



Bob Reinalda. *Routledge History of International Organizations: From 1815 to the Present Day.* New York: Routledge, 2009. 846 S. \$199.00 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-415-47624-9; (cloth), ISBN 978-0-203-87657-2.

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B. Reinalda (Hrsg.): Routledge History of International Organizations

It is no longer an exclusive privilege of historians to present comprehensive histories. Particularly with regard to political history, political scientists or specialists of international relations author books providing historical overviews on political developments, structures, events or institutions. Despite all the accurate praises for this Routledge History of International Organizations by renowned experts in the field, one may ask to what extent this book also satisfies historians. Bob Reinalda, senior lecturer in international relations at the Department of Political Science at the Nijmegen School of Management (Radboud University Nijmegen, Netherlands), has presented a political history of international organisations (IOs) that merits attention. The book covers the endeavours of international organisation since the Congress of Vienna in 1815 until the war between Georgia and Russia in 2008, focuses on the policy areas security, economics and humanities, and includes inter-state institutions as well as non-governmental organisations.

The book is subdivided into 17 parts, an appendix, bibliography and index. It starts in 1815 with the British hegemony, the invention of the multilateral conference and the Concert of Europe and the Rhine Commission (1815) (Part I). Then it addresses transnational networks of citizens from the abolitionist movement since 1815 to the Red Cross Committee (1863) (Part II), followed by sections on the Peace Conferences of 1899 and 1907 mirroring the Hague system (Part III) and a chapter on public international unions since 1865 (Part IV). Part V deals with the international foundation of the

welfare state between 1880 and 1914 and the succeeding section with the issue of collective security between 1914 and 1939 (Part VI). Part VII tackles the International Labour Organisation and the socio-economic policies of the League of Nations. Part VIII informs on the US predominance in the making of the UN system, followed by chapters on collective security in a bipolar world between 1945-1980 (Part IX) and economic cooperation in the same period (Part X). Parts XI and XII deal with decolonisation, the North-South divide as well as with development aid, environmental protection and human rights as normative powers, pushed by NGOs. The next chapter addresses the replacement of dominant Keynesianism in IOs by Neoliberal approaches in the 1980s (Part XIII) and Part XIV deals with new challenges for the UN as peacekeeper in the 1990s. New challenges for the UN in view of globalisation in the 1990s is the subject of part XV, regional organisations (Part XVI) and security and the international economy on the threshold of the twenty-first century (Part XVII) conclude Reinalda's book. Obviously, Bob Reinalda put emphasis on the period after 1945 – almost two thirds of the book deal with the UN system. The first page of each part provides a helpful summary of the respective topic. The parts are further subdivided into many smaller sections. Appendix 1 provides a table listing the states in the League of Nations and the UN by continent and in chronological order – a very useful overview. The second appendix briefly explains groups of states such as first, second and third world and the manifold G-groups (G7, G77 etc.). For a

volume this extensive, a richer appendix could have been desirable, for instance showing similar or diverging organisational structures of earlier and recent IOs or world maps illustrating different memberships.

As the scope of this tome is extraordinarily vast, it is hardly surprising that the bibliography cannot always satisfactorily reflect the state of the art – newer studies on the history of IOs have not been considered. See, for example, the studies by Akira Iriye, Madeleine Herren, Paul Kennedy, John Boli/George M. Thomas, Susan Pedersen or the UN Intellectual History Project, just to name a few. Furthermore, from an historical perspective, literature on world orders might have been useful as well, for instance Sebastian Conrad/ Dominic Sachsenmaier (eds.), *Competing Visions of World Order. Global Moments and Movements, 1880s-1930s*, New York 2007. What may be criticised from a global history perspective is the lack of Chinese, Indian, African or Latin American perspectives, for instance on the Mandate system of the League of Nations, the labour standards of the International Labour Organisation, the East-West conflict within the United Nations or on the overall administrative, political and cultural design of IOs. Unlike Akira Iriye's study on the evolution of a "global community" made up by IOs and NGOs since the 19th century or Madeleine Herren's inspiring effort to identify global history connections between international organisations and attempts to create international order Akira Iriye, *Global Community. The role of international organizations in the making of the contemporary world*. Berkeley/Los Angeles 2004 (first edition 2002); Madeleine Herren, *Internationale Organisationen seit 1865. Eine Globalgeschichte der internationalen Ordnung*, Darmstadt 2009. , Reinalda's tome comes along as a classic textbook. Nevertheless, the work by Bob Reinalda deserves a lot of appreciation as he manages to explain many structures and institutional forms of international organisation(s) – nowadays also equalled with the loosely defined term "global governance". Reinalda's encompassing volume has the invaluable advantage to provide a detailed overview on the various types of international organisation(s). The first part discusses theories of international relations (IR) (liberal institutionalism, transnationalism, regime theory, critical theory, decision-making approaches, constructivism), while more unconventional interpretations (postmodern, feminist, postcolonial etc.) are rather sidelined. For most parts, the Routledge History of International Organizations focuses on conventional narratives and offers less new interpretations of the general history of IOs.

The author at times reflects about the western dominance of IOs: "The phrase "organized peoples" in the preamble to the Covenant of the League of Nations implied the existence of non-organized or less civilized peoples, whereas the UN Charter refers to the sovereign equality of all states" (p. 290). Did this mirror a liberal-minded openness or just a reformulated renovation of neo-colonial understanding? A look at the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948) also helps to gain a critical view: "The text was based heavily on Western ideas regarding the family and the breadwinner" (p. 312). Beyond these examples, the presumed western bias in the very conception of international organisation and IOs from the beginning could have been problematised more prominently: Has it made a difference that IOs were mostly designed following western models and has their character changed over time insofar that these institutions today constitute truly inter-national or even global bodies? For instance, it is very informative that out of 69 Nobel Peace prizes until 2007 36 went to Europe and 23 to the Americas (p. 73) – but here it would be interesting to ask why Asia (8 laureates), the Middle East (4) and Africa (4) have somewhat been ignored in comparison and whether this marginalisation of non-western people constituted a general pattern or not. Another example may be the chapter on the weakening of the Bretton Woods system and the emergence of the G7 in 1975, where the author dutifully explains cooperation mostly of the US and the European Community in the Bretton Woods organisations, the GATT and the creation of the Group of 7 (pp. 435) but provides little information on non-western economic cooperation. It is the most striking events and developments affecting or put forward by non-western states, which deserve attention, such as the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples in 1960 (p. 446), the establishment of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (1964) or the New International Economic Order in 1974 (pp. 484). Nonetheless, Reinalda nicely summarises the views held in the 1960s and 1970s: the rich states saw development as following peace and security, while the economically poorer countries regarded development as the UN's main mission (p. 314).

For historians it may be problematic that in pursuit of an encyclopaedic claim to cover all important subjects, Reinalda for most parts of his volume follows an item-by-item approach with numerous subchapters to the detriment of a larger encompassing narrative. For example, the part on the establishment of the International Criminal Court or the US opposition against it remains a bit

superficial (pp. 617/618). Here, an historian would possibly ask: Where did the impetus come from to bring such a body to life, what was the dominant legal reference system for the Court and how can we periodise the transnational efforts to humanise conflicts, punish war criminals and protect civilians in armed conflicts since the Hague peace conferences around the turn of the 19th/20th centuries?

Rather than a generalising narrative, the book tackles all kinds of international cooperation and only occasionally provides more general summaries – these are often, however, the stronger parts. With regard to an overall narrative, the concluding remarks of the tome are telling: ‘This book has provided a comprehensive answer to the question of how intergovernmental organizations come into being. They are either created (â) or they evolve from a process of institutionalization subsequent to multilateral conferences and follow-up conferences (â)â. (p. 756). In view of the existence of other inspiring critical accounts, this conclusion remains somewhat disappointing. Reinalda continues that how IOs carry on remains a different question: their ‘continued existence may be related to factors other than those involved in their inception’ (p. 756). Not a truly revolutionary finding either,

but it is noteworthy that the author identifies dynamism and expertise as two core factors for the continued existence of IOs (p. 756). With a quote by Cox and Jacobsen, the book also points out the decisive role of international bureaucracies adding new ambitions and tasks to the agenda of IOs: these broadened from technical issues to the goal of peaceful relations and redistribution of wealth from the rich to the poor states (p. 757). Here, Madeleine Herren provides laudable findings on the role of internationalism for the emergence of IOs in the 19th century. Amy Staples further illustrates the professional interest groups as driving forces for the newly created IOs after 1945. Herren, *Internationale Organisationen seit 1865*; Amy L. S. Staples, *The Birth of Development. How the World Bank, Food and Agriculture Organization, and World Health Organization Changed the World, 1945-1965*, Kent (OH) 2006.

In general, Bob Reinalda’s *History of International Organisations*, though not satisfying historians with a conclusive narrative and sometimes ignoring newer research, is impressive due to its scope and very helpful as an overview. This book serves as a strictly recommendable textbook for seminars on IOs but may well be complemented by additional and more critical studies.

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