

Institutional Change in Cyber Governance? Catalytic Factors & The United Nations Open-Ended Working Group (OEWG)

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Introduction and Research Questions

Within the field of the sociology of organizations, much has been written about institutional change and, in particular, the institutionalization or deinstitutionalization of organizations and institutions over long periods of time (Cantwell et. al., 2010; Dosi, 1982; Hilbert, 2020). Turning to the field of international relations, authors such as Goldstein (1988;1991) address the question of long cycles demarcating institutional change and what punctuates the start or the finish of these cycles (the deinstitutionalization phase). Yet few use such perspectives to analyze the field of global internet governance and within that broad field, the field of global cybersecurity governance.

The research reported here begins to explore three related research questions: 1. How do we or should we analyze institutional change (with a focus on deinstitutionalization processes) in cyber governance? 2. Having formulated a cross-disciplinary approach to such analyses, how do findings from this longitudinal study of the United Nations Open-Ended Working Group (OEWG) in the field of cybersecurity relate to institutional change? 3. What possible catalytic factors impact the uncertainties related to such change?

To answer these questions in the case of the current United Nations Open-Ended Working Group on security of and in the use of information and communications technologies 2021-2025 and its First Committee 'parent' requires an examination of factors that catalyze uncertainties surrounding institutional change processes such as those in deinstitutionalization. This perspective stems from early work examining characteristics of environmental settings of groups of organizations over time and how such characteristics shape organizations even as organizations themselves shape their environments. (Tushman & Anderson, 1986). Focusing primarily on the organizational level, the paper does recognize the key roles of individuals as linkers among disparate organizations and nations and as vessels for idea flow and filtering. See Zucker and Schilke (2019) for recent work highlighting individual roles in catalyzing institutional change.

The paper analyzes data particularly from the OEWG's 2022-2023 work and that of 'its parent', the United Nations First Committee, to answer these questions. It is organized to explain briefly first, the methods and data used in the research; and second, the conceptual framework needed to examine the research questions posed here. The paper goes on to discuss findings and finally identify a trajectory for additional research.

Methods & Data Used

Reviews of relevant literature rooted primarily in the fields of organizational sociology, institutional theories, and political science/international relations contributed to the formulation of the conceptual framework. In addition to concepts stemming from the literature reviewed, data comes from a quasi-ethnographic approach to all publicly available data sources of the OEWG. These include Chairs' letters, submissions by formal members of the OEWG as well as submissions by civil society organizations and other nonstate actor organizations. The author used content analyses from non-participant observation of OEWG events/meetings as well as content analyses of the above-mentioned OEWG documents/data sources.

Conceptual Framework

Levinson (2002, 2013) has written about deinstitutionalization and institutionalization processes in the broader internet governance field. These writings examine the institutionalization (the increasing embeddedness and regularizing) over time of two new organizations, the Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers (ICANN), founded in 1998 and the Internet Governance Forum (IGF) first held in 2006. Based on these studies and related literature reviews, she identifies indicators for both institutionalization (routinization or regularization of an institution/organization) and deinstitutionalization (the disappearance of an organization type or idea) processes. Note that in institutional theory, organizations can be institutions but not all institutions are organizations (North, 1971).

Regarding institutionalization processes, the following indicators emerge:

- Presence and acceptance of analogies or mental models and reinforcement from the environment
- Involvement of central/powerful network players
- Widespread adoption of the form or practice (independent of evidence that it is effective or successful)
- Degree of embeddedness, the extent to which a form is inter-linked with other entities.
- Presence of replications.

Regarding deinstitutionalization processes, the indicators that emerge are:

- Adoption of new and authoritative images, ideas, or analogies; new practices taking the place of old practices (through abandonment or regulation or adoption of new practices by periphery players)
- Absence of an authoritative analogy and presence of inconsistent isomorphic pulls making an institution more vulnerable and suggesting a beginning of deinstitutionalization
- Change in the legitimacy of an idea and change in the rhetoric related to an institution.
- Emergence of a new variety of organizational arrangements consistent with an emerging new idea or analogy. (See, for example, Davis, Diekmann, and Tinsley, 1994 or Tushman and Anderson, 1986.)

These indicators build on earlier work by Tolbert and Zucker (1999) that identifies three broad stages of institutionalization:

- Habitualization (adopting new structural arrangements in response to problems; the pre-institutionalization stage)
- Objectification (developing social consensus about the value of these new arrangements (with the emergence of champions of such arrangements)
- Sedimentation (these structures becoming embedded and then transmitted to new members).

Literature studying technological change (among other possible catalytic factors), either in economics or in international relations, highlights the presence or emergence of disruptive technologies (Schumpeter, 1942) as punctuating a long cycle of what is called more incremental technological changes. (See, for example, Coccia, 2018 whose work builds on that of Schumpeter (1942) and Goldstein (1988; 1991) and discusses long cycles/waves and provides an overview of associated factors including war.) These works provide a key foundation for a focus here on cybersecurity as an arena of complex global governance. They set the scene for examining whether or not technological discontinuities arise and their possible impacts related to institutional change. These impacts include growing uncertainties and possible new patterns of learning and organizing. Impacts can also spur new interaction patterns that do not match institutionalized forms and thus generate disuse and abandonment in varying degrees, as noted in the final indicator of deinstitutionalization listed above.

There is a less-traveled literature in addition to that dealing with the role of technological change in catalyzing institutional change processes. Wilson (2019) focuses on idea diffusion and institutional

change (that of multistakeholder participation) and uses a case study of the Open Government Partnership idea and Norwegian government. He examines the role of multistakeholder initiatives and related ideas in bringing about acceptance of the Global Open Government Partnership movement with a focus on its digital dialogue component. Wilson looks for indications of institutionalizing a digital dialogue policy in the Norwegian government.

Surprised to find scant evidence of actual institutionalization of digital dialogue, Wilson does discover more widespread informal institutionalization of the idea. He relates the absence of actual institutionalization to an absence of multistakeholderism in this case study, highlighting its mediating role in bringing about institutional acceptance and change. Concluding that civil society in Norway could have played a more significant role, serving as 'go-betweens' in this case, he argues that civil society knows best the institutional context in Norway. Further, recognizing that there is an embedding of narratives, he recommends that civil society in the future consider how to frame most effectively the governance norms they promote to match the institutional context of Norwegian government. Thus, an understanding of institutional context in the case of implementing a new policy in Norway stands out as key. Thus, Wilson's work highlights what can be called 'idea entrepreneurship' as a possible catalytic factor, especially when the idea entrepreneur is cognizant of recipients' institutional cultures and contexts.

Related to Wilson's embedding of narratives and recognition of institutional contexts research is a related finding from Levinson's research (2021) on the OEWG, the initial part of the five-year ongoing research project reported in this paper. This earlier 2019-2021 study of the OEWG noted the presence of an 'idea galaxy' or cluster of specific words and the positioning of such a cluster next to or very near to a value or norm already more generally accepted. 'Idea galaxy' (Diggs, et. al., 2019; Levinson, 2021) refers to the appearance of specific words near one another in either documents and/or in oral presentations.

Highlighting the cluster or galaxy of the following words: human rights, gender, sustainable development or development, and less frequently, nonstate actors, this research demonstrates how linking an idea galaxy to discussions of capacity-building facilitated their palatability and inclusion in the consensus 2021 Final Reports of the OEWG and even the consensus 2021 GGE Final Report (Levinson, 2021). See, for example #56 in the 2021 OEWG Final Report and the similar #36 in the GGE Final Report: "capacity-building should respect human rights, and fundamental freedoms, be gender sensitive, and inclusive, universal and non-discriminatory". This linking also reflects an understanding of the then institutional contexts of member delegations. Responding to these sections of the 2021 consensus Final Report, much of civil society's hopes were raised; they (along with certain nation state delegations) had argued for a more 'human-centric' approach to cyber governance.

Findings

The findings discussed here revolve around three main categories: emerging technologies; crises; and idea galaxies' presence or absence. These set the scene for the discussion of deinstitutionalization processes at work at the OEWG 2022-2023, linking back to the indicators for deinstitutionalization processes. They also highlight the emergence of dueling idea galaxies, reflecting the increased turbulence surrounding global cybersecurity discussions in 2023.

Emerging Technologies

The year 2022-2023 saw the continuation of broad discussions and widespread media coverage of cyber technologies and, indeed, their use in warfare, especially in the context of the Russian war on Ukraine. It also marked a dramatic increase in reported cyberattacks as well as an increase in recognition of state and nonstate actor cyber-attacks. Most dramatically, beginning with fall 2022 was the rise of popular media discussions surrounding usage of generative artificial intelligence such as CHAT GPT, alongside the continuing coverage of quantum and blockchain technologies and cryptocurrencies.

These topics did not escape mention at the United Nations (see Guterres, 2023) or at the OEWG. Indeed, a number of developing nations identified their critical needs for more knowledge and expertise capital regarding these emerging (and possibly converging) technologies within the context of the OEWG

and called for capacity-building whether at future upcoming OEWG intersessional events or at the nation-state level. At the same time, Russian Federation statements indicate that discussions of such emerging technologies should not be part of the OEWG discussions, thus contributing to uncertainties and to setting the scene for an absence of consensus on this topic.

Especially in the cases of quantum technologies and generative Artificial Intelligence (AI), there is potential for considering these as disruptive technologies or, at the very least, contributing to indicators for deinstitutionalization. Adopting a macro view beyond this case study might allow for considering generative AI or quantum as a marker for the beginning of another long cycle, building on earlier long cycles demarcated by first, the industrial revolution and then, the information revolution. Clearly there is much uncertainty about the impacts of generative AI or quantum or blockchain, emergent and possibly convergent technologies with power for disruption. Additionally, recent research indicates that long cycles may be becoming shorter due to the information intensive nature of such emerging technologies. These technologies shape the environment for governments, international organizations, and nonstate actors as well, adding to uncertainties and turbulence and impacting organizational responses.

Crises (War, Pandemics)

As noted in the opening section of this paper, much of the early research on long cycles or long waves also dealt with the catalytic impacts of crises such as war in punctuating such cycles. On February 24, 2022 just as the new OEWG (the 2021-2025) version was beginning its important 2022 work for the year ahead, Russia invaded Ukraine. Response to the Chair's November 15, 2022 letter where he proposed using the same modalities for stakeholders as were used in the first OEWG presaged the advent of 2023 and the absence of consensus regarding stakeholder roles at the OEWG. Alas, the early months of 2023 saw continuation of the lack of consensus regarding the rules of the road for the OEWG 2023 meetings and for the involvement of nonstate actors, even in their limited roles as consensually defined in the first OEWG.

The Chair's remarks during this period and, indeed, even until the last day of the final session on July 28, 2023, recognized the deep and divisive geopolitical tensions surrounding the OEWG's work. At the same time, Chair Gafoor continued to reiterate his personal commitment to involve stakeholder views. On March 24th, 2023, Chair Gafoor, with still no resolution regarding stakeholder roles in sight, convened an informal, virtual dialogue with 36 multistakeholder organizations, dealing with "the role of the stakeholder community in supporting capacity-building". (Note the linkage of stakeholders with capacity-building.)

This meeting was punctuated by the Chair's having to leave that informal dialogue for a UN Emergency Meeting on the humanitarian situation in Ukraine. At that informal OEWG session with stakeholders, the Chair noted the challenging geopolitical situation and the importance of dialogue. Indeed, he highlighted the OEWG itself as a confidence-building measure. This link between the OEWG as an organization and as a confidence-building measure emerges as another idea galaxy present in both the July 2022 Annual Progress Report and during the second rendition of the OEWG, as will be discussed in the Idea galaxy section of these Findings.

When the Chair finally reported agreement on a process of the OEWG engagement with nonstate actors and for the programme of work, as it is called, he again recognized the role of significant geopolitical tensions. At a later informal session with stakeholders, a representative from Microsoft noted that about 30 nonstate actor organizations did not receive accreditation as a result of the 2023 agreement reached regarding stakeholder involvement. That agreement specified that any delegation could 'veto' so to speak, without listing the reason, a nonstate actor organization that applied for accreditation with the OEWG. (Any entity that was already accredited in the UN system did not have to apply; however, since cyber negotiations are a newer topic at the UN, most nonstate actor organizations active in the field had never applied for accreditation.)

Less referenced but still present during the 2022-2023 OEWG discussions was the role of the global pandemic and its connection with critical infrastructures (especially regarding information, health, and

services to the public) and inequalities made all the more visible. This was particularly evident in statements from developing countries and in submissions from nonstate actors, also building on statements in the Threats section of the first Annual Progress Report of July 2022.

Idea Galaxies

In order to explore what has happened to the 2021 idea galaxy of human rights, gender, (sustainable) development and nonstate actors and to identify any new idea galaxies, examining the notion of “Regular Institutional Dialogue”- one of the OEWG’s mandated and continuing tasks, is useful. Focusing on the institutional context of the OEWG, the representative of Adedeji Ebo, Director and Deputy to the U.N. High Representative for Disarmament Affairs addressed the concluding July 2023 session of the OEWG, saying “But I also acknowledge there are a number of outstanding issues that require further discussions to bridge differences—such as how to capture the divergence of views on the format and structure of a future regular institutional dialogue. These multilateral processes are anything but easy, but they remain absolutely vital.”

The July 2022 OEWG Annual Progress Report’s section on “Regular Institutional Dialogue” containing the following next steps for the OEWG provides a foundation for interpreting this comment from Director Ebo’s July 2023 remarks:

“2. States, at the fourth and fifth sessions of the OEWG, to continue to engage in focused discussions within the framework of the OEWG to further elaborate the PoA (Programme of Action) with a view towards its possible establishment as a mechanism to advance responsible State behaviour in the use of ICTs, which would, inter alia, support the capacities of States in implementing commitments in their use of ICTs. At these sessions, States will also engage in focused discussions, on the relationship between the PoA and the OEWG, and on the scope, content and structure of a PoA.”

France and a number of other delegations first introduced The Programme of Action (PoA) concept at the OEWG toward the end of the 2019-2021 OEWG. It was based on their perceived need for a more permanent organizational structure within the United Nations to build on and amplify the work of the OEWG and to regularize input from other stakeholders. This PoA proposal uses ‘an analogy or mental model’ from a related field (see indicators of institutionalization) at the United Nations in the context of disarmament. Beginning in 2001, there was a globally accepted First Committee Programme of Action to prevent, combat and eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons that is still in existence today.

Additionally, the PoA concept that includes involvement of stakeholders in discussions needs to be viewed against the larger picture of the institutionalization of the concept of ‘multistakeholderism’ both in the field of internet governance and at the United Nations writ large. Indeed, former UN Secretary General Kofi Annan spoke to the World Economic Forum in 1997 (the year prior to the founding of ICANN), saying that “The close link between the private sector and the work of the United Nations is a vitally important one.”

Echoing these remarks (and providing further evidence of incipient institutionalization), the two Secretary-Generals following the Honorable Kofi Annan, Ban-Ki Moon and Antonio Guterres, have highlighted the need for partnerships with other stakeholders, both the private sector and civil society. Indeed, Antonio Guterres recent Compact for Digital Cooperation places such partnerships clearly at the center. The OEWG July 2022 Annual Progress Report (APR) also reflects this growing institutionalization of a multistakeholder approach, even within the constraints of a multilateral organization and its working group. The Introduction section of the 2022 APR mentions engaging stakeholders and even working with regional organizations. It also welcomes the high level of participation by women at the OEWG and the incorporation of gender perspectives in its discussions.

On October 13, 2022, France and 49 other countries initiated a formal resolution (L73) at the First Committee, the ‘parent’ of the OEWG in response to a resolution (L23) introduced by the Russian Federation. This proposal from France and its co-sponsors called for establishing a PoA in 2025

(building on the earlier proposal), linking it to enhancing regular institutional dialogue, recognizing “the necessity of bridging digital divides...and maintaining a human-centric approach...emphasizing the value of further strengthening collaboration with civil society, the private sector, academia, and the technical community, when appropriate.... underlining the importance of narrowing the gender digital divide”. Following tense debate on this resolution, the sponsors amended the wording to highlight that the PoA would not duplicate or parallel the work of the OEWG. All the while, the war in Ukraine continued, as did the presence of COVID.

Earlier the Russian Federation had introduced a resolution at the First Committee (L23). The First Committee voted on each resolution on November 3rd. The Russian Federation sponsored resolution received 112 votes in favor, 52 against and 10 abstentions. The vote on L73, the PoA resolution received 157 votes in favor of the PoA proposed by France and other countries with 6 (Russian Federation, China, Democratic People’s Republic of Korea (DPRK), Iran Nicaragua, and Syria) voting against. 14 countries abstained. Several countries such as Malaysia, Sri Lanka and Vietnam voted for both resolutions. Again, we see the invisible hand of geopolitics and dueling visions.

These competing visions set the scene for the emergence of dueling idea galaxies at the 2023 OEWG and very vividly in the waning days of the fifth substantive session, attempting to achieve consensus on the 2023 OEWG Annual Progress Report. The Russian Federation and several like-minded country delegations refused to join the consensus to adopt the second APR during the day on Friday, July 28, 2023. In opposition to the idea galaxy of human rights, gender, development and nonstate actors, the Russian Federation on behalf of themselves and Belarus, Burundi, DPRK, Iran, Nicaragua, Sudan, Syria and Venezuela highlighted its own idea galaxy, objecting strongly to the “inclusion of language on human rights, international humanitarian law, as well as the overemphasis on gender issues, despite the clear disagreement of our delegations”. Rather these delegations proposed what this author terms a ‘dueling idea galaxy’: the concept of a United Nations “convention” or treaty on international information security reifying the development of “new norms”.

The debate surrounding the ultimately adopted by consensus document marked a dramatic moment in the OEWG’s trajectory, even more dramatic than the July 2022 APR adoption debates. Chair Gafoor was determined to deal with the competing visions and the dueling idea clusters in order to achieve consensus and move the OEWG ahead. Thus, sensing an impasse, he called for a recess late in the day so he and his team might talk informally with delegations. As the clock came closer to adjournment (and the end of the day for UN interpreters) on this very last day of the session, Chair Gafoor finally returned to the podium at 5:30 p.m. (EST) with what he termed “a technical adjustment”—one that the Chair of the delegation from Greece calls footnote diplomacy or as this author terms it, dueling idea galaxies balancing. The Chair announced that he would add two footnotes to the 2023 APR, after which consensus was finally achieved.

The two footnotes reflect two of the dueling idea galaxies- giving each some hope in a footnote placement, without changing any of the text already drafted and accepted by the overwhelming majority of delegations. The first footnote (to be numbered as footnote 30) would say that states will discuss the development of additional obligations and this note would then refer to a proposal (regarding a convention on new norms) reflected in Annex D of the July 2023 APR. The second footnote (to be numbered as footnote 40) would say that states will “continue discussions to further discuss regular institutional dialogue including the PoA ..at these sessions, states will also engage in focused discussions on the relationship between the PoA and the OEWG, and on the scope, content, and structure of the PoA” (Levinson, 2023).

This duel among idea galaxies is even more clear in the statements submitted following the consensus adoption of the July 2023 Annual Progress Report. At the end of the day on July 28th, the Russian Federation submitted two statements, one from their own delegation, and the other from their delegation and a Like-Minded Group. In the latter, they wrote: “we are disappointed by the inclusion of language on human rights, international humanitarian law, as well as the overemphasis on gender issues, despite clear disagreement of like-minded delegations. Such contentious topics should not have been

incorporated in the report without achieving a consensus. Therefore, we do vehemently reserve the right to interpret or reject those provisions that contradict our national fundamental principles, policies, laws, regulations and values.” Further, they argue that the OEWG is “an intergovernmental process in which negotiation and decision-making are exclusive prerogatives of the Member States. We stress that only accredited representatives of businesses, NGOs and academia, including legal experts, have the right to participate in the activities of the OEWG.”

Regarding the dueling idea galaxies, they write that the APR almost ignores “the priority task to further develop these norms”. In their own statement, also issued on July 28th following the consensus adoption of the APR, they argue “the Russian Federation has joined consensus on the annual progress report of the UN Open-ended Working Group (OEWG) on Security of and in the Use of ICTs 2021-2025 because we managed to reflect in it a number of key initiatives, including the concept of a UN convention on ensuring international information security”.

The delegation from Iran also submitted a statement on July 28th following the consensus adoption of the APR. It echoes the Russian Federation statement and states that “we align ourselves with the statement delivered by Russia on behalf of the like-Minded Group and furthermore we are obliged to dissociate ourselves from any of the APR provisions that are not consistent with our national policy, laws and regulations as well as our national values and priorities”. Thus, July 28th also marks the emergence of another dueling idea galaxy, one that links ‘national policies, laws and regulations’ with ‘national values and priorities’, both in opposition to the unpalatable idea galaxy related to human rights, gender, development, and nonstate actor roles.

The Chair of the delegation from Canada also spoke after the consensus adoption and following the remarks from the Russian Federation (echoed in the written statement submitted by the Russian Federation noted above) and observed that “today we were no longer in the space of consensus as it was intended within the multilateral system”, rather “we are tipping dangerously toward a form of consensus ..as a veto consensus (and) as a bullying tactic; this is a very dangerous slope.. we hope this trend will not continue over the coming year”.

Returning to an earlier identified idea galaxy, the linking of the OEWG to a confidence-building mechanism, in remarks following the adoption of the APR, the Chair of the delegation from Iran, included the following: “Our distinguished Chair is rightly believing that the OEWG itself is a confidence-building measure” but warns that “such needed confidence and trust ..will gradually be diminished “ if, paraphrasing here, his country’s views are not considered.

What do these findings tell us in terms of the institutional change indicators and especially those focused on deinstitutionalization, as identified in the opening section of this paper? Clearly each of the catalytic categories are present in varying degrees, contributing to an uncertain and turbulent environment surrounding 2023 OEWG discussions and debates. Geopolitics and war are playing a major catalytic role, demarcating earlier periods of contentious OEWG discussions to the ever more starkly divided 2023 discussions.

New interaction patterns that do not match institutionalized forms give rise to deinstitutionalization processes. The notion of multistakeholderism or involvement of nonstate actors in multilateral discussions, as fuzzy as it continues to be and as embedded as it is in many other settings, is even more contentious today. The First Committee and its Open-Ended Working Group and the earlier Group of Governmental Experts (GGEs) are traditionally multilateral in nature, with country governments and only country governments having the vote and voice (not counting nonstate actors accredited by the United Nations). These structures neither match the concept of multistakeholderism nor the global nature of information infrastructures, thus adding to the turbulence surrounding OEWG discussions.

For the first time in both renditions of the OEWG, dueling and ever more starkly contested idea galaxies emerge. These highlight the tensions among nation-state-based views of cybersecurity, the nation-state-based organizational structure (and related normfare (see Radu et. al. 2021; Levinson, 2021; or Deitelhoff and Zimmerman, 2019) of the OEWG as opposed to the more inclusive interpretation of

multistakeholderism and nonstate actor roles (even if delimited with the word “appropriate”) in the broader environment.

The Programme of Action concept that was introduced during the first OEWG, mentioned in the Consensus 2021 Final Report, and submitted as a resolution to the First Committee in 2022, originally contained strong statements regarding the need for a more permanent mechanism than an OEWG and one that would have regular input from nonstate actors. The year 2023, with the continuing war in Ukraine, has become ever more contentious, especially regarding the Programme of Action as demonstrated here. Geopolitics and war (see, for example Haggart et. al. 2021 on the role of nation states) is playing a major catalytic role, causing tremendous turbulence and possible weakening of the embeddedness of nonstate actor input, even when linked to capacity-building.

The dueling idea galaxies including those related to the Programme of Action at the 2023 OEWG reflect dueling isomorphic pulls, a marker of possible incipient deinstitutionalization of the proposed institution of a PoA on information security. Or at the very least, it is an indicator of attempts to weaken that idea or its legitimacy. Yet the notion of nonstate actor involvement is deeply embedded in many societies today and even at the UN as a whole (as demonstrated by the statements from three Secretary Generals); it is present also in local governance (with inclusion in best practices in many governments' public administration) and in the internet governance field writ large. The inclusion of those governed is even a key element of what is termed today as ‘design thinking’, used in successful architecture and innovation in numerous and diverse settings.

Could 2023 mark the end of a long cycle, punctuated especially by war and also by the presence of pandemic and technological innovation? Deinstitutionalization indicators do not predict the future; rather they identify the roles of uncertainty and turbulence as markers for beginning institutional change. There is no one authoritative image or organizational arrangement that has yet emerged. Keeping an eye on the PoA organizational arrangement over time as an institutional arrangement will help clarify any incipient institutionalization and the outcome of conflicting isomorphic pulls.

Future Research

In sum, the discussions at the fifth substantive session of the OEWG on July 24-28, 2023 were the most tense thus far in the history of the OEWG drafting of Annual Progress Reports or even its 2021 Final Report. Indeed, whether the Russian Federation (and its coalition of like-minded delegations) would join a consensus in approving the Second Annual Progress Report this past July was undetermined even in the waning moments of the final afternoon of the final Session. The Chair, Ambassador Gafoor, had to recess the formal meeting and craft informal negotiations to bring about an acceptable and perhaps somewhat unpalatable solution to some delegations for what might be viewed as a simple and straightforward Annual Progress Report.

As noted in the opening section of this paper, there is a need to focus next on the role of individuals as well as organizations and institutions in understanding deinstitutionalization and institutionalization processes. Analyzing the cybersecurity diplomacy skills and idea entrepreneurship of the Chair and of individuals heading delegations would be useful as would be that of key individuals in the nonstate actor category.

Future research in this arena also calls for methodological approaches that include in-depth, open-ended interviews in addition to nonparticipant observation and content analyses. A mixed methods approach to tracking OEWG processes in 2023-2024 and the trajectories of the idea galaxies identified here (and in 2021) is also needed. What especially remains is the research puzzle that solves for possible varying impacts of the catalytic factors emerging from this case study of the OEWG in 2022-2023. And, of course, there is the challenge of teasing out the interactions and weightings of these catalytic factors as they relate to possible institutional change processes. As of now, the presence of war seems to be a dominating catalytic factor.

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