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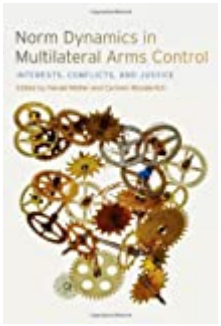


**Harald Müller, Carmen Wunderlich, eds.** *Norm Dynamics in Multilateral Arms Control: Interests, Conflicts, and Justice.* Studies in Security and International Affairs Series. Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2013. xvi + 390 pp. $69.95 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-8203-4422-5; $26.95 (paper), ISBN 978-0-8203-4423-2.

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*Norm Dynamics in Multilateral Arms Control* sets out to answer a series of questions that have been puzzling the lead editor, Harald MÃ¼ller, since 1995, when the âfunctionalist/rationalistâ approach to international politics to which he was committed proved unable to account for what he saw at the Review and Extension Conference of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT). These questions are ones that will be very familiar to students of norms and international politics: What is the relation between ânormsâ and âinterestsâ? What is the moral content of international norms? And what does justice have to do with normative change? The site at which MÃ¼ller and the other authors seek to answer these questions is less familiar: multilateral arms control regimes. While there has been significant scholarship into the nature and functioning of norms, understood in a variety of ways, not all that much of it has focused on arms control, and even less across the range of domains considered here: nuclear, chemical, biological, and âhumanitarian.â

The book is not a conventional edited volume, but rather the product of a rather complex co-authorship, where the substantive chapters bring together three, four, or five experts, with significant overlap among them. The result is a work that is much more coherent than is often the case with an edited volume, as it presents the results of an extended, collective research endeavor. The work begins in chapter 1 with Carmen Wunderlich providing an excellent review of the norms literature, and setting out an interesting and incisive theoretical framework for thinking about norms and normative change. This framework is then intended to inform the remainder of the book, leading to the conclusion that MÃ¼ller draws in the final chapter.

The following chapters set out the nature and development of the regimes governing first weapons of mass destruction (WMD) (chapter 2) and then humanitarian arms control (land mines, cluster munitions, and small arms) (chapter 3). Two chapters look at exogenous factors that contribute to normative change: technology (chapter 4) and events (chapter 5). These are followed by four chapters on agents: great powers (chapter 6), the âGood Citizensâ (chapter 7), those it is hard not then to call âBad Citizensâ (chapter 8, though the authors resist this temptation), and non-state actors (chapter 9). These chapters are all empirically rich, and will provide a valuable resource for students of multilateral arms control. The four chapters on agents are particularly interesting, with the two that focus on the non-great powers the most notable. Arms control is very much a creature of the

great powers. At the same time, the role of the International Committee to Ban Landmines (ICBL), in particular, has led to some interest in non-state actors in the arms control literature. The middle powers who both promote (chapter 7) and resist (chapter 8) the international regimes have received much less attention, and particularly have not tended to be considered together in this fashion.

Having explored the regimes, the external drivers, and the agents of the multilateral arms control system, the book reaches a conclusion that also serves as the title of the final chapter: âAgency Is Central.â It seems to me that it took a very long time, through some empirically dense forests, to reach this conclusion. At the outset, Wunderlich sets out a potentially complex conception of the ânorm dynamicsâ of the bookâs title: âWe regard the evolution of norms as triggered by three driving forces: intraregime norm conflicts, exogenous factors, and–as a necessary condition–norm entrepreneurs who seize windows of opportunity that emanate from these factors and set out to alter the prevalent normative structureâ (p. 21). This conception of norm dynamics leads the reader to expect the book to provide insight into these driving forces. For instance, how do norm conflicts and exogenous factors open and close windows of opportunity; what might condition the attempt by norm entrepreneurs to alter the normative structure, and perhaps most important, what determines the success or failure of those attempts? The conclusion that MÃ¼ller gives us, however, does not quite meet that expectation: âAgency possesses considerable degrees of freedom. How norm entrepreneurs respond to â¦ external stimuli is thus far from predeterminedâ (p. 351).

I will confess that this conclusion does not bother me very much. Agency does matter, and history is contingent. I do think, however, that it should bother the authors rather more than it seems to do. While a move from the functionalist/rationalist position motivates the text, my feeling is that the move was cautious and preliminary. Indeed, it is much the sort of tentative move that early constructivist work in international relations (IR) was making in 1995, while actively resisting the more radical break with functionalism, rationalism, and indeed realism in IR that was happening at the same time.[1] While this book explicitly seeks to advance this constructivist account of norms, it is hampered by its reliance on that accountâs overly conventional epistemology.

In terms of the bookâs attempt to come to terms with normativity, and particularly with the salience of justice in international arms control, the problems stem, I think, from an overly narrow conception of norm. While Wunderlich does a very good job of detailing the emergence and nature of constructivist IRâs concerns with norms, and of providing a sophisticated reading of this central concept, once the authorsâ attention turns to the actual regimes, the focus is almost (though not entirely) on legal obligations codified by treaty. One consequence of this narrow notion of norm, for example, is that the book concludes that while the end of the Cold War made a significant difference to the norms of multilateral arms control, 9/11 did not. However, 9/11 enabled the United States to launch the Proliferation Security Initiative and to wage a war in Iraq that was justified as a response to its possible possession of nuclear weapons. The sudden permissibility of the use of force against proliferation suggests a fairly profound normative shift following 9/11, at least within the âWest,â but it is a shift that is entirely invisible if ânormsâ are taken simply to be those that are found within legally coded, multilateral regimes.

With this narrow focus, the book does a very good job of sketching out the generally torturous development of these legal commitments, the contradictions that have either emerged or been coded within them, and the strategies that the most salient states have taken in dealing with them over the past twenty years. It does, however, leave very little room to explore the central problem that spurred the book: what is the relationship between norms and interests? The difficulty is that ânormsâ become largely coterminous with the treaty regimes, and so become largely the âdependent variable,â as normative change is the development of the treaty regime and the set of practices that surround it. This framing of the issue has two consequences for the bookâs analysis. The first is that it tends to privilege the state as agent (for all the good work done in chapter 9 on non-state actors in arms control), and perhaps more problematically, leaves little space for motivations other than interests understood in a fairly conventional manner.

Despite its not hitting the targets it set for itself, the book does provide a number of valuable contributions. The editors are correct that issues of arms control have been largely absent from the literature on international norms, which is in many ways an odd omission. Should this book spark a renewed interest in the study of arms control and its normativity, it will have done a very great service. In addition, one of the bookâs central aims is to take justice claims seriously. The question of justice, particularly justice understood as equity, is an extremely important problem in international arms control. As the

authors rightly note at various points in the book, there are a range of inequities built into the various multilateral arms control regimes. These inequities are both formal, as in the split between nuclear and nonnuclear weapon states in the NPT, and informal, as in the ways supplier controls tend to reinforce an inequitable distribution of technology. Further exploration of these inequities and the search for justice by participants in arms control is greatly to be wished. Finally, the detailed discussions of the different legal regimes and the roles played by key actors in the global processes of arms control are very valuable in their own right.

Note

[1]. For a discussion of the politics of constructivists and the more radical positions from the time, see David Campbell âEpilogue: The Disciplinary Politics of Theorizing Identity,â in *Writing Security: American Foreign Policy and the Politics of Identity,* 2nd ed. (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1998), 207-228.



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