



Rules for the World: International Organizations in Global Politics

Michael Barnett, Martha Finnemore

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Rules for the World provides an innovative perspective on the behavior of international organizations and their effects on global politics. Arguing against the conventional wisdom that these bodies are little more than instruments of states, Michael Barnett and Martha Finnemore begin with the fundamental insight that international organizations are bureaucracies that have authority to make rules and so exercise power. At the same time, Barnett and Finnemore maintain, such bureaucracies can become obsessed with their own rules, producing unresponsive, inefficient, and self-defeating outcomes. Authority thus gives international organizations autonomy and allows them to evolve and expand in ways unintended by their creators.

Barnett and Finnemore reinterpret three areas of activity that have prompted extensive policy debate: the use of expertise by the IMF to expand its intrusion into national economies; the redefinition of the category "refugees" and decision to repatriate by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees; and the UN Secretariat's failure to recommend an intervention during the first weeks of the Rwandan genocide. By providing theoretical foundations for treating these organizations as autonomous actors in their own right, Rules for the World contributes greatly to our understanding of global politics and global governance.



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