

2.1.5 Intergovernmental organisations

An intergovernmental organisation (IGO) is an alliance of nation states that are aligned on the basis of common interest. A variation is that called 'regional intergovernmental organisations' aligning the interests of nations that are geographically close. All IGOs exist to serve the interests of the member states in matters pertaining to international and regional security, defence and trade. IGOs can represent member states at a global level and also settle disputes between member nations. Examples of inter-governmental organisations and regional inter-governmental organisations include:

- North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO)
- European Union (EU)
- Organisation of American States (OAS)
- Organisation of African Unity (OAU) – also called the African Union (AU)
- Arab League (League of Arab States)
- Council of Europe (COE)
- Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OCSE)

Apart from these IGOs there are also important trade and development IGOs. These IGOs tend to be regionally-based and include alliances such as:

- Economic Community Of West African States (ECOWAS)
- North American Free Trade Alliance (NAFTA)
- Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN)
- Asia Pacific Economic Co-operation (APEC)
- MERCOSUR

The UN Charter (Article 52) allows and encourages member states to create regional arrangements or regional agencies. In so doing they also undertake to use these agencies to make every effort to achieve peaceful settlement of local disputes prior to referring them to the UN Security Council (UNSC).

State sovereignty and IGOs

Whenever nations opt to join an IGO, sign up to a convention or treaty, or ratify an international instrument, they give up some sovereignty. This is because the commitment to an IGO or to a treaty requires a commitment to the values and the purposes of the IGO or the treaty. Furthermore, since IGOs exist to further the aims of member states, they become strong when all parties advance the cause and align their interests. In so doing some sovereignty will be lost. This can be seen in the case of the European Union. All nations have given up their own currency and replaced it with the Euro (€), each has had its borders become open to all other EU members facilitating the easy movement of labour between member nations, and economic integration has meant that governments are accountable to the domestic people and also to the broader European market.

W-Info 12 NATO

NATO is an alliance of 28 nations with the goal of encouraging political stability and peace and security. It was founded in 1949 and its primary purpose is to safeguard the freedom and security of its members through political and military means.

NATO member nations are Albania, Belgium, Bulgaria, Canada, Croatia, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Turkey, the United Kingdom (UK) and the United States (US).

NATO operates on the principle of equality between nations and consensus in decision-making.

NATO has three core tasks:

- Collective defence
- Crisis management
- Cooperative security through partnerships

NATO currently has operations in Kosovo (has been there since 1999), has a force in Afghanistan (the International Security Assistance Force, ISAF), has ships patrolling the Mediterranean and the Gulf of Aden to deter terrorism and piracy, and is working with the African Union (AU) in Somalia to rebuild the nation (peace building).

At the end of 2011 NATO had over 140,000 military personnel engaged in the five ongoing NATO-led missions (listed above) and the operations span three continents.

Principle of collective defence and NATO

The principle of collective defence is at the very heart of NATO's founding treaty. It remains a unique and enduring principle that binds its members together, committing them to protect each other and setting a spirit of solidarity within the Alliance. This principle is enshrined in Article 5 of the North Atlantic Treaty. It provides that if a NATO ally is the victim of an armed attack, each and every other member of the Alliance will consider this act of violence as an armed attack against **all** members and will take the actions it deems necessary to assist the ally attacked. NATO invoked Article 5 of the Washington Treaty for the first time in its history following the 9/11 terrorist attacks against the United States.

NATO strategy in the future covers the following areas:

- Preventing WMD proliferation
- Developing ballistic missile defence
- Fighting terrorism
- Strengthening cyber security
- Reinforcing energy security
- Modernising military capabilities

Sources: <http://www.nato.int/nato-welcome/site.html> and "What is NATO?" - An Introduction to the transatlantic Alliance, © NATO; and http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/topics_59378.htm

The European Union (EU)

The best example of an IGO is arguably the EU which has brought together 27 nations in Europe and has created extremely close regional integration.

W-Info 13 The European Union (EU) – an expanding global order

European Union's 27 members at September 2012 were Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden and the United Kingdom (UK). This regional group represents about 25% of the world's GDP and about 40% of its trade. Its aspirations are to unite the EU's 70 million citizens in peace, democracy and a shared past and future.

The EU is a unique economic and political partnership between 27 European countries that together cover much of the continent. It was created in the aftermath of the Second World War (WWII). The first steps were to foster economic cooperation: the idea being that countries who trade with one another become economically interdependent and so more likely to avoid conflict.

Since then, the EU has developed into a huge single market with the Euro (€) as its common currency. What began as a purely economic union has evolved into an organisation spanning all policy areas, from development aid to environment.

It has delivered half a century of peace, stability, and prosperity, helped raise living standards, and launched a single European currency. Thanks to the abolition of border controls between EU countries, people can travel freely throughout most of the continent.

The EU is based on the rule of law. This means that everything that it does is founded on treaties, voluntarily and democratically agreed by all member countries. These binding agreements set out the EU's goals in its many areas of activity.

One of its main goals is to promote human rights both internally and around the world. Human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality, the rule of law and respect for human rights: these are the core values of the EU. Since the 2009 signing of the Treaty of Lisbon, the EU's Charter of Fundamental Rights brings all these rights together in a single document. The EU's institutions are legally bound to uphold them, as are EU governments whenever they apply EU law.

Countries that have applied but yet to get membership include: Croatia, the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Iceland and Turkey. Turkey's exclusion has been blamed on its economic performance, poor human rights record, the undue influence of the military and its imperfect (unjust) judicial system. The Non-EU nations in Europe are: Albania, Andorra, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Georgia, Liechtenstein, Moldova, Monaco, Montenegro, Norway, Russia, San Marino, Serbia, Switzerland, Ukraine, and Vatican City State.

Sources: http://europa.eu/about-eu/27-member-countries/countries/index_en.htm; http://europa.eu/about-eu/basic-information/index_en.htm and http://ec.europa.eu/publications/booklets/eu_glance/66/index_en.htm accessed on 21.07.2011

Organisation of American States (OAS)

This organisation is an alliance of American nations that exists to support the regional interests of the member states in North, Central and South America (Latin America).

W-Info 14 Organisation of American States (OAS)

The Organization of American States (OAS) is the world's oldest regional organization, dating back to the First International Conference of American States, which was held in Washington, D.C. from October 1889 to April 1890. At that conference, the establishment of the International Union of American Republics was approved and the stage was set for the weaving together of a web of provisions and institutions that came to be known as the inter-American system, the oldest of the international institutional systems.

The OAS came into being in 1948 with the signing, in Bogotá, Colombia, of the *Charter of the OAS*. The Charter entered into force in December 1951 and was subsequently amended by the *Protocol of Buenos Aires*, which was signed in 1967 and which entered into force in February 1970; by the *Protocol of Cartagena de Indias*, which was signed in 1985 and which entered into force in November 1988; by the *Protocol of Managua*, which was signed in 1993 and which entered into force on January 29, 1996; and by the *Protocol of Washington*, which was signed in 1992 and which entered into force on September 25, 1997.

The OAS was established to achieve among its member states, as stated in Article 1 of its Charter, "an order of peace and justice, to promote their solidarity, to strengthen their collaboration, and to defend their sovereignty, their territorial integrity, and their independence."

Today it comprises the 35 independent states of the Americas and has granted permanent observer status to 63 states, as well as to the European Union. The Organization of American States (OAS) constitutes the principal political, juridical, and social governmental forum in the Hemisphere.

Members of the OAS

All 35 independent countries of the Americas have ratified the *OAS Charter* and belong to the Organization. The following 21 member states met in Bogotá, Colombia, in 1948 to sign the OAS Charter: *Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Cuba, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Haiti, Honduras, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, United States of America, Uruguay, and Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of)*. Subsequently, the following 14 member states joined: *Barbados, Trinidad and Tobago (1967); Jamaica (1969); Grenada (1975); Suriname (1977); Dominica (Commonwealth of), Saint Lucia (1979); Antigua and Barbuda, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines (1981); The Bahamas (Commonwealth of) (1982); St. Kitts & Nevis (1984); Canada (1990); Belize and Guyana (1991)*.

Sources: http://www.oas.org/en/about/who_we_are.asp; and http://www.oas.org/en/about/member_states.asp accessed on 22.07.2010

Organisation of African Unity (OAU) – also called the ‘African Union’ (AU)

The most powerful African IGO is the African Union (AU), formerly called the Organisation of African Unity. The AU promotes the interests of member states and is crucial for the creation and maintenance of regional peace and security.

W-Info 15 Introduction to OAU (AU)

The advent of the African Union (AU) can be described as an event of great magnitude in the institutional evolution of the continent. On 9.9.1999, the Heads of State and Government of the Organisation of African Unity issued a Declaration (the Sirte Declaration) calling for the establishment of an African Union, with a view, inter alia, to accelerating the process of integration in the continent to enable it play its rightful role in the global economy while addressing multifaceted social, economic and political problems compounded as they are by certain negative aspects of globalisation. The main objectives of the OAU were to rid the continent of the remaining vestiges of colonization and apartheid; to promote unity and solidarity among African states; to coordinate and intensify cooperation for development; to safeguard the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Member states and to promote international cooperation within the framework of the United Nations (UN).

Source: http://www.africa-union.org/root/au/AboutAu/au_in_a_nutshell_en.htm; accessed on 22.07.2010

The League of Arab States (‘Arab League’)

W-Info 16 Arab League

The Arab League, an informal name for the League of Arab States, is a voluntary association of independent countries whose peoples are mainly Arabic speaking. Its stated purposes are to strengthen ties among the member states, coordinate their policies, and promote their common interests. The Arab League was founded in 1945 by Egypt, Iraq, Lebanon, Saudi Arabia, Syria, Transjordan (Jordan, as of 1950), and Yemen. Countries that later joined are: Algeria (1962), Bahrain (1971), Comoros (1993), Djibouti (1977), Kuwait (1961), Libya (1953), Mauritania (1973), Morocco (1958), Oman (1971), Qatar (1971), Somalia (1974), Southern Yemen (1967), Sudan (1956), Tunisia (1958) and the United Arab Emirates, UAE (1971). There are currently 21 member nations.

The League’s effectiveness has been in question the past few decades, as its members rarely agree on issues. When members reach consensus such agreement rarely goes beyond rhetorical declarations, with little operational effect. Arab citizens seldom felt an impact from the League’s deliberations until the recent vote to impose a no-fly zone over Libya – a decision that eventually led to NATO’s intervention. The League’s handling of the Libya situation is significant for two reasons. First, it proves that members of the League can reach a definitive consensus on an important political and military issue, resulting in an effective international response. Second, the League’s decision lent legitimacy to NATO’s intervention, inadvertently creating a new standing and position for the League. With bodies like NATO and the United Nations looking to it for guidance, the League is beginning to be taken seriously in the international arena. Post-Libya, the League is sensing the powerful role it could play in the region in the future.

Source: <http://www.arab.de/arabinfo/league.htm> and <http://www.stimson.org/spotlight/the-arab-leagues-evolving-role-in-a-restless-middle-east/>; accessed on 22.07.10 and 28.08.12

Council of Europe

W-Info 17 Council of Europe

“Human rights – democracy – rule of law: 47 countries – 1 Europe”

The Council of Europe, based in Strasbourg (France), covers virtually the entire European continent, with its 47 member countries. Founded on 5 May 1949 by 10 countries, the Council of Europe seeks to develop throughout Europe common and democratic principles based on the European Convention on Human Rights and other reference texts on the protection of individuals.

The primary aim of the Council of Europe is to create a common democratic and legal area throughout the whole of the continent, ensuring respect for its fundamental values: human rights, democracy and the rule of law.

These values are the foundations of a tolerant and civilised society and indispensable for European stability, economic growth and social cohesion. On the basis of these fundamental values, we try to find shared solutions to major problems such as terrorism, organised crime and corruption, cybercrime, bioethics and cloning, violence against children and women, and trafficking in human beings. Co-operation between all member states is the only way to solve the major problems facing society today.

Source: <http://www.coe.int/aboutcoe/index.asp?page=nosObjectifs&l=en>

The European Court of Human Rights

The European Court of Human Rights is an international court set up in 1959. It rules on individual or State applications alleging violations of the civil and political rights set out in the European Convention on Human Rights. Since 1998 it has sat as a full-time court and individuals can apply to it directly. In almost fifty years the Court has delivered more than 10,000 judgments. These are binding on the countries concerned and have led governments to alter their legislation and administrative practice in a wide range of areas. The Court's case-law makes the Convention a powerful living instrument for meeting new challenges and consolidating the rule of law and democracy in Europe. The Court is based in Strasbourg, in the Human Rights Building designed by the British architect Lord Richard Rogers in 1994 – a building whose image is known worldwide. From here, the Court monitors respect for the human rights of 800 million Europeans in the 47 Council of Europe member States that have ratified the Convention.

Source: http://www.echr.coe.int/NR/rdonlyres/DF074FE4-96C2-4384-BFF6-404AAF5BC585/0/ENG_Court_in_brief.pdf

Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE)

W-Info 18 Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE)

With 56 states from Europe, Central Asia and North America, the OSCE is the world's largest regional security organisation. It offers a forum for political negotiations and decision-making in the fields of early warning, conflict prevention, crisis management and post-conflict rehabilitation, and puts the political will of its participating states into practice through its unique network of field missions. The OSCE has a comprehensive approach to security that encompasses politico-military, economic and environmental, and human aspects. It therefore addresses a wide range of security-related concerns, including arms control, confidence and security-building measures, human rights, national minorities, democratization, policing strategies, counter-terrorism and economic and environmental activities. All 56 participating States enjoy equal status, and decisions are taken by consensus on a politically, but not legally binding basis.

Source: <http://www.osce.org/who>

Review Questions – Intergovernmental organisations

1. Define the term intergovernmental organisation (IGO).
2. List SEVEN (7) intergovernmental organisations.
3. List FOUR (4) IGOs that focus on trade and economic development.
4. Detail the relationship between sovereignty and membership of an IGO.
5. How many NATO members are there?
6. What is the role and purpose of NATO?
7. Outline the current operations involving NATO forces.
8. Identify the number of members in the EU.
9. State the role and purpose of the EU.
10. Why is the EU important to its individual member nations?
11. Name one nation that seeks to join the EU and state why membership might be beneficial.
12. Identify the role of the Organisation of American States (OAS).
13. How many members are in the OAS?
14. What role might the OAS have in creating peace and stability in the Americas?
15. Provide an alternative name for the Organisation of African Unity (OAU).
16. Outline the role of the AU.
17. Assess the importance of the AU to the continent of Africa.
18. Who is the Arab League?
19. In which global region does the Arab League operate?
20. Why is the Arab League important to international peace, cooperation and stability?
21. Outline the importance of the Council of Europe (COE)
22. Detail the relationship between the COE and the European Court of Human Rights.
23. Discuss the importance of the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE).