



THEORETICAL AND LEGAL FOUNDATIONS OF CONFLICT PREVENTION
AND PEACEBUILDING

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Abstract: *International organizations are formal institutional structures established through agreements among states or other international actors to pursue collective goals via coordinated action. They are characterized by permanent administrative bodies, constitutive treaties or charters, and a degree of autonomy from member states. Theoretical approaches emphasize both their bureaucratic authority, based on rules, expertise, and norms, and their multifaceted roles as instruments of states, independent actors, and arenas of global governance. A key distinction exists between intergovernmental organizations (IGOs) and international non-governmental organizations (INGOs), which differ in legal basis, membership, and operational capacity. IGOs derive authority from international treaties and perform functions ranging from mediation and peacekeeping to sanctions and institutional coordination, while INGOs rely on domestic legal frameworks and contribute through flexibility, grassroots engagement, and trust-building at the societal level. The interaction between universal and regional organizations further shapes conflict prevention, combining global legitimacy with local responsiveness. The Tajik civil war (1992–1997) illustrates complex multi-actor cooperation involving the UN, OSCE, CIS, and regional initiatives, highlighting both the strengths and limitations of institutional coordination. Contemporary developments, such as the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation, demonstrate evolving models of conflict prevention that emphasize sovereignty and non-interference alongside traditional liberal approaches.*

Keywords: *International organizations; intergovernmental organizations (IGOs); international non-governmental organizations (INGOs); conflict prevention; global governance; regional organizations; United Nations; OSCE; Tajik civil war; institutional cooperation.*

International organizations are formal, continuous institutional structures established by agreement among member states or other international actors, possessing distinct organizational identity and pursuing collective goals through coordinated action.¹⁴ Three essential characteristics distinguish them from other forms of international cooperation. First, they maintain permanent institutional structures with established rules, procedures, and secretariats. Second, they operate on the basis of constitutive instruments – treaties or charters – that specify purposes, membership, and decision-making rules. Third, they enjoy a degree of organizational autonomy from member states, manifest in independent agendas, loyal staff, and distinctive institutional cultures.

Barnett and Finnemore offer a complementary definition: international organizations are “bureaucratic authorities that exercise power through the deployment of rules, knowledge, and norms”.¹⁵ This perspective emphasizes that their influence derives not

¹⁴ Archer, C. International organizations. (4th ed.). Routledge. 2014. P.6

¹⁵ Barnett, M. N., & Finnemore, M. Rules for the world: International organizations in global politics. 2004. Cornell University Press. P.17



primarily from material resources but from technical expertise, rational-legal authority, and perceived impartiality – qualities particularly valuable in conflict prevention. Weiss and Wilkinson add that international organizations function simultaneously as instruments of member states, autonomous actors, and arenas of contestation over global governance norms. For conflict prevention, this means organizations can serve as mediators, enforcers, capacity-builders, and norm-entrepreneurs, often simultaneously.¹⁶

The fundamental taxonomic distinction separates intergovernmental organizations (IGOs), whose members are sovereign states, from international non-governmental organizations (INGOs), whose members include private individuals, associations, or corporations.

Intergovernmental organizations derive legal personality from treaties concluded among states.¹⁷ Their constituent instruments are binding international agreements that delegate specified powers, granting IGOs capacity to enter agreements, acquire property, and exercise delegated sovereign functions. Universal IGOs (e.g., United Nations) derive legitimacy from representative character but face coordination problems among diverse members. Regional IGOs (e.g., African Union) achieve quicker consensus but sacrifice breadth of legitimacy.¹⁸

The Tajik civil war (1992-1997) illustrates multi-IGO interaction in conflict prevention, documents how the United Nations (UNMOT), OSCE, CIS, and Shanghai Five cooperated and competed in mediating Tajikistan's transition. The UN provided political framework and chief mediation, the CIS contributed peacekeeping forces, and the OSCE focused on human rights monitoring.¹⁹

International non-governmental organizations operate under domestic rather than international law. They cannot deploy military forces or impose sanctions, but possess flexibility, speed, and local access that IGOs often lack.²⁰ INGOs engage directly with civil society, build cross-communal trust, and address root causes of conflict documents how local NGOs in Tajikistan – including the Inter-Tajik Dialogue – created unofficial communication spaces that complemented official UN-sponsored negotiations, building relationships of trust that official negotiators later leveraged.²¹

The UN Charter (Chapter VIII) envisions a division of labor between universal and regional bodies.²² Universal organizations, headed by the UN, claim global competence. The Security Council possesses legally binding authority to authorize enforcement action, peacekeeping, sanctions, and referrals to the International Criminal Court. However, universal organizations exhibit characteristic weaknesses: veto power creates systematic

¹⁶ Weiss, T. G., & Wilkinson, R. (Eds.). *International organization and global governance* (2nd ed.). Routledge. 2018. P.23

¹⁷ White, N. D. (2015). *The law of international organisations* (3rd ed.). Manchester University Press. 2015. P. 83

¹⁸ Rakhmatullozoda, E. *United Nations peacekeeping and preventive diplomacy: Central Asia, Tajikistan and Afghanistan*. Dushanbe. 2012. P. 11. See also. Mearsheimer, J. J. *The tragedy of great power politics*. W.W. Norton & Company. 2001. P. 21

¹⁹ Rakhmatullozoda, E. . *United Nations peacekeeping and preventive diplomacy: Central Asia, Tajikistan and Afghanistan*. Dushanbe.. 2012. P.31

²⁰ Irrera, D. *NGOs, crisis management and conflict resolution: Measuring the impact of non-state actors*. Edward Elgar Publishing. 2013. P. 44

²¹ Mullojanov, P.. *Civil society and peacebuilding. Conciliation Resources: Accord (Tajikistan Issue)*.2001. P. 67

²² United Nations. (1945). *Charter of the United Nations*. 1945. See also. Simma, B., Khan, D.-E., Nolte, G., & Paulus, A. (Eds.). *The Charter of the United Nations: A commentary* (3rd ed.). Oxford University Press. 2012. P. 90



biases; response cycles are often too slow for fast-moving crises; and capacities for early warning remain under-resourced.²³

Regional organizations offer contextual knowledge, greater political acceptability among conflict parties, and more rapid response capacity. The European Union, OSCE, African Union, and OAS have developed significant conflict prevention capabilities.²⁴ However, regional memberships may include conflict parties, creating conflicts of interest. Regional organizations often lack adequate resources for sustained operations, and Chapter VIII's requirement of Security Council authorization for enforcement action means they operate within parameters set by universal organization politics.

The Tajikistan case illustrates universal-regional interaction. Rakhmatullozoda documents how UNMOT operated alongside a CIS peacekeeping force (Russian-dominated) and OSCE observer missions. This configuration achieved ultimate success, but required constant coordination from the UN Secretary-General's Special Representative.²⁵ Rakhmatullozoda emphasizes that effective universal-regional cooperation depends on "clear division of responsibilities, shared strategic understanding, and mechanisms for resolving disagreements".²⁶

Contemporary challenges include alternative institutions resisting Western-dominated frameworks, such as the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO), which includes Tajikistan and operates on principles of non-interference and sovereignty respect. Mullojonov and Antonov (2022) and Khakimov (2023) analyze how the SCO's conflict prevention approach differs from liberal interventionist models associated with NATO and the EU.²⁷

²³ Barnett, M. N., & Finnemore, M. (2004). *Rules for the world: International organizations in global politics*. Cornell University Press. 2004. P.47.
See also. Diehl, P. F., & Balas, A. *Peace operations* (2nd ed.). Polity Press.. 2014.P. 113

²⁴ Ramcharan, B. G. *Contemporary preventive diplomacy*. Routledge. 2019. P.19

²⁵ Rakhmatullozoda, E. *UN peacekeeping in Tajikistan*. Dushanbe. 2005.

²⁶ Rakhmatullozoda, E. *United Nations peacekeeping and preventive diplomacy: Central Asia, Tajikistan and Afghanistan*. Dushanbe. 2012. P. 45

²⁷ Mullojonov, P., & Antonov, O. *The role of Russian soft power in promoting authoritarianism: Targeting youth In post-Soviet Central Asia*. 2012. P.19. See also. Khakimov, U. *The influence of big power propaganda on Central Asia security (in the context of Tajikistan)*. Cabar.Asia Analytical Portal. 2023. P. 61