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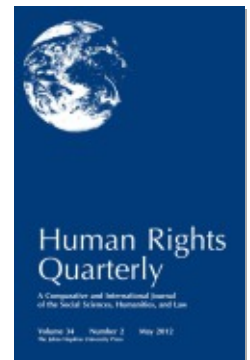
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Non-Governmental Organizations in World Politics: The Construction of Global Governance (review)

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Peter Willetts, *Non-Governmental Organizations in World Politics: The Construction of Global Governance* (Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge, 2011), 224 pages, ISBN 9780415381253.

“Global associational revolution” of the late twentieth century precipitated momentous changes in the landscape of global politics.¹ Different types of associations: nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), social movements, and advocacy networks exercise an unmistakable impact on the framing of global issues, formulation of political agendas, and construction of global norms. The broad participation of non-state actors in various domains of global politics posed an empirical challenge to the state-centric model of governance of the modern world and invited scholars’ attention to these new types of interactions and actors at the global level.

Non-Governmental Organizations in World Politics: The Construction of Global Governance by Peter Willetts is the forty-seventh volume in the Routledge series on Global Institutions edited by Thomas G. Weiss and Rorden Wilkinson and a useful addition to the sizable body of literature on non-state actors and contemporary global governance.² The book cogently depicts the modern system of multi-centric global governance, in which governments, NGOs, international organizations, and other transnational actors interact and influence each others’ practices, views, and behavior. The kernel of Peter Willetts’ argument developed

throughout the book is that NGOs have played an instrumental role in the creation of the structures of contemporary global governance through their active participation in the politics of international organizations, attainment of the international legal status with corresponding rights and obligations, and contributions to the spread of global communications and development of the Internet.³

Although, the idea about the growing prominence of non-state actors in global politics and their contributions to global governance is not new, in Willetts’ volume, it is presented through a compelling reasoning. Wherein each logical step discussing the ways in which NGOs have projected their influence on global politics is examined through historical and conceptual/theoretical lenses, and defended on empirical grounds. Notably, the argument about NGOs roles in global politics is not limited to their causal influence on the practices of governments and inter-governmental institutions. It is implied, through references to the theoretical insights of constructivism, that NGOs have had a constitutive impact on the structures and normative dimensions of global governance. NGOs have brought about a normative shift in global politics, and the modern multi-centric world reflects their own views and values of transparency and participation. To argue the NGOs role in the construction of global governance, the author shows through the chapters of the book how NGOs have initiated and facilitated changes in the direction of broader participation and recognition

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1. Lester M. Salamon, *The Rise of the Nonprofit Sector: A Global “Associational Revolution,”* 73 FOREIGN AFF. 109 (1994).
 2. For other titles on this topic refer to the selected bibliography in PETER WILLETTS, *NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS IN WORLD POLITICS: THE CONSTRUCTION OF GLOBAL GOVERNANCE* 177–80 (2011).

of non-state actors in global political, legal and communication systems.⁴ In addition, several sections of the book reviewing NGOs' participation in global policy making and implementation in such domains as population policy, development, women's issues and human rights, environmental change, and arms control, attest to the NGOs role in shaping the ideational content of global governance through re-framing debates about these and other global issues.

The publisher's blurb for Peter Willetts' book promises the reader an informative, accessible, and comprehensive text. Overall, this is an accurate assessment of the volume. The author strives for greater comprehensiveness of the dense material presented in the book by dedicating a full chapter to conceptual definitions of NGOs, global politics, civil society, and social movements and clarifying the relationship among them. Other terms are usually defined when there are introduced in the text for the first time, and chronological progression of the analyses of how NGOs have been able to influence outcomes in various domains of global politics eases the comprehension of the material.

A definite strength of the book is the wealth of information on international organizations, NGOs, and their practices packed into this very short volume. The author, a veteran researcher of NGOs in world politics, has attempted to convey in a lucid manner his knowledge of the roles of non-state actors in global governance acquired during thirty years of studying NGOs.⁵ With such a considerable exper-

tise in the field of NGOs, the author is able to enliven the discussion of general processes, practices, and mechanisms underlying the influence of non-state actors with original examples and offer fresh ideas about NGOs' pioneer role in offering electronic communications to the general public and NGOs' work in the UN General Assembly and Security Council.

Another remarkable aspect of the book is its non-conformist stance on several accepted "wisdoms" of global politics. One chapter of the book challenges a conventional view granting legal status in international relations to states and international organization only. The author argues for the extension of international legal personality to NGOs by analyzing several unique cases when NGOs were able to gain privileges of statehood, practices of hybrid international organizations constituted on the basis of NGOs with legal rights along-side states, and developments in the customary international law, which conferred international personality to NGOs. In another chapter, the author takes a contending perspective on the relationship between NGOs and the Internet. According to Peter Willetts, a visionary prowess exercised by a few NGOs (particularly, the Association for Progressive Communications) and "their appreciation of the technology as potential resource for mobilization helped to *create* the Internet," rather than the Internet being an enabler of communications and growth in NGOs sector.⁶

Although, the publisher refers to the volume as a textbook, it reads as more

3. *Id.* at 162.

4. *Id.* at 153.

5. Peter Willetts' earlier books are; *PRESSURE GROUPS IN THE GLOBAL SYSTEM: THE TRANSNATIONAL RELATIONS OF ISSUE-ORIENTED NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS* (1982) and *THE CONSCIENCE OF THE WORLD": THE INFLUENCE OF NON-GOVERNMENT ORGANIZATIONS IN THE UN SYSTEM* (1996).

than a text, but less than a monograph. It contains several brilliantly researched and argued sections, which can stand on their own and be used by graduate and undergraduate students interested in these lines of research. The volume also contains multiple literature reviews, which may be useful for students looking for a quick but encompassing read on the state of scholarship about different aspects of global governance and NGOs.

Many readers will regard the discussed features of the book as its strengths; some, however, may consider these same aspects of the volume as its weaknesses. The book is very dense and contains a wealth of conceptual and empirical information. Those readers who have not had any prior exposure to theories of international politics and conceptual jargon of international relations will face a challenge of navigating the sea of theoretical approaches and concepts. This is particularly true in Chapter 5 dealing with the place of NGOs in theories of international relations. The book lacks explicit links between an important theoretical chapter, which comes at the end of the book, and earlier empirical chapters. The connections are there, but are easily lost in the labyrinth of approaches, perspectives, and new conceptual definitions introduced at the end of the book. The author puts forth a new understanding of the concept of global politics drawing on his discussion of alternative visions of authority and power in Chapter 5. This discussion is not connected to the original definition of global politics suggested at the beginning of the volume. The exploration of processes through which NGOs can affect debates over global issues, also provided in Chapter 5, is insufficiently

tied with the evidence presented in the earlier chapters. It remains a puzzle how international law and global communications, discussed in Chapters 3 and 4, are linked up with the concepts of issue areas, issue-systems, and policy systems introduced in Chapter 5.

The puzzles and ambiguities encountered in some parts of the book can be turned into effective teaching/learning exercises inviting students to explain, for example, what makes the book's argument consistent with a constructivist approach, and how general processes and structures examined in the theoretical chapter are exemplified in empirical sections of the book. Some of the volume's propositions can be turned into testable hypotheses utilized in the students' own research. Several fresh ideas conveyed in the volume, such as the notion of a hybrid organization and relationships between NGOs, global communications, and the Internet, offer both students and investigators new avenues for research.

To conclude, the book can definitely serve as a useful guide to NGOs and their roles in global politics. It, however, is not a complete guide. Several perspectives, particularly feminist and critical theory approaches on global governance, civil society, and NGOs, are missing from the volume. The book briefly acknowledges the existence of differences in values of NGOs and persistence of a bi-polar structure of global politics with Western Europe and North America remaining the two leading centers of global governance. The author offers a scanty explanation to this lop-sidedness of global politics citing the reasons of efficiency and expediency. The discussion of the implications of existing global disparities for the forma-

6. WILLETTS, NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS IN WORLD POLITICS, *supra* note 2 at 84.

tion of the normative structure of global governance is omitted from the volume. The book is seasoned with liberal flavor and would have been strengthened with acknowledging this. Alternatively, the author could have engaged more with the critical literature, which treats the empirical phenomena and concepts of NGOs, civil society, and global governance as products of the West developed by advocates, practitioners, and researchers from the Western Hemisphere to describe the upsurge of activities of mostly European and American citizens' associations during the last three or four decades.

Liberal principles and norms are far from the only ideas that can exert influence on the actors of global politics. Although, the author acknowledges in passing the persistence of disagreements among NGOs, the book, as a whole, provides the reader with the picture of global governance devoid of any normative conflict. A possibility that states and corporations can affect agendas and norms of NGOs is not critically examined. Therefore, the readers are encouraged to supplement its reading with other titles providing more critical examination of the extent to which the distribution of economic and political power in the world is reflected in the types of norms and principles constituting the normative content of global governance.

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***Sexual Violence in Conflict Zones: From the Ancient World to the Era of Human Rights* (Elizabeth D. Heineman ed., *Pennsylvania Studies in Human Rights*, Philadelphia, University of Pennsylvania Press 2011), 342 pages, ISBN 9780812243185.**

Sexual violence in conflict has garnered increasing attention in recent years, but as editor Elizabeth D. Heineman describes in the opening chapter of *Sexual Violence in Conflict*, our current understanding is largely based on generalizations drawn from a few recent conflicts.¹ She makes the case for studying historical episodes of sexual violence in conflict by pointing out this serious limitation in the current literature and arguing that studying historical episodes can provide us with an understanding of long-term consequences and depictions of how societies achieve post conflict peace and stability.

With this neglect of historical examples in mind, the chapters in *Sexual Violence in Conflict* provide in depth analyses of pre-1990s episodes of sexual violence in conflict, including those in ancient Greece and Rome and even biblical examples, the Medieval West, Seventeenth-Century England, the Spanish Conquest of Alta California, the American Revolution, the American Civil War, Late Precolonial and Early Colonial Tanzania Uzbekistan in 1917, World War I, World War II, and East Pakistan/Bangladesh in 1971. The book concludes