

## Informal Governance as Response to Institutional Paralysis

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**Abstract :** The United Nations Security Council (UNSC) is probably the most recognized international security organization. It is also profoundly misunderstood and undervalued in its effort to promote peace and security. With the rising involvement of non-state actors and the way states fight wars, international governance has become increasingly complex. However, the formal UNSC agenda has long remained static, reflecting states' unwillingness to entertain more conflicts. Nevertheless, resolutions remain the scholarly measure of states' interests and policies, neglecting the significant share of issues the Council entertains informally. This project builds on a rational institutionalism framework. It provides a systematic analysis of how and under what conditions states use informal governance instead of, or in combination with, formal rules at the agenda-setting stage of the policy process. Data for this project comes from elite interviews and a newly created dataset on governance choices. The results show that counter existing arguments, weaker states successfully circumvent formal institutional roadblocks and use informal governance mechanisms to pursue vital interests, thereby countering institutional restrictions and power asymmetries present informal governance settings.

**Keywords :** agenda-setting, decision-making, international governance, UNSC

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