These were unusual requests, as states rarely ask for and even more rarely succeed in expelling other states. In contrast, offering membership entry as a sign of solidarity happens more often. After years of deflecting Ukraine’s wish to enter the EU, in response to Russian aggression the President of the European Commission Ursula von der Leyen proclaimed in February 2022 that “Ukraine is one of us and we want them in EU.” Seeking to enhance its ties to Europe, Georgia filed its application to join the EU days after the Russian invasion of its neighbor. In reality Georgia and Ukraine have years before membership, but just the act of applying offers a symbolic step to deepen the association with Europe.

Belonging to institutions has a significant impact on behavior. Empirical studies assess the importance of specific institutions in shaping outcomes within the issue area through comparison of policies of members and non-members. Scholars examine how the number of memberships across international organizations more generally can shape trade or conflict (Russett and Oneal, 2001; Boehmer, Gartzke, and Nordstrom, 2004; Ingram, Robinson, and Busch, 2005). Bearce and Bondanella (2007) find there is significant convergence of interests among states that share common IGO membership.

Theories of international institutions explain demand for cooperation that arises from the interest in the issue area regulated. This suggests that membership rules would be clearly defined, whether by laying out eligibility for a universal organization or by establishing rigorous conditions for a restrictive organization. To maximize cooperation, accession would follow a review of whether a state meets the provisions in agreements. Members could conduct this review themselves or delegate to a committee or bureaucracy.

Therefore it is puzzling that the rules of membership are discretionary and flexible. In a comprehensive review of charter provisions in international organizations, I find that a surprising number of international organizations are quite vague about membership criteria. Founding members sign up without any review process, while those who join through enlargement may negotiate terms with members but typically do so absent formal guidelines. Club IGOs


4. For example, see literature on WTO (Rose, 2004; Gowa and Kim, 2005; Goldstein, Rivers, and Tomz, 2007) or environmental policies (Young, 1999; Breitmeier, Underdal, and Young, 2011).
steer a middle course between universality and precise entry conditions. Choosing flexible membership rules supports discriminatory membership. Such institutional design provides maximal discretion to change the terms of membership as part of strategic bargains. Governments have opted to allow themselves discretion over membership in a wide range of institutions from NATO to the WTO. This discretion can be applied to lower the entry bar for some states and raise it for others. Within these organizations, geopolitical alignment strongly predicts membership patterns.

As a club IGO, the OECD illustrates wide discretion over membership. While the organization is often viewed as an exclusive grouping of rich industrial democracies that advocate liberal economic policies and business regulatory standards, the reality is more complex. The OECD counts Turkey as a founding member, welcomed Mexico in 1994 before it had either completed its democratization process or achieved high income status, and most recently admitted Colombia to become its thirty-seventh member. Close affinity with the United States and Europe matter as much as economic policies to explain such decisions. In contrast, since expressing interest in the organization in the mid-1990s, Russia’s effort to join was first slowed by reviews of problems in its banking sector and corruption, and then halted in response to the invasion of Ukraine.

Charter provisions are even more sparse when it comes to expelling a member from the organization. One might expect that states would enforce compliance through provisions for suspending or even terminating membership of repeat offenders. Designing terms to end a contract in case of violation would strengthen the commitment device of joining the institution. But states do not adopt this strategy of conditional membership. Few international organizations have terms for expelling a member based on noncompliance. As EU negotiators confronted the Greek debt crisis in 2010, the concern about Greek exit missed the point that while Greece could vote itself out of the union, the other EU members could not vote to throw it out! States can act outside of treaty rules, of course, but they do so in order to ostracize a pariah state rather than to enforce rules. For example, the majority of members in the Universal Postal Union (UPU) voted to expel South Africa as an expression of opposition to Apartheid policies, and they did so despite objections that there were no rules in the organization for expulsion and no evidence that South Africa had acted contrary to IGO principles for postal service cooperation. The area most likely to witness suspension is democratic backsliding, not regulatory violations. And even then, democratic backsliding by strategic partners is usually not targeted (Borzyskowski and Vabulas, 2019a).
Individual country departures correspond to a geopolitical rift. The World Health Organization (WHO) has been the center of controversy in superpower rivalries on numerous occasions—the USSR left the World Health Assembly (WHA) in 1949 to protest what they said were unfair actions by the WHO to withhold medical supplies from Eastern Europe (Fee and Brown, 2016). President Trump dramatically announced he would exit the organization amidst a pandemic because he saw the organization as favoring China.\(^5\) Cuba departed the IMF within five years of its revolution over a disagreement about repayment of loans by the Batista government that had just been overthrown. Others have had disagreements with the IMF over loans, but without exiting, though geopolitical tensions may impede the willingness of governments to work through a deal.\(^6\) In their analysis of 200 exit cases, Borzyskowski and Vabulas (2019b) show that foreign policy affinity among members reduces the likelihood of exit.

Viewing international institutions as clubs embedded within broader political relations among states explains the rarity of expulsion. Just as governments do not revoke citizenship as punishment for criminal actions, most IGOs do not include expulsion as a tool for enforcing compliance. Political selection to get into international organizations magnifies the significance of expulsion threats. Not only would it deny the benefits of cooperation, but expulsion would also constitute a rejection of continued association and removal of status within international society. States would not be willing to confront a threat of expulsion for failing to meet criteria that were not necessary for entry. Such provisions would be incompatible with the entire notion of joining a community.

This book will develop a theory to explain why states use club membership design for accession and how they take advantage of the discretion over conditionality and participation mandate to inject geopolitics into their membership decisions. The vague terms and room for exclusion at the time of entry represent a flexibility mechanism in the institutional design. Ad hoc criteria facilitate statecraft that uses IGO membership as carrot and stick to advance purposes beyond cooperation on the issues regulated by the rules.

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\(^5\) The emergence of leaders seeking to end isolation brought the governments back. Nikita Khrushchev sought “peaceful co-existence” with the United States, and as part of this strategy returned to active engagement in WHO in 1955; President Joseph Biden terminated the process of U.S. withdrawal from the WHO.

\(^6\) The Castro government went on to repay the loans without rejoining the organization (Boughton, 2016, p. 5).
1.1 Defining IGO Membership

Membership politics are the process by which states set boundaries around a community of states for cooperation. At the level of self-governing villages, the first design principle of cooperation is setting boundaries for the group (Ostrom, 2000). Global governance also requires community. When going beyond the village, community cannot be taken for granted. Nationalism looms large in the community-building process to form state boundaries. Anderson (2016) established the paradigm to view imagined communities that develop when individuals become conscious of belonging with a particular political group. In Anderson’s societal argument, the development of capitalism and the printed word opened horizontal ties of shared experience that facilitated identity aggregation.

At the international level, states must also set boundaries and build communities to facilitate governance. They do so through membership in international organizations. An international organization can serve as a forum to gather states together and a resource to facilitate cooperation. An IGO can become an actor that empowers transnational bureaucrats for independent action (Hurd, 2021). Through each of these processes, the IGO builds on relational ties among states and further deepens those ties. The gains of cooperation provide incentives for states to limit joint action to subgroups. Interactions among states create the coherence for shared identity that determines who is included within these boundaries.

The commitment to ongoing interaction differentiates membership from simple treaty commitments. Governments bind themselves together as a group and not just as independent actors agreeing to specific terms about behavior. Hooghe, Lenz, and Marks (2019, p. 15), in their theory of international organization, describe the nature of an evolving cooperation project among members as part of the sociality of incomplete contracting that occurs in international organizations. They emphasize that “participants are not merely making a bargain. They are also consenting to an iterated process of negotiation as circumstances change.” The layering of new commitments will often occur at a lower level of approval, without a return to the same domestic ratification process.

This book examines formal intergovernmental organizations (IGOs). These are organizations that are established by three or more states and have a permanent headquarters, with regular meetings among member states. Their founding documents include membership criteria and obligations. The set of formal IGOs encompasses organizations with little institutional structure,
such as the Association of Southeast Nations at its formation in 1967, and those with more of an institutional “footprint,” such as the United Nations. It also includes organizations with a narrow focus on a single issue, such as OPEC, and those with a broader scope, such as the OECD.

International organizations sometimes include more complex structures to accomplish tasks, such as emanation organizations or subcommittees. These secondary levels of organizational structure are not the focus of analysis here. In most cases the membership in the primary organization corresponds directly to membership in the subordinate organization. Informal organizations also represent a critical arena for diplomacy that is subject to socializing effects (Vabulas and Snidal, 2013; Roger, 2021). But this lies outside the scope of this study. My focus lies in explaining the puzzle of informal practices that seep into formal structures.

What counts as membership? There are many forms of interaction with an IGO that can fall short of membership but nonetheless represent meaningful diplomacy. For example, observer status is widely used by the United Nations and the OECD. The GATT allowed a range of ad hoc roles that have been considered de facto membership in some studies (Goldstein, Rivers, and Tomz, 2007). This book will focus on formal membership, while considering the intervening steps that may precede a country’s joining the organization. Informal participation can ebb and flow, with little observable indication to outsiders.

More importantly, there is a substantive difference in the commitment level of a country that chooses to attend meetings and its decision to formally commit to abide by all requirements of membership, including budgetary support and rule compliance. Formal membership brings voting rights and governance authority that implicates status as an equal actor.

There is a demand and a supply side to membership. First, a government must seek to join. What motivates states to seek entry? There have been occasions of coercive pressure, such as Russian threats and bribes to induce former Soviet Republics to join the Commonwealth of Independent States. But at some level, sovereign states choose whether to seek membership. Not all are successful. An applicant must earn approval from other members.

7. See Gray (2018) for measures of this vitality of organizations that records emergence of zombies at the IGO level where activity wanes but the organization remains. It would be more challenging to document the change of engagement at the state level.

8. Others have given attention to expansion of access for nongovernmental organizations that in some cases become members of IGOs (Tallberg et al., 2013). This book focuses on state membership in intergovernmental IGOs.
This leads to the supply side of membership, whereby other states accept an applicant subject to conditions. What incentives shape entry conditions and approval? The conditions set by members can also influence outcomes. Some countries initiate membership talks but do not complete them. This book will examine the application and the approval stages for individual international organizations and country experiences. The more aggregate analysis of membership patterns, however, will examine the final membership outcome.

States can become a member either as a founder of the organization or by accession. While there are important differences in the bargaining dynamic experienced by founding states and accession states, this book will treat both forms of joining an IGO as membership. At formation, the demand and supply constraints occur in a simultaneous negotiation over the IGO itself. For accession, the late joining state has less ability to renegotiate the terms of the IGO and is more likely to face one-sided conditions for entry. Nonetheless, states whose participation is critical to the IGO may be in a position to bargain for better terms. Therefore even accession states may shape the rules.

There are three ways for membership to end—dissolution of the IGO, exit, and expulsion. This book focuses on the state-level decisions toward membership, which includes the latter exit and expulsion cases. Indirectly, these actions contribute to the broader trends in the evolution of the IGO population. The “death” of organizations can be seen as the cumulative exit decisions of members who have changing interests toward the issue or in their relations with each other. While geopolitical rivalry provides the core motivation for entry into the organization, rapprochement brings IGO dissolution (e.g., the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance at the end of the Cold War). For others, the emergence of geopolitical rivalry among members acts as catalyst for death, especially in the case of security IGOs (Eilstrup-Sangiovanni, 2020).

Finally, it is important to acknowledge that membership can imply different levels of activity and distribution of benefits. Some members lack influence or choose not to participate (Stone, 2011; Davis and Bermeo, 2009; Libman and Obydenkova, 2013; Hooghe et al., 2017). Research on the vitality of organizations suggests wide variation in the degree to which members engage with each other and deliver expected policy coordination (Gray, 2018). Viola (2020) shows that in many cases the expansion of participation accompanies restriction of rights through procedural rules that favor incumbents. A large swathe of empirical research examines the effectiveness of individual international organizations. Debates continue on whether the trade regime increases trade flows, multilateral aid promotes development, or human rights courts.
raise protection of rights. One could reasonably ask, why study membership if some states never attend meetings or change their policies? While there are certainly examples of meaningless membership, they are not the norm. At the outset at least, accepting formal rules brings an expectation of compliance (Franck, 1990; Hooghe et al., 2017). By exploring who comes to the table, this book lays an important foundation for understanding the role of international institutions.

### 1.2 Membership in International Relations Theory

International relations theory highlights power, material benefits, and social norms as motives for states to join institutions. Examining each in turn reveals the gaps that remain for understanding membership.

**Hegemony and rule creation**

Powerful states often take the lead role in establishment of IGOs. Writing the rules of international order promotes their interests in systemic stability and a political order that reinforces their own position (Krasner, 1976; Gilpin, 1981; Kindleberger, 1986). Lake (2009) argues that a hierarchy among states arises from differential power and forms the basis for social contracts that establish an authority structure between dominant and subordinate states. Institutions connect these partners more closely to work together for common interests, and membership changes such as NATO enlargement broaden the reach of U.S. hierarchy (Lake, 2009, p. 134). Lascurttes (2020) highlights how excluding rivals through membership rules is necessary to support the depth of behavior rules among the subgroup of states that support the order.

What determines the threshold when the hegemon will value participation of other states more than the risk of losing control over the organization? Stone (2011) argues that informal influence allows the United States to balance competing goals for participation and control. He argues that institutions such as the IMF and the WTO induce the hegemon to follow the rules in normal times while allowing deviation over critical issues. This theory suggests IGOs will admit a broad membership on the assumption that there is differential application of the rules. Sponsoring allies and former colonies for

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9. While power is the basis of hegemonic leadership over institutional creation, the specific orientation of the hegemon toward the ideas of liberal multilateralism shape their propensity to build institutions (Ikenberry, 2001).
membership represents an important side of informal politics exercised in the shadow of universalistic rules.

Small states also form and join IGOs. Democratizing states fit rules to their own needs in new organizations and join at higher rates than other states as a way to provide for public demands (Poast and Urpelainen, 2013, 2018). Outside of institutions they have the least influence and their capacity constraints often prevent their achieving important governance tasks. International cooperation offers a solution to their weakness—even if power asymmetry continues within a rule framework. Gruber (2000, p. 8) contends that large states use their “going it alone” capacity to force on smaller states terms that they would not prefer over the status quo, while setting new baselines such that joining a coercive institution is still better than “being completely shut out.”

Even within the constraints of power, states retain the choice to join. At the multilateral level, participation arises from a national decision and a collective decision. This requires looking more carefully at how IGOs form a club with capacity to provide benefits to members and exclude benefits from nonmembers.

**Designing Rules to Overcome Barriers to Collective Action**

Demand for regimes arises when states would benefit from cooperation and an institution helps them overcome market failures that would prevent such cooperation. Keohane (1984) develops the core logic of functional demand for institutions based on their ability to lower transaction costs. His theory focuses on the collective action problems and asymmetric information that characterize cooperation for public goods. On the assumption that benefits are non-rival and non-excludable, institutions are necessary to provide information, monitor compliance, and link issues in ways that support cooperation among a large group. Membership itself is not a central question. For a pure public good, screening membership is ineffective because members and nonmembers alike can benefit from the cooperative output.

Nevertheless, limiting cooperation to a subset of states is widespread practice by international institutions. Using a club model of cooperation builds on common interests within a smaller group of states on a subset of issues—for example, the early years of the trade regime excluded illiberal states and kept narrow focus on trade policies at the border to facilitate easier bargaining over agreements (Keohane and Nye, 2001). Trade policies allow states to discriminate in provision of market access to members and nonmembers in
the multilateral trade regime, and governments apply elaborate rules of origin to further differentiate trade among states with preferential trade agreements (e.g. Gowa and Kim, 2005; Mansfield and Milner, 2015). States rely on alliances to defend against shared threats, with careful selection of members to maximize security (Sandler, 1999). This reflects the fact that many cooperation problems constitute impure public goods where exclusion is possible.

Even in the area of climate change, which represents a classic public goods issue, Keohane and Victor (2011) argue that the environmental regime complex will function better when multiple institutions such as the G8 and EU compete to find solutions to problems among smaller clubs of leading governments. In order to transform environmental cooperation into a club good, Nordhaus (2015) recommends linking climate policies to trade. He proposes using tariffs as a punitive measure against states that do not join the climate change organization. The article highlights that the key to success for international cooperation lies in finding an effective exclusion mechanism. Yet few IGOs follow this solution to expand issue scope and coerce membership through punitive sanctions. Doing so relies on positive utility from enacting sanctions for current members, and this rarely attains credibility. Even in the trade mechanism suggested by Nordhaus (2015), economic theory and empirical trends in trade agreements both contradict his assumption that all states benefit from raising tariffs. More often, such as in the IAEA or climate change protocol, issue linkage uses various forms of aid as a carrot to entice membership. In both positive or negative sanctions in a universal group and reducing membership to smaller groups, these theories recommend changing the issue scope so that cooperation can be treated as a club good for provision by a subgroup of states rather than as universal cooperation for public good provision.

This leads to the question of how states design the exclusion mechanism for international institutions. To address fears of free riding and cheating, membership conditions should represent a significant hurdle such that those unwilling to comply with the rules will not become members (Koremenos, Lipson, and Snidal, 2001). Lower barriers to entry would be expected for coordination games like standard-setting, where wider participation generates more benefits. This leads to contradictory predictions for membership provisions when cooperation involves both distributional and enforcement challenges (Koremenos, Lipson, and Snidal, 2001, p. 796).

The trade-off between depth of rules and breadth of participation can be considerable in the face of diverse state interests. The optimal size of an IGO depends on the enforcement concerns and the distribution of gains.
from cooperation in an issue area as well as on the preferences of states (e.g. Martin, 1992; Drezner, 2007; Koremenos, 2016). A small group with similar preferences can more readily reach agreement for cooperation and faces fewer monitoring problems (Kahler, 1992; Downs and Rocke, 1995; Thompson and Verdier, 2014). This justifies rigorous screening based on performance capacity. In the context of public goods provision, however, a smaller group also means that other states can free ride as they choose not to contribute to cooperation at the high level demanded (Stone, Slantchev, and London, 2008). The substantive significance of “deep” agreements diminishes due to the limited number of participants. A larger membership gains from pooling resources and taking advantage of the economies of scale, which is the rationale for cooperation through formal organizations in the first place (Abbott and Snidal, 1998).

Where international relations theories highlight distributional conflict over accession, they build the expectation for international organizations to sort states into subgroups with similar preferences on the regulated issue. Downs, Rocke, and Barsoom (1998) suggest the optimal pathway for cooperation outcomes lies in sequential liberalization, whereby small groups set the rules and gradually expand to admit new members after their preferences have converged. Gray, Lindstädt, and Slapin (2017) model enlargement scenarios in which the location of the original group and applicants on a unidimensional space determine the probability for enlargement. Small and homogenous founding groups can achieve stable enlargement without changing the organization, whereas a more diverse set of founding states may find that misperceptions about applicants lead to enlargement that changes the level of ambition in agreements. Both of these theories focus on the unidimensional preferences of members in the issue regulated by the regime. Voeten (2021) contends that the differences among states lie within a low-dimensional space that can be defined in terms of support for the Western liberal order. Viola (2020) develops a theory of how states manage diversity through a strategy of assimilative multilateralism, with entry conditional on conformity within a specific range of issues. These theories follow the logic that similarity supports cooperation, but leave open the question of how states coalesce around similar interests within the regime issue area or broader world order.

The institutional design theories reviewed here highlight the importance of studying conditions for entry. Yet they cannot answer why so few IGOs apply rigorous screening. Letting in noncompliers lowers cooperation while adding to the burden of high cooperation states.
The Social Role of Organizations

States may look outside of the policies regulated by the regime when considering the benefits of collaboration with particular states. Association with other actors through organizational membership carries spillover effects. Joint membership forms an association that shapes investor perceptions and security coalitions (Gray, 2009; Brooks, Cunha, and Mosley, 2015; Henke, 2019). Following the foundational work of Bull (1977), I examine international society from a perspective that heeds both power and the dimensions that are based on a social process of interaction and shared community norms. Hooghe, Lenz, and Marks (2019, p. 2) make the critical point that “we need to consider how participants feel about being bound together in collective rule” through studying international governance as it serves functional and social purposes. They compare market traders to those bound in marriage to illustrate how the different perceptions of community could influence cooperation. This turns us to the question of group formation. Absent dating services, how do states form the right group with a sense of community? Membership decisions account for the probability of cooperation by the new entrant and the expected gains from establishing a closer association.

When members care about both the shared good and the attributes of other members, they may devise “discriminatory clubs” that select according to the desirability of the applicant and not just their expected contribution to cooperation outcomes (Cornes and Sandler, 1996, p. 385). As an example, members in a social club care not only about the entertainment activity itself but also about member composition. This changes the logic of cooperation. In most models of membership in institutions, the bargaining problem models anonymous states holding proportional contribution to cooperation based on their size and interests (e.g. Stone, Slantchev, and London, 2008). In discriminatory clubs, where the attributes of other actors are important to members, the utility of joining a club consists of two components—provision of goods by the club, and consumption of characteristics of other members (Cornes and Sandler, 1996, p. 385). When members care about who joins, there is “nonanonymous crowding” in the provision of the club good. The common example is a golf club, where members value association with those of high socioeconomic status as opposed to simply caring about the number of people using the course or their golf abilities. There are several reasons why governments should care about which states they form ties with through IGO membership.
First, membership defines legal status. Belonging to organizations forms the basis of a state's position in international society. Recognition by other states is necessary to establish international legal sovereignty, but there are no consistent rules guiding such recognition (Krasner, 1999, p. 15). Indeed, research on diplomatic recognition, which is the most basic status requirement, indicates that relational variables matter more than country attributes (Kinne, 2014; Duque, 2018). In addition to diplomatic recognition by other states, membership in organizations such as the United Nations is one of the most visible forms of recognition. States that may otherwise not benefit from full rights of sovereignty in the sense of independent control of their territory may nonetheless gain equality through membership, such as the case of India being a member of the League of Nations and founding member of the United Nations while it remained a British colony. Diplomatic recognition reveals network effects in which states pattern their own decisions on those of other states that are seen as friends (Kinne, 2014, p. 248). Similar kinds of dependent decisions across IGOs occur, such as when membership in the United Nations forms a precondition for membership in many other organizations. Each additional membership can reinforce the extent to which a state enjoys recognition. As distinct from the specific benefits of the IGO, through supporting international legal sovereignty, IGO membership brings diffuse benefits that include both material and normative resources, such as prestige before domestic audiences from the appearance at international venues and reassurance to investors about certainty of contracts when dealing with a recognized state (Krasner, 1999, p. 16).

Second, membership creates peer groups. Through the activities of an organization, opportunities for interaction with other members increase and the norms of the organization shape behavior of members. States become identified with the organization such that the members' own reputation can be influenced by the reputation of fellow members of the organization. Both economic and security actors may respond to this reputation in ways that generate material consequences. Organizational membership can impact country risk ratings and bond yields. Dreher and Voigt (2011) find that independently of the quality of domestic institutions, membership in international organizations improves the country risk rating. Gray (2013) identifies peer effects in

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10. Social identity theories may not readily apply to the formation of collective identity among states, but state recognition provides a first step in such a process. See the discussion by Greenhill (2008).
which a state joining an organization can be seen as a better or worse investment environment simply because of its association with a particular group of states through joint membership in a regional economic organization. She theorizes that investors use the IGO membership information to inform their risk assessment, and finds evidence that bond yields change in response to accession negotiations.

Third, membership establishes a forum for interaction. States build trust through social ties, which can occur irrespective of the issue area of cooperation and hold positive externalities for trade and security. The step to establishing closer relations through participation in a formal organization with joint governance creates opportunities for members both to learn more about each other and to form in-group identity. Indeed, Ingram, Robinson, and Busch (2005) find sociocultural IGOs promote trade as much as economic IGOs. Yet the quality and degree of interaction may vary depending on the institutional context and relative status of each additional tie for groups of states. Boehmer, Gartzke, and Nordstrom (2004) find that membership in structured IGOs with formal rules and procedures reduces the probability of conflict onset, while Hafner-Burton and Montgomery (2006) emphasize IGO membership holds pacifying effect conditional on how the IGO determines the social network position of a state. Taking a network approach to examine convergence of IGO membership, Kinne (2013a) shows that deepening ties across IGOs reduces the probability of militarized disputes. This could arise through states screening out conflict-prone states when making membership decisions (Donno, Metzger, and Russett, 2015). States that associate together in IGOs send informative signals about their type to both potential investors and disputants.

Across each of these dimensions, the attributes of other members shape the benefits of shared membership. States will want to be selective about whom they recognize as equal and associate with as a peer for greater interactions. They hold incentives to favor entry for states with desirable characteristics. Criteria for discrimination in social clubs range from income to race, but it is unclear what would be the equivalent criteria for desirable attributes of states within international society. Region, economic development, prestige, and security alliances all form potential bases for discrimination. Internal politics may elevate one dimension over another.

The promise of gains from status by association makes membership more attractive. A government could even decide to join an organization that offers few benefits from the provision of goods but yields large status gains from
association with a particular group of states. Classifications within organizations take on larger significance because of their role of sorting states into groups.\footnote{In one such example, states seek to “graduate” from World Bank lending programs despite the prospect of less foreign aid, and undertake more political reforms for this goal (Carnegie and Samii, 2017).} At the same time, members may screen out those who offer less benefits from association even when they could otherwise meet performance conditions for compliance with rules. This can be seen from data on networks of diplomatic recognition, whereby states cue off of central states’ decisions more than of those on the periphery (Kinne, 2014).

States have reason to fear that they will be branded according to joint association with other states. Johnson (2011) argues that there is a process of guilt by association, whereby unfavorable views toward one member can lead to overall skepticism toward the organization as a whole. The perception that the hostile state holds institutional or ideational influence gives rise to such negative feelings, which is supported by evidence from public opinion polls. Gray (2013) further demonstrates that the strength of association with other states can have unexpected spillover; membership in a regional organization will impact bond yields, as members gain better reputation from joining an organization with low risk countries and suffer when joining an organization with high risk countries.

Group membership is how international society allocates status across states. But rather than being a uniform and objective metric, status by association varies according to the criteria used as the exclusion mechanism in group formation. Dafoe, Renshon, and Huth (2014, p. 375) define the concept:

‘Status’ is an attribute of an individual or social role that refers to position vis-a-vis a comparison group; status informs patterns of deference and expectations of behavior, rights, and responsibilities. Status categories may be dichotomous (e.g. membership in a group) or rank based (e.g. position in a hierarchy). A change in an actor’s status implies a change in at least one other actor’s status, either because of a change in rank or because of a (perhaps slight) change in the meaning of membership in a group.

The connection to membership is clear—status is a function of community recognition, and joint membership in organizations is one visible signal of such recognition. While diplomatic recognition is the baseline of status, membership in organizations offers a more differentiated perspective. Paul, Larson,
and Wohlforth (2014, p. 7) define status as “beliefs about a state’s ranking on valued attributes,” such as wealth or diplomatic clout, and note that status manifests itself in international politics through “membership in a defined club of actors.” Elite clubs like the G7 or the permanent five members of the UN Security Council are considered status markers.

The pursuit of status has long served as motivation of states. From Thucydides to contemporary scholarship, theories account for wars fought in the name of honor and prestige. Keohane (2010) advocates “esteem” as a source of incentives for governments to support climate change policies. Although there are different nuances across terms, one can reasonably aggregate honor, prestige, and esteem as forms of status. Furthermore, the rival nature of status can also be understood through its relative position. If all states are members of an organization, membership no longer confers status to one state relative to another. Finally, the status by association in IGO membership is differentiated by the quality of other members rather than simply by an attribute of one state.

Notably, status as a motivation for entry into organizations differs from both the socialization that occurs after joining and scripted behavior. Johnston (2001) argues that institutions represent a social context in which shaming and backpatting influence states toward compliance. This socialization process, however, depends on the state having first joined the organization. To the extent only pro-social states choose to join the organization and are allowed to accede by members, constructivist theory about socialization in IGOs is equally subject to the selection bias concerns that face functional theories of institutions. In his study of China’s decision to engage with international institutions for security cooperation, Johnston (2007) argues that concerns about avoiding isolation and taking conformist positions were more important than the impact of proposed commitments on relative power. In his theory, the first step occurs as mimicking, when states follow the behavior of others, based on the assumption that if others are joining the institution it must present benefits. After entry, states are then socialized through interaction as they respond to social rewards and punishments and build their own internal organizations to support their work within the institution. A government that once was content to be isolated, through membership becomes attuned to its position within the group in ways that make it susceptible to social pressures and lock in a new direction of cooperative policies. But the theory does not answer the question about why states choose to mimic one group of states and not another.
Placing social interaction at the center of theories, constructivist international relations scholarship offers several insights related to membership in organizations. In constructivist theories, the historical context of relations among states and the decision processes within states exhibit path dependence and cognitive biases that differ from simple calculation of interests. Organizations may serve as an arena for rule-bound behavior that follows a logic of appropriateness (March and Olsen, 1998). From this perspective, states join organizations because that is what states do, irrespective of the costs and benefits of specific organizational membership decisions. Current members find themselves caught in their own rhetoric of inclusion and cooperation, and are unable to turn away applicants (Schimmelfennig, 2001). Variation in membership patterns could arise through channels of emulation, whereby states follow the IGO membership decisions of influential regional leaders.

When states join organizations as part of a script for modernity to follow the behavior of other states, membership in organizations takes on larger purpose than the simple provision of benefits. As described by March and Olsen (1998, p. 964), organizations like the OECD or European Union are “creators of meaning in general and more specifically of identities.” Through joint membership, deep ties emerge that could influence state preferences. Constructivist theory emphasizes the possibility for states to set aside self-interest within a larger collective identity (Wendt, 1994). This collective identity emerges from repeated interaction. These theories of socialization acknowledge the importance of forming ties in an IGO. Next we consider how security underlies the choices about which states seek closer association—the choice of whom to mimic and what attributes to value in cooperation partners arises from geopolitical alignment.

1.3 Geopolitical Alignment as Basis for IGO Cooperation

States take sides within international politics. The shorthand term for this is *geopolitical alignment*, which refers to a like-minded approach to world affairs and especially to international security problems. The concept overlaps with alliance structures but can differ in important ways. States ranging from Switzerland to Israel fall within a sphere of common security interests with the United States while never having established alliance ties. The states of Southeast Asia have formed a like-minded approach to security that emphasizes non-intervention in domestic affairs even while their alliance
affiliations differ. During the Cold War, the nonaligned movement countries engaged in security cooperation by the joint decision not to become allies with either the United States or USSR. The concept of geopolitical alignment differs from that of ideology because of the defining role of security. Whereas liberal ideology differentiates between democratic and authoritarian regimes or market and non-market economies, geopolitical alignment supports cooperation with any political regime type. Likewise, ideology prioritizes differences in economic policy orientation that are not significant from a security standpoint—partnering with states that uphold liberal markets or with those with more intervention for developmental or socialist policies may serve security interests despite vast differences in ideology.

Two features of geopolitical alignment make it the favored selection criterion in the politics of joining international organizations. First, alignment offers information about reliability. Second, it aggregates interests to support bargaining. The former reduces fears that a prospective cooperation partner will cheat while the latter encourages a broader view of the distributional gains from cooperation. Here I briefly take up each in turn.

As an information tool, geopolitical alignment provides a valuable cue about the quality of cooperation expected from another country. Selecting partners for cooperation requires an assurance about future behavior. States that change regulatory policies or pool resources expose themselves to risk if the others fail to comply. But since compliance types are difficult to judge ex ante, states must seek information from other sources. The accumulation of security cooperation reflected in activities ranging from alliances to military training exercises and joint foreign policy statements or voting in the United Nations provides many opportunities for states to learn about the geopolitical alignment of prospective partners. Their success coordinating on issues related to security builds trust to support subsequent cooperation on new challenges.

Equally importantly, geopolitical alignment expands the bargaining range to include more issues. States that share interests for foreign policy can more readily generate mutual gains from trade-offs between economic and security policies. More expansive cooperation is possible when linkages support sharing economic gains. This can facilitate bargaining even beyond the narrow sphere of allies and for cases where the economic exchange is asymmetric. States may tolerate cheating or unequal distributional outcomes within the confines of the regime in exchange for wider benefits across the relationship.
The role of shared security interests, to provide information and linkage channels, differs from the conventional view in the literature on cooperation. In his foundational theory of international regimes, Keohane (1984) focuses on the role of enforcement and issue linkages carried out within the regime jurisdiction as ways to overcome the information asymmetry that hinders cooperation. Instead, my argument highlights how political relations that exist prior to and outside of the regime provide information about expected compliance. When states let non-regime issues such as security determine membership choices, they open themselves to less effective regimes through overexpansion, as they let in unqualified applicants, or underprovision of cooperation, when they leave out otherwise qualified entrants.

In the leading realist perspective on overlapping security and economic interests, Gowa (1994) theorizes that the security externality of trade motivates allies to trade more with each other in order to share the income gains from economic exchange. But this logic applies to the relationship between pairs of states where common security interests are certain, such as bilateral trade between allies during the Cold War. It cannot explain the surge of institutionalized cooperation after the end of the Cold War, when there is less certainty about which states will be allies or adversaries. The puzzle remains of why states would commit to multilateral cooperation when their security relationship could change. Indeed, within the context of the long-term commitment to repeated action in an IGO, a security externality could worsen the bargaining problem by increasing distributional stakes (Fearon, 1998).

The security linkage that underlies multilateral institutions offers an alternative logic to one based on principled beliefs. In his theory about ideology and multilateralism, Voeten (2021) argues that the United States uses multilateralism to advance its ideological principles. In order to move the status quo in the preferred policy direction, the United States coerces those joining institutions to follow regime rules as part of a strategy to diffuse liberal principles of free trade and democracy. Screening for shared beliefs at entry and upholding high compliance with policies would advance those goals. But security linkage has no such restrictions—patronage politics to favor allies could even motivate states to lower standards for entry and compliance. Indeed, U.S.

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12. Gowa (1994) shows that trade gains form a positive security externality when allies trade, in contrast to the negative externality arising from trade between adversaries. The bipolar structure of an international system supports open markets more than a multipolar system because the security externality motivates altruism between allies in their trade relations (Gowa, 1989).
allies have been shown to undertake less economic reform when entering the GATT or receiving IMF loans than their counterparts (Stone, 2008; Davis and Wilf, 2017).

It is difficult to differentiate between the ideological and security logic. Shared values and beliefs about the organization of society form a foundation for cooperation on security, which contributes to the overlap between geopolitical alignment and ideology. During the Cold War this overlap occurred in the bipolar division of competing alliances between communist and capitalist sides. One might expect that the role of alliances in shaping entry into multilateralism would end after the Cold War, along with the decline of the ideological basis for alliances. But it has not. States are still more likely to enter IGOs with their allies. The security logic of geopolitical alignment to build a coalition through multilateralism remains amidst the uncertainty of a changing order.

Joining international organizations together strengthens security coalitions. In hierarchical relations of exchange, states reinforce their ties through offering side payments to support security cooperation (Lake, 2009). This process is easier when states share membership in organizations so they can exchange favors on priority issues (Henke, 2019). As fellow members in an IGO, states can use patronage or bribery to gain leverage over critical swing states in a broad security coalition. Research confirms that within multilateral economic institutions, allied states lend more and trade more with each other than with other members (Thacker, 1999; Gowa and Kim, 2005; Stone, 2008; Dreher et al., 2013).

Policy coordination outside of defense policies also helps states to signal intentions of goodwill and commitment to security partners (Morrow, 2000). Henke (2019) shows that diplomatic embeddedness through the exchanges that take place in multilateral fora support the formation and maintenance of multilateral military coalitions. Linking economic and security cooperation has also been shown to reduce conflict within alliances and increase alliance performance (Powers, 2004; Poast, 2013). Joint association in an international organization sends a message of solidarity.

At the same time, excluding rivals denies them the benefits of the organization. States have less leverage to punish a rival after it has joined a multilateral organization. Indeed, according to Carnegie (2014), rivals receive a large boost to their trade after entry into the trade regime. Multilateral norms do not prevent biased allocation within organizations, but they make it more difficult to restrict access to a state than if it were a nonmember. Exclusion of rivals also signals outsider status by isolating them from routine diplomatic exchanges.
The status benefits of IGO membership also engender cooperation among allies. From basic recognition of sovereignty to major power status, IGO membership converts relationships into a broader standing within international society. Reputation may generalize across members in the institution. This can deliver additional benefits as states improve their standing in the eyes of investors or gain credibility vis a vis hostile states. Keeping these benefits within a security community is optimal. The social interaction amplifies the preference for association with security partners. Choosing to form closer relations by joint membership arises from willingness to engage in close interaction and share cooperation benefits. Joint membership also informs all states about the social categories of which states work together. States will value status by association with security partners more than status by association with other states.

In the domestic politics of international cooperation, accession offers a window for security to take priority. Diplomats and top leaders take charge of treaty negotiations. Given their mandate over foreign policy, these actors have incentives to allocate significant attention to security stakes and diplomacy (Bueno de Mesquita and Smith, 2012; Milner and Tingley, 2015). As these negotiators coordinate with domestic actors over treaty ratification, they can emphasize geopolitical alignment with other states to build support outside of the direct constituencies for the agreement. Policies within the regulated issue areas confront stakeholders lobbying for gains and resisting costly adjustment. Issue linkage offers an effective tactic for breaking through divisions. In this case, joining organizations helps diplomats and leaders with strategic goals frame the broader stakes in cooperation and avoid zero-sum single-issue politics. The public may favor cooperation with allies independently of the specific issues in the treaty (Carnegie and Gaikwad, 2022). Adding potential gains from the security dimension makes entry more likely than if partners are seen as rivals or the IGO is evaluated only in terms of the issue area.

From a coalition-building view of IGO membership, states seek additional leverage in their relations with other states by broadening and deepening their sphere of connections through IGO membership ties. As a form of balancing, strategic use of IGO membership represents a useful tactic for both strong and weak states. It also remains relevant during periods of low certainty over alliance relationships, which calls for keeping options open on whom to be able to influence. This supports an expectation that many states will design IGOs as discriminatory clubs and use that flexibility to favor their security partners. There will be less variation by issue area or distribution of power.
than implied by competing explanations focused on cooperation problems and distribution of power.

To evaluate the argument, the book will test three core claims about how states discriminate over membership. The first hypothesis addresses the rules and decision-making procedures that form a background condition for discrimination. The second hypothesis looks at the nature of bias that shapes membership patterns. The third considers how the entry process allows for differential costs of entry.

**Hypothesis 1, Discretionary Rules: States will design IGO accession rules to provide discretion over selection.** More international organizations will follow the design of club models, with an exclusion mechanism based on voting rather than policy evaluation of rule compliance. At the design stage, it is difficult to define ex ante the in-group, and states want the flexibility to engage in discriminatory practices. Therefore, they leave the entry qualifications vague while assuring control over selecting who gets in. The selection could favor anything—security, culture, economic interests, or compliance—because the rules do not specify. The second hypothesis explains the geopolitical logic that drives the pattern of membership in IGOs and is the primary focus of the book.

**Hypothesis 2, Geopolitical Discrimination: States with shared geopolitical alignment form organizations together and are more likely to join the same organizations.** In this relational theory, states discriminate to favor others based on their pre-existing security ties. Shared alliances and similar voting in the United Nations serve as proxies for measuring like-minded orientation to security issues. Alignment with other members and not just the largest power can support entry and continued membership. Yet non-allies and even rivals can and do join IGOs—the hypotheses are probabilistic and not deterministic. As states consider cooperation partners, non-security gains may outweigh the security factors. In the sequencing of member expansion, early entry by allies will consolidate the voting core and rules, while non-allies must wait longer and do more to win approval. The third hypothesis explains the conditions for entry.

**Hypothesis 3, Favoring Friends: States with shared geopolitical alignment with other members will make fewer reforms as a condition of entry.** This final hypothesis is nested within the first two because discretionary terms of membership allow variable conditions across applicants, and lowering the bar for friends
facilitates early entry. Holding up non-allied states until they meet a higher threshold accommodates mixed incentives about who can join—as in societal discrimination where the out-group applicant must be twice as qualified on performance basis to overcome the bias against them.

The argument holds implications over the politics for ending membership as well. Geopolitical alignment supports ongoing membership after having joined an organization. The discretionary approach to accession extends to rules for exit and expulsion. States are not required to prove compliance in order to remain in the club.

Empirical analysis will compare the role of geopolitical alignment with the demand for membership based on interests within the issue area regulated by the IGO. The large body of literature on functional theories of institutions posits that the desire to achieve mutual gains in the face of market failure motivates cooperation in international institutions; this leads to the baseline expectation that interests, information, and policies within the issue area should explain who joins. Since geopolitical alignment and interests within the issue area overlap entirely in the area of security organizations, looking outside security organizations is necessary to test the hypotheses. In the area of economic organizations one can compare how economic interests contribute to expected benefits from membership relative to the impact of geopolitical alignment. Supporting evidence would include examples where states that have little engagement in international trade join the trade regime at the encouragement of an ally. Further evidence would include internal statements from diplomats and security hawks in support of joining the IGO, and lenient provisions to allow entry without requiring substantial economic policy reforms. Raising non-trade issues and extra concessions as a condition for membership to block entry by a rival state represents the exclusionary side of discrimination. In contrast, support for functional theories would include evidence that most of the variation in membership arises from differences in the trade interests of states. The domestic political interests would largely revolve around debate among different economic ministries and business groups, and accession negotiations would extract substantial concessions to ensure conformity with rules. There would also be divergent expectations about the conditions that would lead states to exit or be expelled from an organization. Whereas the discriminatory club model of IGO membership suggests exit would be largely independent of compliance with IGO rules, the functional model of institutions implies that exit and expulsion would occur after a period of noncompliance.
Although the argument implies that states expect to deepen cooperation with other states through shared membership, this book will not evaluate the effects of entry. Nevertheless, there is a dynamic where states are selecting based not simply on existing security but also on the security relationships they want to develop by means of shared membership. The politics of engagement with Eastern Europe or newly independent states during the Cold War stand out as such examples. At the two ends of the spectrum of geopolitical alignment, there are clear incentives to favor allies and exclude rivals. But for swing states there may be differences in approach, as diplomats are making bets on the future trajectory of a state and trying to shift that trajectory. The hypotheses above can only partially capture this strategic dynamic: flexible rules maximize discretion for borderline cases and on average those that are closer in geopolitical alignment will be more likely to join, with lower conditions. Many of the hardest cases to predict will be those where contextual factors will shape perceptions of whether geopolitical alignment of the state is in transition.

1.4 Chapter Overview

The book proceeds to further develop the logic of the argument and explore the patterns of membership politics. Moving from the general theory of international organizations as discriminatory clubs to applications in the context of specific international organizations and country experiences, I will balance conceptual approaches with the nuance of history and mixed motives. Where the aggregate analysis of international organizations uses proxies to measure geopolitical alignment, case studies will probe more deeply the various forms of in-group identity on security issues and the interaction between domestic politics and international cooperation. Although unable to leverage exogenous shocks or randomized experiments for rigorous identification of causal effects, the sum of descriptive inferences across mixed methods analysis supports the hypotheses and builds an agenda for future research.

The central research question of the book asks how states choose their cooperation partners. This introductory chapter has laid out the core claim that geopolitical alignment shapes multilateral cooperation on non-security issues through membership politics. When international organizations become discriminatory clubs, they set the boundaries for cooperation among a subset of states chosen for their affinity. Security forms the basis for affinity in this study, but the larger claim contends that like-minded states cooperate
by means of biased membership decisions. Viewing membership as a choice of association within international society differs from the conventional expectation that international organizations represent contracts to uphold the interests of powerful states and coordinate common interests within an issue area.

International organizations are a heterogeneous set of institutions that vary in size, rules, and issue mandate. The research design of the book takes different approaches to assess geopolitical alignment relative to other conditions when controlling for some of the features that differ among organizations. Chapter 2 compares the design of all IGO charters, looking at how discretion appears across IGOs in different issue areas and with different membership size. The empirical analysis of membership decisions in chapters 3–5 focuses on economic IGOs to evaluate whether security interests unrelated to the mandate of the organization emerge as a factor over membership alongside economic interests. Chapter 6 looks from a country perspective at membership decisions across all organizations over time. Then the book turns to IGOs with two different types of entry rules: chapter 7 focuses on organizations with a regional focus, while chapter 8 looks at those that explicitly embrace the principle of open eligibility for all states. Across this range of institutional settings, geopolitical alignment emerges as a consistent factor in membership. This is not limited to the domain of global institutions or those within Europe; organizations large and small and those across different regions heed the pull of geopolitical alignment when considering members. Yet other factors also matter, and statistical analyses with control variables and case studies with attention to different narratives reflect on these mixed motives.

Chapter 2 develops the theory of membership that makes IGOs form discriminatory clubs. States seek both gains from cooperation and status from association with other states. This dual purpose explains the form of membership provisions that are designed to promote cooperation among a community of states. The central importance of geopolitics motivates the prevalence of discretion over member approval. States retain control to choose with whom they cooperate.

The chapter goes on to test the hypothesis about discretionary design of membership provisions with a comprehensive analysis of IGO charters and their terms for membership selection. A typology of IGO membership provisions illustrates variation across the dimensions of participation mandate and conditionality terms. These concepts are mapped onto accession rules for 322 international organizations using a new dataset. For issues that represent
global public goods, universalistic principles underlie membership with open eligibility for all states. Most join easily. Nevertheless, screening for entry into universal organizations determines who counts as a state within international society, and so even universal organizations include some selection. Attention is given to how design varies by issue area, but there are surprisingly consistent features across issues. For the majority of issues that constitute club goods where exclusion is possible, states design IGO membership provisions to select a smaller group of states. Surprisingly few organizations screen for compliance based on objective performance standards or policy review. Instead, vague eligibility terms, negotiable terms, and the requirement of member approval characterize club standards for membership. I argue that states choose this design structure in order to maximize their flexibility to have informal norms and geopolitical interests operate as de facto criteria for who joins. Alongside the discretionary approach to accepting new members, IGOs rarely terminate membership over noncompliance. This chapter explores why states refrain from following reciprocity strategies that would call for threatening to expel states that repeatedly reject IGO rules. Analysis of IGO charters examines which types of IGOs include provisions for expulsion and exit. The infrequency of member suspension for noncompliance upholds the logic that membership in an IGO confers a form of citizenship within society rather than a simple contract.

Chapter 3 evaluates the second hypothesis that geopolitics correlates with membership.\(^\text{13}\) Looking at multilateral economic IGO membership offers a sharper test, since the substantive focus of the organization itself does not require coordination of security policies. We use data on alliances and UN voting similarity to measure geopolitical alignment, and compare the geopolitics hypothesis with the benchmark model that organization membership reflects economic interests measured by the trade ties between countries. Analyzing membership patterns for 231 multilateral economic organizations from 1949 to 2014, we use a finite mixture model to examine the relative importance of economic and security considerations, finding that geopolitical alignment accounts for nearly half of the membership decisions in economic institutions. The geopolitical origins of IGO membership represent an important mechanism connecting the security and economic behaviors of states.

\(^{13}\) This chapter is based on an article co-authored with Tyler Pratt, “The Forces of Attraction: How Security Interests Shape Membership in Economic Institutions,” *Review of International Organizations* 2021.

(continued...)
INDEX

Note: Page numbers in italics refer to figures and tables.

Abbas, Mahmoud, 363
accession process, 2, 7, 40–41, 43, 73, 78–79, 96; accession review process, 60, 61–63, 67, 70, 132–33, 138, 151, 170, 286, 289, 384; and ADB, 67; and ASEAN, 304–7; costs of entry (see "favoring friends" hypothesis; costs of entry/negotiable terms of membership); and EU, 285–87, 289–91; and GATT/WTO, 67, 98–122 (see also GATT/WTO accession); informal practices, 67–70, 153, 304, 384; joint entry of states, 172, 287, 345–46; models of, 42–48 (see also club IGOs; hierarchical organizations; meritocratic organizations; universal organizations); and OECD, 67, 129–32, 149–73; speed of negotiations, 26, 31, 95, 101, 108–11, 110, 114, 115, 117–18, 121; time between eligibility and application, 31, 95, 101, 108–10, 110, 113–14, 115, 116, 119, 121; and UPU, 187–88
accession rules. See rules for accession and membership
Acharya, Amitav, 301, 303
ADB. See Asian Development Bank
Adenauer, Konrad, 284
Afghanistan, 39, 51, 102, 121
Africa: newly independent states, and ostracism of South Africa, 368–70; and regional organizations, 274–75, 276, 370.
See also specific states and organizations
African Union (AU), 56
AIIB. See Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank
Akiyama, Takuya, 236–37
Allee, Todd L., 119, 120
alliances, 24, 26–27, 56, 74, 79n18, 209, 231, 388; absence of alliance requirements for IGO membership, 59; and accession of North and South Korea to UN, 341–47; alliance ties as measure of geopolitical alignment, 26, 72, 75, 77, 95; Anglo-Japanese Alliance, 177, 194; and ASEAN, 300, 302, 308, 309, 311, 387; distinguished from geopolitical alignment, 21–22; effect on economic IGO membership (empirical analysis), 79–85, 80 (see also economic organizations); effect on GATT/WTO accession, 99–101, 111, 114, 115, 117–18; effect on IGO membership in different issue areas, 83–84, 84; and external threats catalyzing regional cooperation, 264; lack of alliances among states of Southeast Asia, 300, 302; non-NATO allies of the U.S., 142, 168; and OECD membership, 123, 141, 141–42, 146, 147–48, 148; and regional IGOs, 269, 270–73, 273, 274–75, 276, 277–78, 279; and TPP, 231; and universal organizations, 328, 330–31, 333, 334, 336, 341–47; U.S.-Japan alliance,
alliances (continued)  
56, 203–4, 215, 228, 232, 236, 251, 254, 256, 287. See also “favoring friends” hypothesis; geopolitical alignment; NATO; security  
Amari, Akira, 238  
Anderson, Benedict, 9  
Anti-Bribery Convention (OECD convention), 127, 133, 162, 171, 398  
Aoki, Shuzo, 187  
Apartheid, 7, 34, 42, 50, 316, 368–80, 392; end of, 370, 378, 379  
approval of potential IGO members. See member approval requirement  
Araujo, Ernesto, 166, 168–69  
Argentina, 135, 172  
ASEAN. See Association of Southeast Asian Nations  
ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF), 304  
Asian and Pacific Council (ASPAC), 309–10  
Asian Development Bank (ADB), 67, 214–19, 216n61, 225, 254, 314, 359  
Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB), 3, 32, 179, 225, 254, 266  
Aso, Tarô, 220  
Association of Southeast Asia (ASA), 301, 303  
Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), 33, 56, 58, 259, 300–309, 311, 387; accession rules, 33, 304–5, 308; case study, 33, 258–59, 300–309; as coalition of heterogeneous, non-allied states, 302, 307, 309, 311, 387; non-members in the region, 258, 307–8  
AU. See African Union  
Australia, 130, 168, 227, 248, 249, 301, 304, 308–10  
Austria, 142, 284, 285  
authoritarianism: coalitions of like-minded regimes, 263, 311; and OECD membership, 130, 137, 140, 140, 154; and regional organizations, 263; and U.S. stance on South Africa, 377  
Bandung Conference (1955), 301, 308  
Bangkok Declaration (1967), 302  
Bangladesh, 258  
Ban Ki-moon, 349  
Barkin, Samuel, 320  
Barsoom, Peter, 15, 98  
Pearce, David H., 6  
Becker, Gary, 41  
Belarus, 64  
Belgium, 282  
Bevin, Ernest, 283  
Biden, Joseph, 8n5, 49, 105, 145, 171, 359  
BIPM. See International Bureau of Weights and Measures  
Blair, Tony, 297  
Boehmer, Charles, 18, 47  
Bokova, Irina, 367  
Bolivarian Alternative for the Americas, 263  
Bolkiah, Prince Mohammad, 305  
Bolsonaro, Jair, 165, 167–70  
Bondanella, Stacy, 6  
bond yields. See risk ratings and bond yields  
Borzyskowski, Inken von, 8, 50  
Brazil, 131, 168, 191, 340; and deforestation, 170–71; engagement with OECD, 126, 134, 140–41, 160–63, 162, 166; as founding member of GATT, 96; improved relations with U.S., 32, 126, 168, 172; OECD application, 165–73; reluctance to join OECD, 32, 125, 163–65, 176, 386; shift in geopolitical alignment, 32, 166–67, 176, 386  
Brexit, 2, 4, 33, 50, 51, 294–300, 311, 340  
Brzezinski, Zbigniew, 377  
BRICS states, 131, 164, 167  
Bridgewater, Peter, 251  
Brown, Sherrod, 358  
Brunei, 227, 231n96, 305  
Bulgaria, 104, 172, 387  
Bull, Hedley, 16, 323, 326, 387, 397  
Busch, Marc L., 18  
Bush, George H. W., 345  
Bush, George W., 297, 353, 355
Cambodia, 301, 302, 303, 307
Cameron, David, 295
Canada, 50, 152, 222, 227, 249
Capling, Ann, 231n96
Cardoso, Fernando, 163, 172
Caribbean, 275, 276
Carnegie, Allison, 231n96
Carroll, Peter, 131, 136, 151
Carter, David B., 79
Carter, Jimmy, 377
Central America, 275, 276
Charters. See rules for accession and membership
Chen Shui-bian, 352, 355
Chen Yuan-tsong, 355
Chile, 130, 248
China, 3, 20, 89, 131, 185, 205–9, 232–34, 302; and ADB, 216; and AIIIB, 3, 219–20, 224; and ASEAN, 306; and ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF), 304; and ASPAC, 309–10; cost of delayed WTO entry, 94; and embassies and IGO membership, 338, 340; and GATT, 104–5, 104n19, 109, 121; IGO membership by year compared to membership of Japan, U.S., and South Korea, 180; and Japan, 32, 179, 194, 195, 199, 200, 202, 205, 219–22, 224, 225–27, 231–34, 240, 242–43, 246, 255; and North and South Korea, 345, 347, 387; and OECD, 133, 160, 161, 162, 164; One Belt One Road initiative, 221, 225; and RCEP, 179, 241–46; and SARS outbreak, 355; and South Africa, 371; sovereignty of, 348; and Taiwan, 34, 321, 347–60, 380; Tiananmen Square massacre, 93, 104, 345; and TPP, 231–34, 235; and Treaty of Amity and Cooperation in Southeast Asia, 304; and UN membership, 343, 348, 349; and UPU, 188; and U.S., 167, 348–50; and WTO, 31, 59, 69, 93–94, 99, 104–51n19, 104–6, 121, 352
Choi, Byung-il, 151, 156
Choi, Chong-ki, 343n23
Christianity, 292, 397
Chûbachî, Ryôji, 229
Chun Doo-hwan, 152
Clinton, Bill, 251, 352
Clinton, Hillary, 367
Club goods, 14, 16, 30, 37–39, 127, 129, 136, 326
Club IGOs (club-style discriminatory intergovernmental organizations), 25–27, 33, 38, 41, 69, 382–98; accession to (see accession process; rules for accession and membership); advantages of club configuration, 25–26, 46–47, 70, 125, 127, 136; bases for discrimination in international organizations, 2, 18, 388 (see also geopolitical discrimination); benefits of membership as both provision of goods and association with other states, 2, 21, 29, 368, 383, 384, 388, 391; club model compared to functional model, 27 (see also economic organizations); and cooperation, 13–16, 38, 127–28, 390, 391, 394–98 (see also cooperation); defined/described, 13–15, 42, 45–47; disadvantages of, 23, 36, 52, 70, 129, 136 (see also expulsion from international organizations; overexpansion problem); and ending IGO membership, 51; EU as discriminatory club, 286 (see also European Union); and flexible accession rules, 6–7, 42, 43, 45–47, 67, 68–70 (see also costs of entry/negotiable terms of membership; eligibility criteria; member approval requirement; rules for accession and membership); G7 as a club IGO, 127; GATT/WTO as discriminatory club, 96, 119 (see also GATT/WTO accession); OECD as a club IGO, 7, 43, 45–46, 125, 127, 134, 174 (see also OECD accession); popularity of club model, 42, 46, 67–69, 68, 384; proliferation of IGOs, 394–96; and regional organizations, 258, 265, 286 (see also regional organizations); selection unrelated to organization's mandate, 2, 41, 126, 128, 388 (see also
club IGOs (club-style discriminatory intergovernmental organizations) (continued) geopolitical discrimination); and shared security interests, 258, 386–89 (see also security); statement of hypotheses about club model, 46–27, 388; summary of conclusions about, 382–98; and universal organizations, 33–34, 318, 328–40

Coggins, Bridget, 320

Cold War: aid allocated according to military importance during the Cold War, 71; and ASEAN, 300, 301, 303, 305; Cold War vs. post–Cold War IGO membership, 84, 121; and controversies over UN memberships, 316, 341–47; and Eastern European states’ accession to EU, 287–91; and Eastern European states’ accession to OECD, 125, 159; and GATT/WTO accession, 115, 116, 119, 121; geopolitical changes following end of, 23, 34, 153, 159, 284, 288, 291, 300, 341, 344, 345, 387, 395; nonaligned movement countries, 22; and origins of the EU, 284; and regional organizations, 270, 274–75, 277–78; and relative weight of security vs. trade ties for membership decisions in economic organizations, 88–89; and South Africa, 375; and universal organizations, 334, 336, 339; and U.S.-Japanese alliance, 204; and U.S. policy toward Soviet Bloc states, 103

Colombia, 7, 126, 130, 132, 140, 162

COMECON. See Council for Mutual Economic Assistance

Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), 10, 258, 395

communism, 103–4, 204, 215, 375

compliance with organization mandates: accession review process, 60, 61–63, 67, 70, 132–33, 138, 151, 170, 286, 289, 384; and ASEAN, 304; compliance after becoming a member, 7, 391–92; compliance review as exclusion mechanism, 60, 61; enforcement of mandates, 7, 8, 30, 48–49, 51, 63–64, 73, 132–33, 138, 385; and EU, 289, 386; expulsion for noncompliance, infrequency of, 8, 30, 50, 385, 395–96; expulsion for reasons other than noncompliance, 50 (see also exclusion from international organizations); expulsion or suspension for noncompliance, 48–49, 62, 63, 65, 384–85; and free rider problem, 48; and Japan as IWC member, 248–50; and OECD accession, 133, 138, 151, 170, 392; rarity of rigorous screening of potential members, 15, 30, 39, 40, 61, 62, 70, 266, 267; and regional organizations, 266, 267, 286, 289, 304; responses to noncompliance other than expulsion, 50–51, 62, 63; and signaling to applicants via specific rules for eligibility or expulsion based on noncompliance, 384–85; worsening compliance as security ties take precedence over policy reform, 91. See also meritocratic organizations

Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership. See TPP
conditionality terms. See eligibility criteria; rules for accession and membership conflict. See geopolitical rivalry
conflict reduction, 18, 24, 35, 47, 91, 264–65, 304, 322, 389–91

Congo, 321

constructivist theory of international relations, 20–21, 388, 396
coop eration, 2–3, 9, 13–16, 34, 37, 40, 47, 49, 71, 127–28; and assimilative multilateralism, 15; and balancing trade and security interests in economic organizations, 75, 85, 88–89, 387; benefits of limiting joint action to subgroups, 9, 13–15; cooperation problems and inclusive vs. exclusive organizations, 174; directions for future research, 393; and discriminatory clubs, 13–16, 34, 39–48, 174, 382, 390–92; and the EU, 3, 45, 281; evolution of intergovernmental cooperation, 394–98; free

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rider problem, 14, 15, 42, 48, 90, 127, 313, 317; and functional theories of institutions, 27; and geopolitical alignment and discrimination, 2, 21–28, 35–36, 174, 389–94 (see also geopolitical alignment); and hierarchical organizations, 384; and homogeneous vs. heterogeneous founding groups, 15; and meritocratic organizations, 45, 384; network ties as cooperation multiplier, 390; and OECD, 174; and proliferation of institutions, 394–96; and public goods (see public goods); quality of cooperation, 2, 35, 317, 391; and regional IGOS, 260, 281; and sequential liberalization, 15, 97–98, 138; and sovereignty, 320; and trade-off between depth of rules and breadth of participation, 14–15, 127–29, 317, 384; and universal organizations, 384
Copelovitch, Mark, 112
Copenhagen School, 388
Correlates of War (COW) dataset, 54, 76n4, 77n8, 77n10, 78n14, 185n2–3, 266, 268n17, 269n20, 276, 277, 302n54, 310n57, 328n7–8, 330n11, 332n15, 333n17, 337, 337n19, 350, 381n33
Costa Rica, 125, 130, 132, 140, 162
costs of entry/negotiable terms of membership, 2, 30, 46, 57, 59, 60, 63, 104, 384; and ASEAN, 306–7; and China, 31, 104–6; costs of entry as exclusion mechanism, 57; differential costs of entry, 7, 24, 128, 384, 386 (see also specific organizations and states under this heading); differential costs of entry, hypothesis about, 26–27 (see also “favoring friends” hypothesis); and Eastern European states, 159–60; and EU, 281, 289–90; and GATT/WTO, 31, 99–101, 103–6, 108, 119, 120, 121, 205–9, 384; and ILO, 197–98, 254; and Japan, 174, 177–79, 197–99, 205–9, 212, 254, 386; length of negotiations, 95, 101, 108–11, 110, 114, 115, 117–18, 121; and Mexico, 150–51; and OECD, 127, 150–51, 155–60, 164, 170–72, 174–75, 212, 386; and regional organizations, 267; and South Korea, 155–58, 174, 386; speed of negotiations, 26, 31, 95, 101, 108–11, 110, 115; and TPP, 233. See also “favoring friends” hypothesis Council for Mutual Economic Assistance (COMECON), 11, 288, 395
Council of Europe, 5, 282, 287
Covid-19 pandemic, 43–44, 354, 359, 360
Croatia, 172
Cuba, 8, 51
Cyprus, 130, 293–94, 311
Czech Republic (Czechia), 126, 130, 134, 142, 159, 160, 288, 289
Dafoe, Allan, 19
Daimon, Mikishi, 220
Davutoglu, Ahmet, 292
Dedman, Martin, 283
de Gaulle, Charles, 286–87, 287n39
democracy: and ASEAN members, 33, 307; democratic backsliding, 7, 51, 53, 95, 130, 292–93, 307, 385; democratization in Eastern Europe, 159, 160, 289, 290; democratization in Mexico, 151; democratization in South Korea, 154; democratization in Turkey, 291; and economic organizations, 89; and EU accession, 263, 287, 311; and GATT/WTO accession, 111, 114, 115, 117; greater tendency for democracies to form and join IGOS compared to other regime types, 78; new democracies forming new organizations, 160, 311, 395; and OECD accession, 58, 125, 129, 131, 137, 147–49, 148; and OECD members, 140, 140; promotion of, 23, 325; and regional IGOS, 263, 265, 269, 270–72, 272–73, 274–75, 277–78, 311 (see also European Union); and signaling the direction of regime transition through IGO membership, 5, 47, 159; and universal organizations, 332, 334
Denmark, 189, 287
development banks, 66, 67, 73, 91, 179, 214–26, 254. See also specific institutions
Diplomatic Contacts Database, 337, 338, 346
diplomatic recognition, 17, 19, 318–22, 325
and Afghanistan and Myanmar, 51; challenges of defining sovereignty, 314 (see also sovereignty); changing recognition of governments, 51 (see also Taiwan); circular relationship between sovereignty and membership in IGOs, 320–25; and contested sovereignty, 318–19, 321–22, 325; and diplomatic ties, 324–25, 335; and embassies and IGO membership, 338, 339; and emergence of new states, 319, 320; and Israel, 360, 361; and Japan, 186–88; and membership in universal organizations, 44, 51, 320–27, 335, 342, 379; nonrecognition as policy tool, 325; and OECD accession, 369; and Palestine, 360, 362, 365, 368; and Taiwan, 347–48
discrimination coefficient, 41–42
discrimination/discretionary selection, 2, 68–70, 73–74, 398; discrimination advancing moral causes, 42 (see also pariah states); employment discrimination, 41–42; exclusion from organizations, 27 (see also China; Iran; Russia; South Africa; Taiwan); and factors unrelated to issue area, 27, 96, 99, 104, 108, 121; hypothesis about designing discriminatory rules to provide discretion over selection, 26, 69–70, 310–11 (see also rules for accession and membership); hypothesis about differential costs of entry, 26–27 (see also “favoring friends” hypothesis; costs of entry/negotiable terms of membership); and legitimacy of organizations, 39 (see also legitimacy of organizations); and meritocratic organizations, 43, 45, 70; and principle of multilateral cooperation, 39; racial discrimination, 41, 195, 196, 202; and regional IGOs, 258; states selected for both performance capacity and association value, 41, 48, 315–17, 327, 368, 379, 384, 388; theory of international organizations as discriminatory clubs, 2–8, 38, 41 (see also club IGOs); and trade regime/economic organizations, 13–14, 27, 70, 99, 104, 119–22, 209; and universal organizations, 43, 379. See also club IGOs; exclusion from international organizations; geopolitical alignment; geopolitical discrimination; hierarchical organizations; meritocratic organizations; universal organizations; specific organizations and states
domestic politics, 25, 27, 28, 32, 47, 105, 137, 176, 397–98; in Brazil, 166–70; IGO membership providing domestic leverage for policy change, 32, 153, 155, 156, 174, 176, 208, 235; in Japan, 32, 194–98, 205, 212–19, 217, 218; in Mexico, 4–9, 94; in South Korea, 154–55, 157–58; in Taiwan, 352–56, 358; in Ukraine, 5
Donno, Daniela, 100n10
Downs, George, 15, 97
Dreher, Axel, 17, 136
Drezner, Daniel, 127, 259–60
dues, 44–45, 63, 132, 367
Dunne, Tim, 323

Eagleton, Clyde, 281
East Asia: development banks, 214–26 (see also Asian Development Bank; Asian Infrastructure and Investment Bank); and Japanese leadership, 214–46. See also specific organizations and states
Eastern European states: and democracy, 159, 160, 289, 290; and EU accession, 33, 70, 287–91, 311, 395; and GATT accession, 96, 103–4, 395; and NATO accession, 289, 291; and OECD accession, 125, 152, 153, 158–60, 395; post–Soviet transition to new foreign policy direction, 47, 288, 291
East Timor, 307–8
EC. See European Economic Community/European Community
economic interdependence and trade, 27, 31, 71; and Brexit, 294–97; and club model of cooperation, 13–14; correlation of alliance and trade ties, 79n18; cost of delayed GATT/WTO entry to China and Mexico, 94; economic cooperation as common aspect of mandates in formal charters, 73; and economic organizations (empirical study of membership patterns), 72–91, 80, 82, 90; and environmental cooperation, 14; functional theories of economic cooperation, 73; and GATT/WTO accession, 95, 100, 111–12, 115, 118, 121; measures of economic interdependence, 72, 75, 78; and Northeast Asia, 309, 310; preferential trade agreements (PTAs), 14, 91, 112, 115, 116, 228, 229, 231, 236, 396; and regional IGOs, 265, 268, 270–72, 274–75, 277–78, 295, 312; regional trade agreements and defining regions, 261–62; relative weight of geopolitical alignment and economic interdependence in membership decisions for economic organizations, 72–73, 85–91, 87, 90; and sociocultural organizations, 18; and universal organizations, 332, 336, 339; U.S.-China trade war, 167
ecological organizations, 27, 29, 70, 71–91; accession rules, 59–61, 66, 67, 69 (see also specific organizations); benefits of discrimination for strong and weak states, 72; conditions influencing the relative importance of trade and security interests, 75, 85, 88–89, 387; economic interdependence and membership patterns in economic organizations (empirical study), 72–91, 80, 82, 90; economic topics listed, 76n13; exit from, 80, 81; expulsion or suspension terms in charters, 65; and free rider problem, 90; and functional theories of institutions, 27, 72–75, 85, 89, 95, 96; geopolitical alignment with all members vs. most powerful member states, 75, 77, 82, 82–83, 90; geopolitical discrimination and membership patterns in economic organizations (empirical study), 31, 71–91, 80, 82, 84, 87, 89, 90; geopolitical discrimination occurring at both formation and enlargement of economic organizations, 72, 80, 81, 83, 90; and meritocratic organizations, 90; as most common type of hierarchical IGO, 66; number of, 55, 61n19; relative weight of geopolitical alignment and economic interdependence in membership decisions for economic organizations, 30, 72–73, 85–91, 87, 90; role of geopolitical alignment over the lifespan of economic organizations, 75, 80, 81, 83; and security externalities and linkages, 29, 71–74, 77, 91, 264; and shifts in alignment, 80, 81–82; size range, 56, 57; and trade and lending among allied states, 24; trade boosted for rivals after they enter trade regime, 24; and weighted voting, 66, 67, 69. See also specific organizations
economics: and ASEAN, 300; and Brexit, 294–97; economic benefits of membership in IGOs, 17–18, 31, 47–48, 134–36, 155, 169, 205, 210, 228–31, 262, 281, 288, 289, 291; economic inefficiency of racial discrimination, 41; economic sanctions on South Africa, 369, 378; economics as core aim of most IGOs, 55, 56; and EU, 281, 287, 291; financial crises tied to OECD accession, 126, 134, 152–53, 156–57; and geopolitical alignment, 22–24; and ideology, 22; membership affecting risk ratings and bond yields, 17–19, 47–48, 134–36, 156; and OECD, 134–36; and TPP, 228–31
Edano, Yukio, 250
EEC. See European Economic Community/European Community
EFTA. See European Free Trade Association eligibility criteria, 44, 58–59; absence of requirements for specific regime types or alliances, 58–59; and ASEAN, 33, 304, 308; and club IGOs, 45–46; and commodity IGOs, 58; and Council of Europe, 287; and EU, 263, 287; and GATT/WTO, 98, 109–10; and geographic location, 259, 383; and hierarchical organizations, 44; and meritocratic organizations, 45, 67 (see also European Union); and OECD, 125, 127–29, 131–33; open eligibility, 29–30, 33, 44, 47, 92, 121, 266, 315, 317, 328–29, 330, 337, 339, 340, 379, 384 (see also universal organizations); and OSCE, 266; and performance capacity, 2, 15, 316–17 (see also performance capacity of states); and regional organizations, 58, 68, 259, 263, 266, 267, 287, 304; and required membership in other organizations, 58; and restricting membership, 56–59; and universal organizations, 42–44, 57–58, 67, 314, 316–18, 327–29; vague criteria, 6–8, 26, 30, 39, 41, 45–46, 58, 67, 98, 127–31, 174 embassies, 338, 338, 339, 340, 345, 346, 369 Emmons, Cassandra V., 63 enforcement of mandates, 7, 8, 30, 48–49, 51, 63–64, 73, 126, 132–33, 138, 385. See also compliance with organization mandates environment, 14, 43, 56, 170–71 environmental organizations, 14, 54, 55, 56, 57, 59–60, 60n18, 61n19, 65, 67, 68–70, 83–84, 83n26, 84 Erdogan, Recep, 292 Estonia, 130, 132, 142, 159, 258 EU. See European Union Eurasian Union, 263 Europe: and regional organizations, 123, 274, 276, 282n33. See also Eastern European states; European Union; NATO; specific states European Coal and Steel Community, 123, 282n33 European Economic Community/ European Community (EEC, EC), 2, 282n33, 284–85, 291, 293 European Free Trade Association (EFTA), 123, 282–83n34, 284 European Union (EU), 33, 61–62, 258–59, 280–300; accession process, 45, 286, 289–91; accession reviews, 62, 70, 286, 289; accession rules, 61–62, 263, 280–81, 285–87, 289–90; and Austria, 284; benefits of membership, 281, 288, 289, 291; and Brexit, 2, 4, 33, 50, 51, 294–300, 311, 340; and Bulgaria, 387; contrast to ASEAN, 259; and cooperation, 3, 45, 281; costs of entry for applicants, 128, 281, 289–90; and Cyprus dispute, 293–94, 311; and Czech Republic, 288; and democracy, 58, 263, 311; and democratic backsliding, 51, 53; and Denmark, 287; and difficulties of collective decision-making, 300; discrimination over membership, 43, 45, 128, 286, 291–94, 384; and Eastern European states, 6, 33, 45, 70, 258, 287–91, 288, 311, 395; and economic interests, 281, 291; and EEC, 284; enlargement of, 33, 45, 70, 128, 160, 285–91, 311; and Estonia, 258; European integration favored by the U.S., 286, 296; and foreign policy, 280, 281, 283, 287, 288, 291, 294–300, 386–87; founding members, 282; and geopolitical alignment, 280, 288; and Georgia, 6; and Hungary, 288; and identity, 21, 258; and Ireland, 287; joint entry of states, 287; lack of treaty terms for expelling members, 7, 62; as a meritocratic IGO, 43, 45, 61–62, 70, 259, 286, 289; and neutrality, 284–85; origins of, 281–85; and Poland, 288, 290–91; and post–Cold War shifts in alignment, 288, 291; and power of small states, 52–53, 289; precursors to, 282n33, 284–85; and security interests, 280–81, 288; and supply and demand side of membership, 288, 289, 290; Turkey excluded from, 291–94, 311, 386; and UK,
exit from IWC, 249; and economic organizations, 80, 81; foreign policy affinity reducing likelihood of exit, 8; and geopolitical rifts, 8; and IGO charters, 49; India’s exit from RCEP, 245–46; infrequency of, 50, 66; Japan’s exit from ILO, 202; Japan’s exit from IWC, 180, 246–47, 251–53, 255; Japan’s exit from the League of Nations, 185, 199–200; reasons for ending membership, 48–52, 52; South Africa’s exit from IGOs, 370–72, 372; states’ exit from G77 upon OECD accession, 152, 164; U.S. exit from TPP, 226, 230, 239, 241; U.S. exits from UNESCO, 49, 315, 367; U.S. intention to exit WHO under Trump administration, 8, 49; USSR exit from World Health Assembly, 8. See also expulsion from international organizations

expulsion from international organizations, 5–6, 7–8, 27, 49–53, 62; and democratic backsliding, 7; flexibility in exclusion mechanisms, 69; high threshold for, 52–53, 64; and IGO charters, 7, 30, 50, 51, 62–65, 373, 396; infrequency of, 7, 8, 30, 50, 53, 68, 70, 315, 368, 385, 395–96; and loss of recognition of sovereignty, 315; nonrecognition as de facto expulsion, 51; and power of small states, 52–53; reasons for expulsion, 52–53; and regional organizations, 267; and Russia, 5, 7, 64; and signaling to applicants via specific rules for eligibility or expulsion based on noncompliance, 384–85; and South Africa, 7, 42, 50, 316, 372–80

FAO. See Food and Agriculture Organization

“favoring friends” hypothesis, 26–27, 177, 179, 386–89, 391–92; and effectiveness of IGOs, 391–92; and EU accession, 289; and GATT/WTO accession, 92, 99–101, 106, 110–11, 119–22, 209, 384; and OECD accession, 138–39, 384;
“favoring friends” hypothesis (continued) and quality of cooperation, 35, 391; and regional IGOs, 289, 311; statement of hypothesis, 26–27; and theory of IGOs as discriminatory clubs, 383, 386–89 (see also club IGOs); and universal organizations, 318, 328. See also alliances; costs of entry/negotiable terms of membership; geopolitical discrimination; security

Finland, 130, 142, 284
Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), 370, 372, 372
foreign policy, 4–5, 8, 35; and Brexit, 294–300, 340; and the EU, 280, 281, 283, 287, 288, 291, 294–300, 386–87; and GATT/WTO accession, 95, 98–104, 106, 111, 119, 121; and geopolitical discrimination in economic organizations (see economic organizations); and Japan’s involvement with international organizations, 32, 177–256 (see also Japan); and regional IGOs, 259, 270–71, 280, 281, 283, 287, 288, 291. See also geopolitical alignment

France, 186–88, 191, 216, 287n39, 301; and conflict reduction in Europe resulting from European integration, 391; and Eastern enlargement of the EU, 288; as founding member of the EEC, 282; and the League of Nations, 194; and origins of the EU, 283; veto on UK accession to EEC, 33, 286–87, 311

Freedman, Lawrence, 299
free rider problem, 14, 15, 42, 48, 90, 127, 313, 317
free trade agreements (FTAs), 243–44, 295–96. See also European Free Trade Association; Free Trade Area of the Asia-Pacific; Trans-Pacific Partnership

Free Trade Area of the Asia-Pacific (FTAAP), 241–46
Fukuda, Takeo, 217–18

functional theories, 27, 72–75, 85, 89, 95, 96, 123, 178, 254, 260, 389

G7, 20, 127
G20, 164, 324
G77, 152, 164, 167
Garon, Sheldon, 198
Gartzke, Erik, 18, 47
GATT. See General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade
GATT/WTO accession, 92–122; accession rules, 95, 98–99, 106, 108, 384; and Afghanistan, 102; and alliances, 99–101, 111, 114, 115, 117–18; and application timing (time between eligibility and application), 95, 101, 108–10, 110, 113–14, 115, 116, 119, 121; and China, 93–94, 99, 104–519, 104–6, 109, 121; communist applicants, 103–4; cost of delayed entry to China and Mexico, 94; costs of entry/negotiable terms of membership, 24, 98–101, 103–6, 108, 109, 120, 121, 207–9, 384; and democracy, 95, 111, 114, 117; and Eastern European states, 2, 96, 103–4, 287, 395; eligibility criteria, 98, 109–10; expansion of membership, 92–93, 97–98; and favoring friends, 92, 99–101, 106, 110–11, 119–22, 209, 384; and former colonies of members, 93, 97, 98, 102, 109, 112; and functional theories of institutions, 95, 96; GATT/WTO as discriminatory club, 96, 119; and geopolitical alignment of members and non-members, 111–12, 114; and geopolitical discrimination hypothesis, 92, 94–108, 111–22, 120, 311; and Iran, 39, 106–8, 121; and Iraq, 102, 121; and Japan, 101–2, 179, 204–9, 254, 387; and length of negotiations, 95, 101, 108–11, 110, 114, 115, 117–18, 121; and market size and wealth, 112, 115, 116; member approval requirement, 98, 207–8; and Mexico, 4, 94; and nontrade issues, 96, 99, 101; opportunity costs associated with geopolitical
discrimination, 99–100; and Poland, 2, 96, 104; and relational design theories, 96; and sequential liberalization, 97–98; and South Korea, 103; and Soviet Union, 104; and sponsorship by members, 101–3, 121; supply and demand side of membership, 31, 94–109, 112–14, 119; and trade with current members, 111–12, 121; and Turkey, 293

General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT): accession to the GATT/WTO, 92–122 (see also GATT/WTO accession; specific topics under this heading); Article 35 denial of MFN privileges to Japan, 208; and boundaries of cooperation, 3; charter (Articles 26 or 33), 98–99, 102, 109–10, 110, 113, 114, 115, 119; effectiveness of, 93–94; expansion of (see GATT/WTO accession); formal membership and ad hoc roles, 10; founding members, 96

General Postal Union, 187–88. See also Universal Postal Union

geography: and accession rules for regional organizations, 266; geographic proximity and regional IGOs, 265, 267–68, 270–72, 274–75, 277–78, 279; regions determined by, 259–61

geopolitical alignment, 2, 7, 22, 28–30; and ASEAN accession, 300, 303; as basis for IGO cooperation, 21–28; benefits of discrimination in economic IGO membership for strong and weak states, 72; and Brexit, 294, 299; as central to post–WWII international relations, 397–98; and Cold War vs. post–Cold War IGO membership, 84; common security interests among states that are not formal allies, 21–22 (see also Association of Southeast Asian Nations); conditions influencing the relative importance of security interests in economic organizations, 75, 85, 88–89; and differential costs of entry, 26–27 (see also costs of entry/negotiable terms of membership); discrimination based on, 2, 22, 28, 30 (see also geopolitical discrimination); distinguished from alliances, 21–22; distinguished from ideology, 22; and economic interests, 22–24; and economic organizations, 71–91, 80, 82, 87, 89, 90; and engaging states based on expectations of future security relationships, 28; and environmental organizations, 83–84, 84; and EU accession, 280; and GATT/WTO accession, 94–108, 111–22, 120; geopolitical alignment with all members vs. most powerful member states in economic organizations, 75, 77, 82, 82–83; geopolitical bias in membership complicating evidence for correlation between peace and membership in institutions, 35, 91; and Japan’s involvement with international organizations, 177–256 (see also Japan); and length of negotiations, 110–11; measures of, 26, 72, 75, 77, 95, 102, 111, 116, 142; and OECD accession, 123, 125–26, 129, 137, 159; and OECD membership, 141–42, 143, 145, 146, 147–48, 148; and Palestine’s UNESCO accession, 365, 366; and regional IGOs, 258, 265, 268, 270–72, 273, 274–75, 280, 288, 291, 300, 303, 311 (see also European Union); relative weight of geopolitical alignment and economic interdependence for economic organizations, 30, 72–73, 85–91, 87, 90; role of geopolitical alignment over the lifespan of economic organizations, 75, 80, 81, 83; shift in U.S.-China relations during Nixon administration, 348–49; shifts in alignment and economic IGO membership, 80, 81–82, 159, 166–67, 176, 386; shifts in alignment following end of the Cold War, 23, 34, 153, 159, 284, 288, 291, 300, 341, 344, 345, 387, 395; shifts in
geopolitical alignment (continued)
alignment leading to Eastern enlargement of EU, 288, 291; shifts in alignment leading to exit from IGOs, 201–2; and signaling goodwill, 24; signaling shifts in, 5, 47, 159, 288; and South Africa, 371, 375, 378; and speed of applications and accession negotiations, 101, 109–21, 110; and UN accession of North and South Korea, 341–47; and universal organizations, 331, 335, 337, 379. See also alliances; Cold War
geopolitical discrimination, 2, 26–28, 30; and benefits for IGO cooperation, 35–36; and deepening relationships and rivalries, 389–91; and economic organizations (empirical studies), 31, 71–91, 109–22; and GATT/WTO accession, 92, 114, 122, 311 (see also GATT/WTO accession); geopolitical discrimination occurring at both formation and enlargement of economic organizations, 72, 80, 81, 83, 90; and hypothesis about differential costs of entry ("favoring friends" hypothesis), 26–27 (see also "favoring friends" hypothesis; costs of entry/negotiable terms of membership); hypothesis about geopolitical alignment as basis for discrimination in membership decisions, 26, 28, 30–31, 311, 316–17, 388; impact on cooperation, 389–94; impact on effectiveness of IGOs, 34, 391–93; impact on IGO legitimacy and credibility, 34, 39, 91, 393–94; and impact on state behavior, 91, 391–92; and Japan’s involvement with international organizations, 177, 256 (see also Japan); and OECD accession, 128; opportunity costs associated with, 99–100; organizations designed as discriminatory clubs with flexibility to favor security partners, 25–26 (see also club IGOs; institutional design); and unexpected reformers, 35, 36; and universal organizations, 315–18, 335, 340. See also geopolitical alignment; security
geopolitical rivalry, 34; and contested sovereignty, 318–19, 346–47 (see also sovereignty); and controversies over UN memberships, 316, 341–47; emergence of rivalry and the dissolution of organizations, 11; excluding rivals from membership in IGOs, 3, 12–14, 99–100, 108, 122, 319–20, 347–60 (see also North Korea; South Korea; Taiwan); great power rivalries, 316, 319, 341, 343 (see also Cold War); Japan–China rivalry, 179, 219, 222, 224, 225–27, 231–34; and motivation for entry into organizations, 11; and Northeast Asia, 310; and regional organizations, 259, 277–78, 279; rivalry between North and South Korea, 341–47; and shift in U.S.-China relations during Nixon administration, 348–49; and UN accession for North and South Korea, 379–80; U.S.-China trade war, 167; and worsening of out-group hostility, 34, 382, 390–91. See also Cold War
Georgia, 6, 47
Germany, 177, 186–87, 201–2, 282–84, 288, 344, 349, 391
Goldstein, Judith, 94n4, 97
Gorbachev, Mikhail, 287, 344, 345
Gowa, Joanne, 23
Grabbe, Heather, 288
Gray, Julia, 15, 19, 136
Greece, 7, 130, 293–94, 311
Gruber, Lloyd, 13
Guriev, Sergei, 135
Gurria, Angel, 152
Hafner-Burton, Emilie M., 18
Haftel, Yoram Z., 264
Haasegawa, Yasuchika, 221
Hatoyama, Ichirō, 207
Henke, Marina, 24, 390
hierarchical organizations, 42, 44–45, 66–69, 67, 68, 128, 203, 266, 324, 326, 384.
See also International Monetary Fund; United Nations
Hofmann, Stephanie C., 264
Hooghe, Liesbet, 9, 16, 39n2, 51, 55n10, 266n10, 317n3, 385
Horie, Shigeo, 208
Hughes, Kirsty, 288
Hu Jintao, 356
human rights, 50, 99, 105, 121, 171, 231, 263, 287, 364, 371, 375–77. See also South Africa
Hungary, 51, 53, 96, 130, 134, 142, 159, 160, 288, 289
Hurd, Ian, 320
Hurrell, Andrew, 38, 318
Huth, Paul, 19
Iceland, 249
identity, 9, 18, 21, 134, 141, 152, 258, 262–63, 288
ideology, 22, 23, 387, 388
IGOs. See intergovernmental organizations
Ikeda, Hayato, 209, 219
ILO. See International Labour Organization
Imai, Kötsuke, 85
IMF. See International Monetary Fund
India, 17, 131, 140, 142, 160, 161, 162, 245–46, 304, 321, 340
Indonesia, 301–3, 305
Indo-Pacific region, 257
Ingram, Paul, 18
Inhoffe, Jim, 358
Inoue, Seiichi, 210
institutional design: enforcement mechanisms, 7, 8, 73, 126, 132–33, 385 (see also compliance with organization mandates); flexible accession rules (see rules for accession and membership); IGO membership designed to provide discretion over selection, 2, 26, 29–30, 39, 56–61, 310–11, 383–86, 398 (see also discrimination/discretionary selection; rules for accession and membership); institutional design theories, 13–15, 29–30; models of membership described, 42–48, 43; and tension between hierarchy and legitimacy, 38–39; and trade-off between depth of rules and breadth of participation, 14–15, 27–19, 317, 384. See also club IGOs; hierarchical organizations; meritocratic organizations; universal organizations intergovernmental organizations (IGOs), 9–12, 382–98; accession to (see accession process; rules for accession and membership); benefits of membership (see membership in international organizations, benefits of); benefits of restricting entry into, 3, 12–14, 20, 319–20, 324, 394, 395; coercive pressure to join an IGO, 10; and collective decision-making, 40–41, 53, 300, 384; compared to social clubs, 2, 16, 18, 38, 39, 45, 46, 174; compliance with mandates (see compliance with organization mandates); and conflict reduction (see conflict reduction); conventional view of membership, 29; and cooperation (see cooperation); credibility of, 74, 91, 173; definition of IGOs, 9–12; designed for the provision of public goods (see public goods); designing rules to overcome barriers to collective action, 13–15 (see also rules for accession and membership); differential allocation of benefits among members, 38, 51, 318, 384; differential application of rules, 12 (see also costs of entry/negotiable terms of membership); differential expectations of members, 66 (see also hierarchical organizations); directions for future research, 393, 395; as discriminatory clubs (overview of theory), 2–8 (see also club IGOs; discrimination/discretionary selection; geopolitical discrimination); dispute settlements, 390; early institutions determined by proximity, 260; effectiveness of, 11–12, 34, 35, 91, 93–94, 124–25, 173, 391–93, 396; effect of alliances on
intergovernmental organizations (IGOs) (continued)

IGOs in different issue areas, 83–84, 84 (see also economic organizations); effects on states prior to accession, 150, 173 (see also costs of entry/negotiable terms of membership); elite clubs (G7, UN Security Council, etc.) as status markers, 2, 5, 10, 17–20; enforcement of mandates, 7, 8, 30, 48–49, 63–64, 385 (see also compliance with organization mandates); enlargement, costs and benefits, 127–29 (see also specific organizations); enlargement scenarios, 3, 15; evolution of, 382; examples, 9–10; exit from (see exit [voluntary] from international organizations); expulsion from (see expulsion from international organizations); formation of new organizations, 12–13, 34, 91, 382, 394–96; functions of, 9, 21, 38; and gatekeeping over sovereignty, 320–27, 380, 385, 392, 395, 398; geopolitical alignment as basis for IGO cooperation, 21–28 (see also geopolitical alignment); IGO accession as club membership, 40–48 (see also accession process; rules for accession and membership); IGO membership by year for Japan, U.S., China, and South Korea, 180; impact of membership on states’ behavior, 6, 35, 50–51, 199, 209 (see also socialization of states in IGOs); and international relations theory, 12–21; issue areas (see economic organizations; environmental organizations; regional organizations; social organizations; social topic organizations); legitimacy of, 34, 38, 39, 44, 128n2, 129, 163, 313, 315, 317, 318, 327, 328, 380, 382, 389, 391–92; models of membership described, 42–48, 43 (see also club IGOs; hierarchical organizations; meritocratic organizations; universal organizations); number of IGOs by issue area, 55, 61n19; number of IGOs with various restrictions on participation mandate, 60; observer status, 10, 104, 107, 190, 206, 249n134, 322, 344, 350, 354–59, 362, 363, 368; optimal size, 14–15, 127; overexpansion problem (see overexpansion problem); participation mandates, 42–46, 43; size range, 56, 57; social role of organizations, 16–21 (see also international society); summary of conclusions about, 382–98; and tension between hierarchy and legitimacy, 38–39; trade-off between depth of rules and breadth of participation, 14–15, 127–29, 317, 384; unexpected joiners, 34, 125, 126, 226, 392; zombie organizations (organizations that have outlived their usefulness), 49. See also club IGOs; hierarchical organizations; meritocratic organizations; universal organizations.

International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), 3, 62

International Bureau of Weights and Measures (BIPM), 191–94

International Court of Justice: and definition of states, 324; and ruling against Japanese whaling, 249–52

International Labour Organization (ILO): and Japan, 5, 32, 179, 197–99, 254, 392; Japan’s exit from, 202; Japan’s return to, 206; negotiable terms of membership, 197–98, 206, 254; and North and South Korea, 344n24; South Africa’s exit from, 370, 372; as a universal IGO, 58; U.S. as non-member, 202

International Monetary Fund (IMF), 6, 8, 12, 24, 43, 44, 64–66, 341, 372

International Organization for Migration, 56

international organizations. See intergovernmental organizations

international society: and advantages of club-style accession to applicants, 46–47;
and benefits of status gained by association with other member states, 5, 134 (see also status); Bull’s theory of, 326; changes in the early modern period, 397–98; and China, 185; and control over membership norms, 38; and ending IGO membership, 48–53 (see also exit [voluntary] from international organizations); and evolution of IGOs, 382; and GATT/WTO membership, 119; hierarchy among states and authority structure between dominant and subordinate states, 12; and Japan, 185–94, 199–200, 202–14; membership in organizations as a choice of association, 29; and membership in organizations signaling future geopolitical alignment, 5, 47, 159, 288; minimal information about social position gained from universal or meritocratic IGO membership, 48; and North Korea, 356; and OECD membership, 123; social role of organizations, 16–21 (see also status). See also alliances; diplomatic recognition; geopolitical alignment; membership in international organizations, benefits of; sovereignty; specific states and organizations

International Telecommunication Union (ITU; International Telegraph Union), 58, 189–91, 372
International Whaling Commission (IWC), 58, 246–53, 2490134, 255
Iran, 39, 69, 106–8, 121, 386
Iraq, 102, 121
Ireland, 142, 285, 287
Islam, 292
Israel, 21, 130, 131, 142, 168, 360–61, 365, 367
Italy, 194, 201–2, 282
ITU. See International Telecommunication Union
IWC. See International Whaling Commission

Jacoby, Wade, 289
Jansen, Marius, 200
Japan, 32, 177–256; and ADB, 214–19, 254; and AIIB (Japan as non-member), 32, 179, 219–26, 254; Anglo-Japanese Alliance, 32, 177, 194; and ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF), 304; and ASPAC, 309–10; and BIPM, 191–94; and call for racial equality at Paris Peace Conference, 195, 196, 202; and China, 32, 179, 194, 195, 199, 200, 202, 205, 219–22, 225–27, 231–34, 240, 242–43, 246, 255; costs of entry into IGOs, 174, 177–79, 197–99, 205–212, 254; and domestic lobbying for or against membership in IGOs, 178, 179, 187–97, 205–11, 213, 219, 225–26, 228, 239, 254; and entry into IGOs, 174, 177–79, 197–99, 205–212, 254; and foreign aid, 210, 225; and foreign policy, 32, 177–256; and foreign pressure for reforms, 32, 179, 198–99, 208–9, 212–13, 235, 248, 254; and FTAP, 241–46; and GATT accession, 101–2, 179, 204–9, 254, 387; and geopolitics, 177–256 (see also specific organizations under this heading); IGO membership by year compared to membership of U.S., Korea, and China, 180; IGOs joined by year of entry, 181–84; and ILO, 5, 32, 179, 197–99, 206, 254, 392; and international society, 32, 185–94, 199–200, 202–14, 395; and ITU, 189–91; Iwakura Mission, 185; and IWC,
Japan, (continued)
179–80, 246–53; Japanese Constitution, 206; and leadership in East Asia, 179, 244–46; and League of Nations, 5, 194–202, 254; Meiji government, 185, 186, 192, 194; and OECD accession, 130, 132, 174, 209–14, 254, 386; and RCEP, 179, 241–46, 255; reforms under Ikeda government, 209; rivalry with China, 179, 225–27, 232; and Senkaku/Diaoyu islands, 232; shift in geopolitical alignment in the 1930s, 201–2; and sovereignty, 179, 186–88; and supply side of membership in IGOs, 189–90, 192–93, 206–8, 213, 225–26; and TPP, 179, 226–46, 396; and Treaty of Amity and Cooperation in Southeast Asia, 304; and UN membership, 203, 256; and UPU, 186–91; U.S.-Japan alliance, 32, 56, 142, 177, 179, 203–4, 215, 228, 232, 236, 251, 254, 256, 387; U.S.-Japan free trade agreement, 243–44; U.S. Occupation, 202–3, 247; U.S. sponsorship, 179, 187–88, 203–4, 206–7; U.S. troops stationed in, 204, 219; war in China, 200; and WHO accession, 203; and World War I, 179, 194; and World War II, 177
Jesień, Leszek, 290
Jich Wen-chich, 355
Johnson, Tana, 19
Johnston, Alastair Ian, 20
Johnston, Donald, 129
Jonsson, Gabriel, 342, 344
Jupille, Joe, 394

Kaieda, Banri, 243
Kamiyama, Akiyoshi, 201
Kan, Naoto, 227
Katzenstein, Peter, 262, 312
Kellow, Aynsley, 131, 136, 151
Kennan, George, 204
Keohane, Robert O., 13, 14, 20, 23
Khrushchev, Nikita, 815
Kim Il-sung, 345
Kim Young-sam, 154, 157

Kinne, Brandon J., 18, 47, 325, 390
Kishi, Nobusuke, 219
Konoe, Fumimaro, 195
Korean War, 343
Koremenos, Barbara, 65, 96
Kos, Drago, 171
Kosovo, 315, 323
Krasner, Stephen, 321, 322
Kulakowski, Jan, 290
Lake, David, 12
Landau-Wells, Marika, 51, 322
Laos, 301, 303, 307
Larson, Deborah Welch, 19–20
Lascurérettes, Kyle M., 12, 319
Latin America: and regional organizations, 275, 276. See also specific states
Latvia, 130, 132, 162
League of Nations, 5, 17, 185, 194–202, 254, 325
Lechner, Michael, 82n23
Lee Teng-hui, 349
Lehner, Michael, 82n23
Lee Teng-hui, 349
legitimacy of organizations, 34, 38, 39, 44, 128n2, 129, 163, 313, 315, 317, 318, 327, 328, 380, 382, 389, 391–92
Lenz, Tobias, 9, 16
Li Bin, 356
Lien Chan, 349, 358
Lin, David, 354
Lindstäd, René, 15
Li Peng, 345
Lipson, Charles, 96
Lithuania, 130, 132, 135, 162
London, Tamar, 317
López Portillo, José, 4, 94
Luxembourg, 282

Maastricht Treaty. See Treaty on European Union
MacArthur, Douglas, 247
Mahathir Mohamad, 306
Makino, Nobuaki, 195, 196
Malaysia, 142, 227, 231n96, 301, 303, 305, 309–10
Malik, Adam, 303
Manby, Bronwen, 370
Mancukuo, 200, 325
Mandela, Nelson, 370–71, 378, 379
Mansfield, Edward, 112, 138
March, James, 21
Marks, Gary, 9, 16
Matsuoka, Yosuke, 200
Mattli, Walter, 262, 284, 394
May, Theresa, 296–97
Ma Ying-jeou, 353, 356
McGrath, Liam F., 81n19

member approval requirement, 30, 39, 57, 59–61, 68, 383; and club IGOs, 46, 67, 70; and economic organizations, 59–60, 69; and EU accession, 286–87, 293; as exclusion mechanism, 57, 68; and GATT/WTO accession, 98, 207–8; geopolitics playing less of a role in IGOs with high approval thresholds, 84, 276; and hierarchical organizations, 67; and OECD accession, 59, 129–30, 170, 172, 173, 213; and regional organizations, 266, 267, 270–71, 274–75, 276, 286–87, 311; and SADC, 266; and security organizations, 59–61; and UN, 323, 342; and UNESCO, 364, 365; and universal organizations, 315–16, 335, 336, 337, 364, 379; and UPU, 187, 373; variation in threshold for approval, 59–60; and WHO, 354

membership in international organizations, benefits of, 2, 17–21; benefits of excluding other states, 3, 12–14, 20, 136, 319–20, 394, 395; conflict reduction, 18, 24, 35, 47, 91, 264–65, 304, 322, 389–91; diplomatic recognition/establishing sovereignty, 17, 186–88, 194, 320–23, 365–66, 395; domestic leverage for policy change, 32, 135, 174, 175, 208, 235; economic benefits, 17–18, 31, 47–48, 134–36, 155, 169, 205, 210, 228–31, 262, 281, 288, 289, 291; enhancing relationships among states, 3, 18, 188–89, 193, 195–96, 213, 231, 239, 254; factors diminishing the value of association, 368; and gaining a voice in international society and global governance, 195, 196, 197, 208, 210–11, 239, 322; and gains in status by association, 5, 18–19, 46–48, 123, 136–39, 173, 254, 395 (see also status; specific organizations and states); and learning from practices of other countries, 155, 157, 210–11; network ties as cooperation multiplier, 390; peer effects, 17–18, 48, 137; and signaling shifts in foreign policy direction or regime type, 5, 47, 159, 288; socialization of states in IGOs, 20–21, 35, 128, 151, 390, 392; utility of membership as both provision of goods and association with other states, 2, 21, 29, 368, 383, 384, 388, 391. See also specific organizations and states

Menendez, Bob, 358

meritocratic organizations, 42–43, 45, 48, 61–62, 68, 90, 384; accession rules, 40, 43, 45, 61–62, 67, 312; described, 42, 45; EU as a meritocratic IGO, 43, 45, 70, 259, 286, 289, 384; rarity of, 39, 45, 68

Metre Convention, 192, 193

Metzger, Shawna K., 100n10

Mexico: economic impact of OECD membership, 126, 134, 157; exit from G77, 152, 164; financial crisis, 126, 157; and GATT, 4, 94; and NAFTA, 149–51, 163, 174; and OECD, 7, 69, 126, 130, 149–52, 163, 174; and TPP, 227

Middle East: and regional organizations, 275, 276; and South Africa, 371. See also specific states

Mishustin, Mikhail, 144

Monnet, Jean, 281, 287

Montevideo Convention on the Rights and Duties of States (1933), 323

Montgomery, Alexander H., 18

Moravcsik, Andrew, 283

Moronuki, Hideki, 250

Myanmar, 51, 302, 303, 307

Myoung Ho-shin, 152, 154–55
NAFTA, 149–51, 163, 174
Nakao, Takehiko, 224
Nakasone, Yasuhiro, 251
Naoi, Megumi, 236
NATO, 284, 386; and boundaries of cooperation, 3; and Czech Republic, 289; and flexible membership rules supporting discriminatory membership, 7; and France, 287n39; and Hungary, 289; and OECD membership, 142, 395; and Poland, 289, 291; as a security IGO, 56; and Turkey, 293; and the UK, 283, 299
Nauru, 315
negative interaction effect, 84, 85, 276
neofunctional theory, 281, 390–91
Netherlands, 282
Ne Win, Shu Maung, 303
New Zealand, 130, 142, 227, 248, 301, 309–10
Nikai, Toshihiro, 251, 252
Nitobe, Inazô, 195–96
Niue (Pacific island), 314
Nixon, Richard, 348–50, 352
Noboru, Seiichirô, 131, 164
Noda, Yoshihiko, 227, 231, 243
Nordhaus, William, 14
Nordstrom, Timothy, 18, 47
North America: and regional organizations, 275, 276. See also specific states
North Korea, 34, 338, 340–47, 344n24; political ties following end of the Cold War, 345, 346; and sovereignty, 346–47; and UN membership, 1, 34, 316, 341–47, 387
North Macedonia, 323
Norway, 249n134, 284
Obama, Barack, 231, 298–99
observer status, 10, 104, 107, 190, 206, 249n134, 322, 344, 350, 354–59, 362, 363, 368
OECD. See OECD accession; Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
OECD accession, 31–32, 45, 67, 129–32, 213; accession rules, 31, 45, 127–33, 174 (see also compliance review process; costs of entry/negotiable terms of membership; eligibility criteria; membership approval requirement under this heading); and Brazil, 32, 140–41, 160–73, 176, 386; and BRICS states, 131, 164 (see also specific states); case studies, 31–32, 149–73 (see also specific states under this heading); and Colombia, 7, 126, 132; compliance review process, 67, 132–33, 138, 151, 170, 392; and Costa Rica, 125, 132; costs of entry (reforms required for accession), 127, 150–51, 155–60, 164, 170, 174; and Czech Republic, 126, 159, 160; and demand side of membership, 123, 125–26, 129, 133–39, 142, 149–76, 209–11, 386; and democracy, 58, 125, 129, 131, 137, 147–49, 148; and Eastern European states, 125, 152, 153, 158–60, 395 (see also specific states under this heading); eligibility criteria, 125, 127–29, 131–33; and Estonia, 159; EU membership not correlated to, 160; exclusion mechanisms, 132–33; and favoring friends, 138–39, 384; flexibility of rules, 31, 127–28, 131, 133; and geographic location, 146, 146–47, 148, 149, 152, 158–59, 174; and geopolitical alignment, 123, 125–26, 129, 137, 146, 147, 148; and geopolitical discrimination, 128, 384; and Hungary, 130, 142, 159, 160; and income level, 131–32, 139, 147, 148, 149; and Japan, 130, 132, 174, 209–14, 254, 386; joint entry of states, 172; member approval requirement, 59, 129–30, 170, 172, 178, 213; and Mexico, 7, 69, 125, 126, 131, 149–52, 163, 174; and Poland, 130, 142, 159, 160; and Russia, 5, 7, 134–35, 142–44, 175; and selecting for similar type, 129–39; and sequential liberalization, 138; and Slovenia, 159; and South Korea, 126, 130, 152–58, 386; and sponsorship by members, 126, 152; statistical analysis of correlates of

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membership, 145–49, 146, 148, 160; and supply side of membership, 126, 131, 139, 149–73, 175, 213; time to apply, 145–49, 146; trade and financial openness not predictive of membership pattern, 127; and trade openness, 148, 149; and Turkey, 124, 125, 131, 141–42, 387

Ohira, Masayoshi, 213
Ohls, David, 112
Okada, Soeji, 213
Olsen, Johan, 21
Olympics, 314–15, 344
One Belt One Road initiative, 221, 225
OPEC, 58
Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), 31–32, 69, 123–76, 210; accession process (see OECD accession); activities open to non-members, 161–62; alliance ties of members, 141; Anti-Bribery Convention, 127, 133, 162, 171, 398; benefits of membership, 31, 133–39; Brazil as non-member partner, 126, 134, 140–41, 160–63, 162, 166; charter, 45, 129–30; as a club IGO, 7, 43, 45–46, 125, 127, 174; Codes of Liberalization, 133, 134, 149; common features of members, 139–45; and cooperation problems, 3, 174; costs and benefits of expansion, 127–29; and creation of collective identity, 21, 134; and demand side of membership (see under OECD accession); and democracy, 58, 125, 129, 131, 137, 140, 140, 147–49; and discretionary selection, 7, 39, 69, 124–25, 127–28, 134; dues, 132; and Eastern European states (see under OECD accession); effectiveness of, 124–25, 173; enforcement of mandates, 126, 128, 130, 133, 138, 392; engagement with non-member states, 10, 126, 132–34, 140–42, 160–73, 161, 322; enlargement of, 125, 127–29, 130, 152–54, 159–60, 172, 209 (see also OECD accession); and financial crises, 126, 134, 152–53, 156–57; founding members, 124, 125, 130, 131, 133, 141–42; and geopolitical alignment, 123, 125–26, 129, 137, 141–42, 146, 147, 148; increasing priority of environmental stewardship, 170–71; instruments signed by non-members, 162, 166; lack of formal sanctions procedures or rules for expulsion, 130, 133, 392; mandate and policy scope, 124, 133; National Treatment for Foreign-Controlled Enterprises, 133; and NATO, 142, 395; need to remain exclusive in order to maintain brand value, 136; new members by accession year, 130; origins of, 123–24; peer review (see OECD accession: compliance review process); prospective members, 134–35; as quasi-alliance of “the West,” 31, 125, 142; reputation as “rich country club,” 31, 134, 139, 164; and socialization of members, 128, 151, 392; and status seeking, 31, 123, 125–26, 134, 136–39, 152; and supply side of membership (see under OECD accession); as think tank and information center, 31, 124, 125, 133, 136–37; Turkey as founding member, 1–2, 7, 39, 124, 125, 131, 141–42, 387

Organisation for European Economic Cooperation (OEEC), 123–24
Organisation of African Unity (OAU), 370
Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), 266, 266n11, 288
Organization of American States (OAS), 51, 63
O’Rourke, Kevin, 295
Ostrom, Elinor, 37, 49, 51
overexpansion problem, 3, 23, 34, 36, 127, 129, 136, 382, 396
Pakistan, 301
Palestine, 33, 34, 360–68, 380; and diplomatic recognition by other states, 360, 362, 362n54, 365, 368; excluded from UN, 1, 44, 314, 362, 368; excluded from UPU, 362; excluded from WTO, 314; income level, 362, 363; and International
Palestine (continued)

Criminal Police Organization membership, 314; observer status in the UN, 362, 367; observer status in the WHA, 363; and Olympics, 315; and Partition Plan, 360–61; and peace process, 363, 365; and sovereignty, 316, 324, 368; and UN application, 362, 368; and UNESCO membership, 49, 314–16, 324, 364–68; U.S. stance on, 362, 363

Palestinian Authority (PA), 362, 363, 366, 368

pariah states, 7, 52, 203, 318, 368, 370, 392
Paris Peace Conference (1919), 194–97
Park Chung-hee, 103
Park Myung-hwan, 158
Paul, T. V., 19–20
Paye, Jean-Claude, 153
peace. See conflict reduction
People’s Republic of China. See China performance capacity of states, 2, 15, 392; and economic organizations, 73, 128, 131, 132, 159; and effectiveness of IGOs, 391; measures of, 327; and regional IGOs, 258; screening for, 2, 15, 19, 27, 30, 40, 73, 316–17, 379; selection for criteria other than performance capacity, 42, 68, 69, 258, 383 (see also discrimination/discretionary selection); and sovereignty, 331, 360; states selected for both performance capacity and association value, 41, 48, 315–17, 327, 368, 379, 384, 388; and Taiwan, 347, 360; and universal organizations, 315–17, 327–28, 331
Perry, Matthew, 185, 189
Peru, 172, 191, 248
Petri, Peter, 230, 240
Pevehouse, Jon, 112, 138
Philippines, 301, 302, 303, 309–10
Poast, Paul, 160, 276n28, 395
Poland: democratic backsliding, 51, 53; economic impact of OECD membership, 134; and EU accession, 288, 290–91; and GATT accession, 2, 96, 104; and NATO accession, 289, 291; and OECD accession, 130, 142, 159
politics. See alliances; domestic politics; foreign policy; geopolitical alignment; geopolitical discrimination; specific states and organizations
Portugal, 130
Pratt, Tyler, 30n13, 71, 330
preferential trade agreements (PTAs), 14, 91, 112, 115, 116, 228, 229, 231, 236, 396
public goods, 2, 51, 313; club goods, 14, 30, 37–38, 39; and free rieder problem, 15 (see also free rieder problem); global public goods, 30, 43–44; impure public goods, 14, 37–38; and OECD, 133; and performance capacity of states, 317; pure public goods, 13; and universal organizations, 33, 316
racial discrimination, 41, 195, 196, 202. See also Apartheid
Ravenhill, John, 231n96
RCEP. See Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership
Reagan, Ronald, 251, 377
realist theories of international relations, 23, 86, 264, 388, 396–97
recognition of states. See diplomatic recognition
regime type, 387; absence of requirements for specific regime types in IGO charters, 58–59; and ASEAN composition, 307, 309; and distinction between ideology and geopolitical alignment, 22; and GATT/WTO accession, 111, 115; and OECD membership characteristics, 140, 140; and OECD’s founding members, 130; and regional identity, 262–63, 288; signaling the direction of regime transition through IGO membership, 5, 47, 159, 288. See also authoritarianism; communism; democracy
Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP), 179, 241–46, 255

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regional organizations, 29, 32–33, 37, 56, 58n14, 257–312; absence of a Northeast Asia regional organization, 309–10; accession rules, 265, 266, 266n12, 312 (see also specific rules and case studies under this heading); and Africa, 274–75, 276, 370; and alliances, 269, 270–71, 273, 274–75, 276, 277–78, 279; analysis of membership patterns, 265–80; ASEAN case study, 33, 258–59, 300–309 (see also Association of Southeast Asian Nations); and Cold War, 270, 274–75; and conflict reduction, 264–65; and conflicts/rivalries, 259, 274–75, 277–78, 279, 293–94, 310; and demand side of membership, 258, 262, 284, 288, 303; and democracy, 263, 265, 269, 270–75, 272–73, 277–78; and democratic backsliding, 385; difficulty of defining regions, 58, 68, 258, 259–65, 301, 309, 311; as discriminatory clubs, 258, 265; economic benefits of, 262, 281, 291; and economic integration/trade ties, 261–62, 265, 268, 270–72, 274–75, 277–78; eligibility criteria, 58, 68, 259, 263, 266, 267; EU case study, 33, 258–59, 280–300 (see also European Union); exclusion mechanisms, 266; expansionist security goals undermining regional cooperation, 263–64; expulsion from, 267; and foreign policy, 259; and geographic proximity, 265, 267–68, 270–72, 274–75, 277–78, 279, 309; and geopolitical alignment, 258, 265, 268, 270–71, 274–75, 280, 311; hierarchical regional IGOs, 266; and human rights, 263; and identity, 258, 262–63, 288; and income level, 270–71, 274–75, 277–78; and negotiable terms of membership, 267; and regime type, 262–63; regional IGOs open to non-region members, 266; regions determined by geography, 259–61; and requirement for member approval, 60, 266, 266n12, 267, 270–71, 274–75, 276, 286–87; and security interests, 258, 263–65, 279–300, 311, 386–87 (see also Association of Southeast Asian Nations; European Union); and supply side of membership, 258, 303, 305. See also specific organizations

relational theories, 26, 178, 389

religion, 292

Renshon, Jonathan, 19, 326

Republic of China. See Taiwan

republics of the former Soviet Union, 47, 288. See also Eastern European states reputation, 25, 35, 123, 134–36. See also status

Reus-Smit, Christian, 323

risk ratings and bond yields, 17–19, 47–48, 134–36, 156 rivalry. See geopolitical rivalry

Rivers, Douglas, 94n4, 97

Robinson, Jeffrey, 18

Rocke, David, 15, 97

Roh Tae-woo, 345

Romania, 172

Rose, Andrew, 97, 124

Rousseff, Dilma, 165

Rozman, Gilbert, 309

rules for accession and membership, 12–15, 29, 37–70, 41, 54–56, 58, 174, 383–86; analysis of data on, 53–68; and ASEAN, 33, 304–5, 308; charters rarely modified, 55, 69; and club IGOs, 43, 45–47, 67, 383–86 (see also specific organizations); and compliance reviews, 60, 61–63, 70, 132–33, 138, 151, 170, 266, 267, 289, 384; conditionality terms for different model IGOs, 42–46, 43, 61–63, 66–68, 70; coordination games benefitting from low entry barriers, 14; and definition of IGOs, 9–10; differential costs of entry (varying conditions for different applicants), 26–27 (see also costs of entry/negotiable terms of membership; specific organizations and states); economic cooperation as common aspect of mandates, 73; and economic organizations, 59–60, 66, 67, 69 (see also GATT/WTO accession; OECD accession); eligibility criteria
rules for accession and membership
(continued)
(see eligibility criteria); and environmental organizations, 54, 68–69; and EU, 280–81, 285–87; exclusion mechanisms, 14, 39, 56–61, 68, 328–40; (see also exclusion from international organizations); exit provisions, 30, 66; expulsion or suspension terms (or lack thereof), 7, 30, 50, 51, 62–65, 65, 69, 130, 133, 192, 385; flexibility of rules, 6–7, 38, 39, 42, 45–47, 53, 68–70, 95, 106, 108, 131, 175, 308, 312, 316, 398; and gatekeeping over sovereignty, 320–27, 385; and GATT/WTO, 95, 98–99, 102, 106, 108–10, 110, 113, 114, 115, 384; and hierarchical organizations, 43, 44–45, 66–68; hypothesis about designing rules to provide discretion over selection, 26, 30, 39, 310–11 (see also discrimination/discretionary selection; institutional design); and IWC, 247; lack of definitions, 385; member approval requirement (see member approval requirement); and meritocratic organizations, 40, 43, 45, 67; negotiable terms of membership (see costs of entry/negotiable terms of membership); and OECD, 31, 45, 127–33, 174 (see also OECD accession); participation mandates for different model IGOs, 42–46, 43, 56–61; rarity of rigorous screening of potential members, 15, 30, 39, 40, 266, 267; and regional organizations, 266, 266n12, 267, 270–71, 274–75, 276, 311 (see also Association of Southeast Asian Nations; European Union); and sequential liberalization model of enlargement, 15; and signaling need for compliance, 384–85; and social topic IGOs, 54; and terms for exit, 49; and TPP, 233; trade-off between depth of rules and breadth of participation, 14–15, 127–29, 317, 384; and UN, 323, 342, 348n29, 376; and UNESCO, 364; and universal organizations, 43, 43–44, 57–58, 66–67, 314–16, 327–28, 379 (see also specific organizations under this heading); and UPU, 373, 375; vague rules on eligibility and compliance, 6–8, 26, 30, 39, 41, 45–46, 58, 67, 98, 127–32, 174, 266, 287, 308, 312, 383; and WHO, 354. See also club IGOs; compliance with organization mandates; specific organizations
Russett, Bruce, 100n10
Russia, 3, 104, 131, 191, 226, 296, 304; and changing recognition following dissolution of the USSR, 51; and coercive pressure to induce former Soviet Republics to join the CIS, 10; difficulties of expelling from IGOs, 64–65; and economic organizations, 89, 99, 226; exclusion from international organizations following invasions of Ukraine, 5, 7, 64, 144, 175; and potential accession to OECD, 5, 7, 134–35, 142–44, 175, 386. See also Soviet Union
Saionji, Kinmochi, 197
Salinas de Gortari, Carlos, 150–51
sanctions, 49–50, 51, 64. See also South Africa
San Francisco Peace Treaty, 202, 203, 205, 206
Sapir, Eliyahu V., 356
SARS, 355
Satō, Eisaku, 214–15, 219
Scalera, Jamie E., 119, 120
Schneider, Christina, 128, 289
security: and ASEAN membership, 300–309, 387; boundaries of cooperation for states sharing a common security interest, 3; and Brexit, 300; common security interests among states that are not formal allies, 21–22 (see also Association of Southeast Asian Nations); conditions influencing the relative importance of trade and security interests in economic organizations, 75, 85, 88–89, 387; and
contested sovereignty, 318–19; and economic cooperation, 29, 34, 71–74, 85, 91 (see also economic organizations); and EU membership, 288; expansionist security goals undermining regional cooperation, 263–64; and foreign policy process at the domestic level, 4–5; and network ties as cooperation multiplier, 390; and Northeast Asia, 310; and principle of noninterference, 302–4, 307–9; and regional organizations, 258, 263–65, 276, 280–81, 288, 311, 312, 386–87 (see also European Union); relative weight of security vs. trade ties for membership decisions in economic organizations, 72–73, 85–91, 87, 90; security as goal of alliances and diplomacy, 398; security interests as common source of discrimination in IGO membership, 73–74, 258, 386–89 (see also geopolitical alignment; geopolitical discrimination); security interests forming the basis for cooperation and status, 2; security linkages and security externalities shaping incentives for membership in economic organizations, 71–74, 77, 91, 219; as source of affinity in the modern era, 398; and South Africa, 371; and TPP, 228, 231–34; and universal organizations, 33, 316–18, 340, 386–87; and U.S. sponsorship of Japan, 203–4, 207–8; worsening compliance with IGO regulations as security ties take precedence over policy reform, 91. See also alliances; geopolitical alignment; geopolitical discrimination security organizations, 55, 56, 57, 59–61, 6119, 65, 67, 83, 81126, 84. See also NATO; Southeast Asia Treaty Organization; Warsaw Pact Seko, Hiroshi, 244 Senkaku/Diaoyu islands, dispute over, 232 sequential liberalization theory, 15, 97–98, 138 Shanghai Cooperation Organisation, 3, 395 Signorino, Curtis S., 79 Singapore, 142, 227, 301, 303, 305 Slantchev, Bransilav, 317 Slapin, Jonathan B., 15 Slovakia, 130, 134, 142 Slovenia, 130, 142, 159 Snidal, Duncan, 96, 394 social clubs, 2, 16, 18, 39, 51, 391–92; international organizations compared to, 2, 16, 18, 38, 39, 45, 46, 174, 398 socialization of states in IGOs, 20–21, 35, 128, 151, 390, 392 social topic organizations (human rights organizations, etc.), 54, 55, 56, 57, 60n18, 6119, 65, 67. See also Council of Europe; International Labour Organization; United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization Solingen, Etel, 263 Somalia, 321 South Africa, 131, 368–80, 392; diplomatic ties, 369, 369–70; end of Apartheid, 370, 378, 379; engagement with OECD, 132, 160, 161, 162; exit from IGOs, 370–72, 372; expulsion from the UPU over Apartheid, 7, 34, 42, 50, 316, 372–80; factors giving rise to pressure for exclusion/expulsion, 368–69; and geopolitical alignment, 371, 375, 378; membership in IGOs, 370–71, 371, 372; ostracism by international community, 368–80; sanctions on, 369, 378; UK and, 374; UN seat retained, 370, 374, 376, 380; U.S. and, 369, 374, 375, 377–78, 380 South America, 275. See also specific states Southeast Asia, 172; post-colonial challenges to integration, 300–301; and sharing security interests with states that are not formal allies, 21–22. See also Association of Southeast Asian Nations Southeast Asia Treaty Organization (SEATO), 301, 308 Southern African Development Community (SADC), 266
South Korea, 152–58, 340–47; and Asia and Pacific Council, 309–10; cost of entry into OECD, 155–58, 174, 386; and embassies and IGO membership, 138; exit from G77, 164; expanding political ties following end of the Cold War, 344–45, 346; financial crisis tied to OECD membership, 126, 134, 152–53, 156–57; and foreign pressure for reforms, 155–56; and GATT accession, 103; IGO membership by year compared to membership of Japan, U.S., and China, 180; and ILO accession, 344n24; and IWC, 248; membership in universal organizations, 34, 341, 343; and OECD accession, 126, 130, 134, 152–58, 386; and Olympics, 344; and RCEP, 242; and sovereignty, 346–47; and UN accession, 1, 34, 316, 341–47, 379–80, 387; U.S.-Korea alliance, 142, 168

South Sudan, 320, 368

sovereignty, 321, 323; ambiguity of, 319; and ASEAN, 302; and Brexit, 295, 311; challenges of defining sovereignty, 314; circular relationship between sovereignty and membership in IGOs, 320–23; contested sovereignty, 34, 44, 314–15, 319–21, 325, 346–60; and EU, 295, 300; gatekeeping over, 320–27, 380, 385, 392, 395, 398; and independence or secession, 318–20; and Japan's engagement with IGOs in the 19th century, 179, 186–88, 194; and membership in universal organizations, 33–34, 444, 314, 316, 346–47, 367, 379; and North and South Korea, 346–47; and Palestine, 44, 316, 324, 367; principle of sovereign equality, 320; protective effect of IGO membership, 322; recognition of sovereignty lost following expulsion from IGOs, 315; and South Africa, 374; and Taiwan, 34, 44, 325, 347–60, 380; types of, 321, 323, 347–48; and universal organizations, 331, 335, 367; and UN membership, 320–23, 346–47

Soviet Union, 8n5, 104, 341–44, 347, 361–62, 371, 387; dissolution of, 51, 287–88; states of the former Soviet Union (see Eastern European states; republics of the former Soviet Union). See also Russia

Spain, 130, 376n73

Sri Lanka, 301, 303, 307

status, 2, 19–21, 46–48, 125, 127, 134, 194, 318; and benefits of restricting entry into IGOs, 20, 326, 394; benefits of status gained by association with other member states, 5, 17–20, 25, 46–48, 123, 136–39, 173, 254, 395; as a club good, 326; defined/described, 19–20; and diplomatic recognition, 19 (see also diplomatic recognition); forms of, 20; and guilt by association, 19; and Japan's accession to ILO, 199; and Japan's accession to OECD, 254; Japan's great power status in the League of Nations, 194, 197; and OECD membership, 123, 125–26, 134, 136–39, 152, 254; security interests forming the basis for cooperation and status, 2; status communities, 326; status gained by association with security partners valued more than status by association with other IGO members, 25; status gains diminished as organizations expand, 20, 127, 136, 326, 394, 395

Stone, Randall W., 79n17, 99, 267n13, 317, 324

Story, Dale, 4n1

Suga, Yoshihide, 245–46

Sullivan, Jonathan, 356


Sweden, 142, 284, 285

Switzerland, 1, 21, 142, 284

Taiwan, 33, 347–60, 378; and ABD, 216n61, 314, 359; China's stance on, 321, 325, 350, 353, 356–57, 360; controversial status of, 34, 347–60; and Covid-19 pandemic, 354, 359, 360; and domestic sovereignty,
347; and embassies and IGO membership, 338; excluded from UN, 1, 44, 314, 349, 380; excluded from WHO, 34, 314, 316, 354–60, 392; expelled from IGOs following PRC’s recognition as sole representative of China in the UN, 349; membership in international organizations, 34, 349–50, 351, 381; and observer status in IGOs, 350, 354–58; and Olympics, 315; and One China policy, 352, 355, 356; party shifts within, 352–56, 358; ROC as representative of China in the UN prior to shift in U.S.-China relations, 348–49; and SARS outbreak, 355; sovereignty of, 326, 347–60, 380; Taiwan Allies International Protection and Enhancement Initiative (TAIPEI) Act, 355; Taiwan Relations Act (TRA), 352, 352n33; “three-noes” policy, 353; U.S. stance on, 349, 350, 352, 352n33, 352n35, 355–56, 358–60; and WHA, 355, 357–59; and WTO accession, 104, 104–5n19, 354, 359
Tan, Yeling, 106
Tanaka, Kakuei, 213
Temer, Michel, 165
Terada, Takashi, 232
Thailand, 188, 235, 301–3, 309–10
Tiananmen Square massacre, 93, 104, 345
Tingley, Dustin, 85
Tomz, Michael, 94n4, 97
TPP. See Trans-Pacific Partnership trade. See economic interdependence and trade regime. See World Trade Organization
Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP, also CPTPP), 226–46; accession rules, 233; and China, 231–34, 239; economic benefits of TPP membership, 228–31; as foreign policy instrument, 231–34; and Japan, 179, 226–46, 396; member states, 227; non-member states, 235; and other free trade agreements, 241–46; prospects for future U.S. membership, 226, 234, 240–41; provisions of, 228–31, 233, 240; U.S. exit from, 226, 230, 239, 241
transparency, 132–33, 393
Treaty of Amity and Cooperation in Southeast Asia (TAC; 1976), 303–4
Treaty of Paris (1956), 326
Treaty of Rome, 280, 282, 286
Trump, Donald: and Brexit, 299; intention to exit WHO, 8, 49, 359; and Japan’s exit from IWC, 250–51, 253; lack of interest in multilateralism and environmentalism, 250–51, 255; and relations with Brazil, 166–67, 169, 172; and TAIPEI Act, 355; tariffs, 105; withdrawal from Iran nuclear deal, 108; withdrawal from TPP, 239
Tsai Ing-wen, 353, 356
Turkey, 69, 134, 261, 326; and democratic backsliding, 292–93; and dispute over Cyprus, 293–94; excluded from EU, 291–94, 311, 386; as founding member of OECD, 1–2, 7, 39, 124, 125, 130, 131, 141–42, 293, 387; and GATT, 295; and NATO, 293
Uchida, Kōsai, 195, 201
Ukraine, 5, 6, 45, 64, 144, 145, 321, 324
UN Economic Commission for Asia and the Far East (ECFAFE), 214–17
UNESCO. See United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
United Kingdom, 186–88, 193; and AIIB, 219, 222, 266; Brexit, 2, 4, 33, 50, 51, 294–300, 311, 340; and Eastern enlargement of EU, 288; and EEC, 2; and EU accession, 33, 286–87, 311; and Japan, 32, 177, 194, 203–4, 206–8; and the League of Nations, 194; and NATO, 283, 299; and origins of the EU, 283; and South Africa, 374; UN voting compared to U.S. and Europe, 298; U.S. ties favored over ties to Europe, 283, 297–99
United Nations (UN): accession rules, 323, 342, 348n29; and Afghanistan, 51;
United Nations (UN) (continued)
and China, 343, 348, 349; and defining regions, 261; and diplomatic recognition/establishing sovereignty, 17, 320–23, 342; and East and West Germany, 349; as hierarchical IGO, 66, 128, 324; and India, 17, 321; and Israel, 361–62; and Japan, 203, 256; and Myanmar, 51; and North and South Korea, 341–47; and observer status, 10, 362, 367; Palestine excluded from, 1, 44, 314, 362, 368; and Partition Plan for Palestine and Israel, 360–61; rules for expulsion, 376; and South Africa, 370, 374, 376, 380; and South Sudan, 320; states excluded from, 1, 44, 314, 315, 323 (see also specific states); Taiwan excluded from, 1, 44, 314, 349, 380; and transfer of seats to rebel groups, 322; and Ukraine, 321; and universal organizations, 331–32, 334, 336, 337, 339; UN voting similarity as measure of geopolitical alignment, 26, 72, 75, 77, 95, 102, 111, 116–19, 120, 123, 142, 143, 147, 148, 208, 270–71, 297
United States, 23, 186–87, 191, 202–3, 243–44, 247, 396; and ADB, 216–17; and AIIB, 219–20; allies within OECD, 142; and ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF), 304; and Brazil, 32, 126, 166–67, 172; and Brexit, 296, 298–99; and China, 167, 252, 348–50; and delaying/blocking other states’ accession to IGOS, 39, 99, 106–8, 343; and embassies and IGO membership, 338; European integration favored by the U.S., 286, 296; exit from TPP, 226, 230, 239, 241, 396; exits from UNESCO, 49, 315, 367; formal alliances and military cooperation with TPP members, 231996; frequency of exits from IGOS, 50; and hegemony and differential application of rules, 12; IGO membership by year compared to membership of Japan, Korea, and China, 180; intention to exit WHO under Trump administration, 8, 49; and Iran, 39, 106–8, 386; and Israel, 361–62; and IWC, 248, 251; and the League of Nations, 194; and leverage from alliance ties, 209; and Mexico, 4, 94, 152; non-NATO allies, 142, 168; and North Korea, 343; and Palestine, 360, 362, 365, 367; and Russia, 386; and sharing security interests with states that are not formal allies, 21–22; and South Africa, 369, 374, 375, 377–78, 380; and South Korea, 341, 347; sponsorship of applicants to GATT/WTO, 101–3, 121, 179, 387; sponsorship of Japan, 179, 187–88, 203–4, 206–7, 387; and TAIPEI Act, 355; and Taiwan, 349, 350, 352, 352n33, 352n35, 355–56, 358–60; and TPP, 226, 240–41; and Treaty of Amity and Cooperation in Southeast Asia, 304; UK favoring ties with U.S. over ties to Europe, 283, 297–99; UN voting compared to UK and Europe, 298; and UN voting similarity, 102; U.S.-Japanese alliance, 32, 56, 142, 177, 203–4, 215, 228, 232, 236, 254, 256, 387; U.S.-UK alliance, 297
universal organizations, 29–30, 33–34, 42–44, 54, 68, 70, 315–81, 334, 336, 337, 339; accession rules and restrictions, 43, 43–44, 57–58, 66–67, 314, 316–18, 327–29, 379; analysis of factors affecting accession, 330–40, 334, 336, 337, 339; as discriminatory clubs, 33–34, 318, 328–40, 379–80; and embassies and IGO membership, 338; examples, 58; exclusion from, 313–81 (see also exclusion from international organizations); and free rider problem, 317; and geopolitical alignment, 331, 335, 337, 379; and geopolitical discrimination, 315–18, 335, 340; and inefficiency of collective decision-making in heterogenous groups, 384; and Japan, 203; legitimacy of, 44, 317, 327; and North Korea, 34, 341–47; and Palestine, 33, 360–68; and
performance capacity of states, 327–28, 331; and political ties of states, 327–28, 333; and position in international society, 48; and security interests, 33, 318, 340, 386–87; and South Korea, 34, 341–47; and sovereignty/legal standing of states, 33–34, 44, 186–88, 314, 316, 320–27, 331, 335, 379, 385; statistics on membership, 330; and Taiwan, 33, 347–60; and terms for exit, 49; and trade-off between depth of rules and breadth of participation, 384. See also International Labour Organization; International Telecommunication Union; International Whaling Commission; United Nations; Universal Postal Union; World Health Organization

Universal Postal Union (UPU), 7, 56, 58, 188, 341, 343, 373; accession rules, 373; Japan and, 186–91; lack of rules for expulsion, 375–76; Palestine excluded from, 362; South Africa expelled from, 7, 42, 50, 316, 372–80

UN Security Council, 20, 66, 128, 324, 326, 342, 343, 348, 374

UN Treaty Series, 54

UPU. See Universal Postal Union

Urata, Arata, 236

Urpelainen, Johannes, 160, 276n28, 395

U.S.-Japan Security Treaty, 219

Vabulas, Felicity, 8, 50

Vachudova, Milada Anna, 289

van Lennep, Emile, 137

Venezuela, 191

Versailles Peace Treaty, 194

veto power, 52–53, 276, 286–87, 289, 293, 311, 326, 342–44, 362, 380. See also member approval requirement

Victor, David G., 14

Vienna Convention on the Law of Treaties, 324


Viola, Lora Anne, 11, 44n3, 128, 324

Voeten, Erik, 15, 23, 388
World Trade Organization (WTO) (continued)

this heading; Iran excluded from, 39, 69, 106–8, 386; and Iraq, 121; and North and South Korea, 341; and overexpansion problem, 396; and Russian invasion of Ukraine, 64; as successor to GATT, 92; and Taiwan, 104, 104–5n19, 314, 354, 359; U.S. intent to exit from, 8, 49, 359; “WTO-plus” and “WTO-minus” obligations, 108

World War I, 179, 194

World War II, 177, 202, 282, 301, 395

WTO. See World Trade Organization

Yearbook of International Organizations, 55n11

Yeltsin, Boris, 143

Yemen, 321, 344

Yoshida, Shigeru, 101, 205

Yoshikawa, Akimasa, 188

zombie organizations (organizations that have outlived their usefulness), 49