

Bob Reinalda (ed.), *Routledge Handbook of International Organization*
(Abingdon: Routledge, 2013), pp. 576, ISBN 978-0-415-50143-9 (hbk)

Reviewed by Gerry Alons
Radboud University Nijmegen

The *Routledge Handbook of International Organization*, edited by Bob Reinalda, aims to serve the community of students, scholars and practitioners interested in International Organisation(s) by providing a broad and multidisciplinary overview of developments and challenges in this dynamic field of research. Taken together, the thirty-eight contributions in the book deal with a variety of actors (IGO's, INGO's, Secretaries-General, diplomats) and themes (staff values and learning processes in IGO's, UN Security Council reform, inter-regionalism, developments in international trade and finance regimes) applying a range of methodologies and theoretical perspectives. The handbook should therefore not be treated as one integrated collection of chapters around a particular theme, but rather as a work of reference for scholars and practitioners working in the field and as a helpful starting point for students who wish to become involved.

A group of sixty-one scholars collaborated in this large-scale project. Although the majority of these scholars work at Western European and North American universities, the project is genuinely global in nature, involving authors from all continents. Reinalda has also secured a good mix of established, mid career and early career scholars, providing PhD students and early career researchers the opportunity to disseminate their work alongside established scholars. That two thirds of the contributors are male seems to reflect the preponderance of male researchers in the field.

The book starts with a short overview and an introduction to international organisation as a field of research and is subsequently divided into six parts: 1) Documentation, data sets and sources; 2) International secretariats as bureaucracies; 3) Actors within international bureaucracies; 4) Processes within international bureaucracies; 5) Challenges to international organisations; and 6) Expanding international architectures.

Although the overview does accurately summarise each contributor's arguments, it unfortunately does not move beyond this description. It is also a pity that the editor did not conclude the book with a synthesis chapter to point at interrelations between the different contributions and thus rendering the book more than a collection of articles. However, the selection of themes for the six parts of the book is a welcome variation to the structure usually found in textbooks on international organisation(s) successively focusing on theoretical approaches, actors, and substantive themes (security, trade, human rights and so on). Furthermore, these themes are well chosen considering the book's broad multidisciplinary focus and theoretical heterogeneity, transcending common thematic and theoretical classifications. Nevertheless, not all of the chapters seem to fit equally well in the part to which they were assigned. The

part on 'documentation, data sets and sources' includes excellent chapters on the availability and potential use of different data sets and sources, but Hurrell and Lees' chapter on international organisations and the notion of equality, as well as Collins and White's chapter on the legal autonomy of IGO's do not seem to fit so well in this part of the book. Valubas' insightful chapter on when and why IGO's grant consultative and observer status to NGO's, would perhaps fit better in the 'actors within international bureaucracies' section than in the part on 'international secretariats as bureaucracies'. Finally, it is unclear why Akami and Okamoto's chapter describing international organisation(s) in Asia and the Pacific is included in the part on 'challenges to international organisations'. Thus the book would certainly have benefited from an explicit explanation of why the book was structured around the selected six themes and how the different contributions fit in.

Reinalda's introductory chapter sketches the emergence and evolution of the field: how it moved from description to scientific explanation and from a focus on state actors to one acknowledging the independent influence of international institutions. This chapter is an excellent introduction to the field and the literature, but it is also overladen with information. Newcomers to the field would certainly benefit from some tables here, which could provide a schematic overview of theoretical chronology and of dominant approaches.

The chapters in the handbook touch on a broad variety of themes and range from purely descriptive contributions to analytical chapters focusing on theory development and application. It would go beyond the scope of this book review to evaluate all thirty-eight contributions to the volume. Instead this review will distinguish between four different potential uses of the book and how different audiences could benefit from them: 1) a gateway to data and sources; 2) a source of methodological reflection; 3) an introduction to specific themes of research or to theoretical approaches; and 4) a focus on how science meets practice.

First, the handbook can serve as an excellent starting point for students and scholars who need insight in what type of data and sources are available on international organisations and their decision-making processes, and on where these sources can be found. In this vein, the contribution of Church and McCaffrey provides a thematically and geographically structured systematic overview of available sources, publications, and documents of a host of organisations. Gatzke and Schneider delve deeper into the Correlates of War database and summarise the insights gained by analysing this data set. Furthermore, they present data sets of key institutions such as the UN, the EU, IMF and WTO. These chapters provide easy access to very important information that will help students and scholars in political science, public administration, history, and law find the data needed to conduct their empirical research.

The handbook also offers significant methodological reflection. In this vein, Voeten reviews how data sets on voting in the UN are used, indicating a shift from serving as a means to understand UN policy to an instrument to measure common interests and preferences. He argues that researchers pay insufficient attention to the content of UN votes and use inadequate methods to construct indicators of common interests based on the UN voting patterns. It should be noted though that some degree of methodological and statistical background knowledge is needed to follow the argument in this chapter. In their contribution on the INGO research agenda, Bloodgood and Schmitz present methodological innovations and challenges students and

researchers in this field should take into account. Both contributions are excellent examples of how an introduction to sources is combined with insightful methodological reflection in the handbook.

The third way in which the book could be used is as an introduction to different themes and theoretical approaches in the field of international organisation(s). Most of the chapters can be used to this end, because they combine the description of a research theme with an overview of relevant theoretical approaches, concluding with potential avenues for further research. On a theoretical note, Ege and Bauer provide an overview of Public Administration and International Relations perspectives on international bureaucracies, arguing that the latter are better able to explain the formation of international organisations, while the former provide deeper insights into their policy-making role in day-to-day practice. In his chapter on leadership capacity and qualities of Secretaries-General of international organisations, Kille laments the descriptive focus in existing research and aims to contribute to developing stronger analytical frameworks with theoretical grounding, suggesting important avenues for further research. On a different note, Van der Vleuten and Ribeiro Hoffmann introduce the relatively novel phenomenon of inter-regionalism – relations between international regional organisations – clarifying the concept and how it can be applied in research, concluding that it does not indicate a shift from a world order based on nation states to one based on regions and inter-regional relations. These examples show how the handbook brings together old and new research themes in the field of international organisation(s) and can serve as a work of reference for students and scholars wishing to engage in research on these different themes.

Finally, the handbook shows how science can meet practice in the field (and *vice versa*). Kemp Spies' contribution is a good example of how practice meets science. She analyses the mandates, roles, and functions of multilateral diplomats and the challenges associated with their functions, arguing that diplomatic theory is an underdeveloped part of international relations theory and should be developed further. In Peksen's contribution on multilateral economic sanctions theory meets practice. He evaluates the body of scholarship examining the effectiveness and possible unintended consequences of multilateral economic sanctions, concluding with a guide not only for future research, but also for future policy making. These contributions show the important interactions between theory and practice in the field of international organisation(s), making the handbook not only useful for students and scholars, but also for practitioners.

The *Routledge Handbook of International Organization* is thus not a book that provides a well-integrated collection of chapters around a clearly demarcated theme. It is therefore not a book that most scholars will or should wish to read from cover to cover. It does however constitute a *handbook* with a large collection of 'stand alone' chapters on a wide range of issues in the field. The table of contents and the index serve as a point of departure and will guide readers to chapters of their particular interest. As such, it is a highly useful work of reference for students, scholars and practitioners alike and deserves a place in university library collections and on the shelves of scholars engaging in the field of international organisation(s).