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Book Review

Mario Telò, Globalisation, Multilateralism, Europe: Towards a Better Global Governance? (Globalisation, Europe, Multilateralism)

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Mario Telò, *Globalisation, Multilateralism, Europe: Towards a Better Global Governance? (Globalisation, Europe, Multilateralism)*, Ashgate Pub. Co., 2014, 470 pp. \$41,29 Paperback.

By Gustavo G. MÜLLER[†]

Book Review

With two edited volumes, Mario Telò, Jean Monnet professor of International Relations at Université libre de Bruxelles (ULB) and at the Institute for European Studies in Belgium, sets the ambitious task of assessing the political, economic and institutional changes brought about by the intensification of globalization and complex interdependence, the enhancement of multilateralism, and the emergence of a new and multidimensional regionalism in world politics. It is time to take stock of the impact of these phenomena at large, which are operating for at least two decades, both at the level of the state and at the level of global institutions and international organizations. Thus, these two volumes serve the purpose of understanding the emerging and unprecedented multipolarity where regions and regional institutions play an important role.

Despite being complementary, each book aims at different audiences. The first one, “*State, Globalization and Multilateralism*”, brings in-depth analysis of the impact of a renewed multilateralism on the ongoing transformations of the state. It is therefore, first and foremost, providing researchers and scholars in the field of international politics with analysis that are conceptually and theoretically grounded. The second volume, “*Globalisation, Multilateralism, Europe*”, is much larger in both number of authors and chapters, with twenty-two in total divided into four parts. It is also much larger in scope. This comes with the price of each chapter being forcibly reduced. Thus, the volume is above all a textbook that aims at providing students of international relations with a starting point to explore the intricate relations between globalization, European Union studies, and the literature on multilateralism and regionalism.

The textbook is divided in four parts that follow roughly the logical steps expected of students and young researchers when planning their scientific work. It starts with the definition of key concepts and the goal of having a ‘common language’. Concepts such as multipolarity, multilateralism and globalizations are indeed the core element of the textbook and run through the remaining chapters. Perhaps missing is a common understanding and definition of the concept of ‘governance’ itself, which is highly contested in the literature, and how it relates to

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Journal of Economics and Political Economy

different fields such as political economy, and peace and security. Then, in the second part, the chapters present the various disciplines capable of analyzing global governance, from International Political Economy to Comparative Politics, Institutionalism(s), Legal Studies, and approaches to Global Justice. The third part focuses on the institutions operating in the international arena. It presents a broad understanding of what institutions are: from highly structured organizations such as the United Nation and the International Monetary Fund to loose arrangement and regimes such as environmental governance, passing by the intricate international trading system.

Finally, the last part provides the reader with a wide array to empirical analysis of actors and processes, which are relevant as illustrations to the changes in global governance. Despite the fact that chapters are relatively short, never more than 20 pages, the authors managed to provide the state of art of the research in relation various issues: wealth inequality, peacebuilding and responsibility to protect, development, and spread of weapons of mass destruction. It would be of course unfair to expect innovative breakthroughs in short textbook chapters, but the authors have the merit of raising the unavoidable questions surrounding these issues. The end of each chapter also presents the relevant literature for researches interested in advancing their knowledge and questions for students who are preparing for their exams or discussing in class. Other particular feature of the book is that every chapter presents a series of text boxes serving to better present a concept, sum up the discussion of an issue, or further elaborate on empirical examples.

An additional goal is to bridge European Union studies and the scholarship related to European integration with the studies on globalization and global order. To do so, it is claimed, one must go against the realist paradigm that is dominant in International Relations. Indeed, the inclusion of other paradigms is necessary and the book offers multiple perspectives related to institutionalism and more traditional conceptions of constructivism. But realist theories have also changed and adapted to this new environment and geopolitics are as relevant as ever, even within and at the borders of the European Union. Furthermore, given the broad range of issues and approaches to global and European politics already in the book, one could also expect the inclusion of emerging theories and epistemologies that are being applied to the international such as poststructuralism, feminism, post-colonial studies and even a renewed Marxist theory. Thus, in some occasions, the book seems to overlook both what is left of realism and what is promising about more critical approaches to international politics. All these approaches have legitimate answers of their own to the changing nature of the global order and the impact of multilateral institutions on the state.

The book "*State, Globalization and Multilateralism*" has a much more focused agenda. It aims primarily at innovating within the debate of the future of the state and the impact from multilateralism and globalization. The puzzling question is that the state has made a comeback after the 'liberal illusions' of governance without government of the nineties and yet seems to diverge from the classic Westphalia model. The book has also the merits of presenting the European experience as contributing to the changing nature of the state without being the unique model of regional integration. On the contrary, the main message is that the European Union and other regional institutions can and must be compared to other regions and regional arrangements if we are to understand the complexities of a multipolar, multiregional, world order.

Finally, the book's introduction acknowledges the importance of bottom-up initiatives regarding multilateralism and regionalism, which would also include private and social actors. Yet, the following chapters are exponential in analyzing

Journal of Economics and Political Economy

changes at institutional and international levels, especially within the framework of institutionalism as proposed in the chapter of Vivien Schmidt, but tend to overlook the role of social movements, civil society, private companies, and other actors in the 'bottom'. However, regionalism can also be considered an expression of bottom-up initiatives because it contrasts with a global liberal agenda of hyper-globalization, which is clearly top-down. Therefore, the book provides a more balanced view on multilateralism that brilliantly challenges both hyper-globalists on one side and uncompromising notions about rational-choice and security-dilemma on the other. The proposal for a mid-way look at these phenomena is perhaps the book's biggest contribution.

A large part of the two books focuses on the impact of multilateralism, and the acknowledgment of its value by the states, on global governance. Regionalism, or the rise in importance of regions and regional organizations, is understood by Mario Telò as a type of multilateralism. It is not a global process, but a geographically 'limited', coherent, type of multilateral interaction. Therefore, both multilateralism and regionalism have seen three phases. Firstly, a Eurocentric type of regionalism before the Second World War where few countries outside Europe would join multilateral arrangements and organizations. Secondly, a US-centered hegemonic phase during the Cold War that was promoted by superpower and ultimately defined by it, often in conflict with the other bipolar power. Finally, a post-hegemonic phase where regional actors are autonomous to build their regions, multilateralism is much more institutionalized and reciprocity moves from being issue-specific to being more diffuse in the multilateral system.

It is safe to say that the tone in both books remains largely optimistic in relation to the changes currently operating in global governance and its institutions. Multilateralism and regionalism are largely seen as venues for improvement of global order in both material and ideational terms. In a nutshell, one is left with the impression that post-hegemonic regionalism and multilateralism are inherently good and as having the potential to the enhancement of the legitimacy of international organizations, international institutions and global governance as a whole. Both volumes also focus almost exclusively on the big picture and the dynamics of the interplay between states, between institutions, and between institutions and the national states. Thus, one could ask for a deeper look, in some chapters, into the social aspects within the 'black-box' of the state.

A common language among scholars of various fields is hard to come by, especially when the authors of different chapters come from such heterogeneous backgrounds and are inspired by various theories, disciplines, and ultimately epistemologies. But it is clear that this is not only a challenge of these two volumes, but a challenge of a new and undeniable global reality where exchanges within and among world regions are constantly happening. The editor and the contributing authors make this point very clearly and open the path to additional research, both empirical and normative, on the changes operating in a global scale.

It should be clear by now that we are indeed living in a period of (long) transition of global order. In a large scale, the overwhelming supremacy of the West that has been underpinned by industrialization and colonialism is relatively reducing in the *long durée* perspective, the Cold War period now appears much more as an exception in the long history of globalization, and multipolarity – this time in a global and not only European scale – is having a comeback. The impact of these changes for the state and for the relationship between regions is highly controversial. To anticipate changes in international politics is a courageous move, where the traps such as excessive optimism or pessimism and value-oriented research are always present.

Journal of Economics and Political Economy

However, this is also a task that needs to be undertaken. We need to think outside the frameworks that we take for granted, outside the state and the idea of non-overlapping jurisdiction and sites of power, and outside the international when it is itself seen as an extension of the state. Mario Telò and the contributors of the two volumes walk in this direction by taking stock of the achievements, innovating, and proposing new venues for future research.



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