Hylke Dijkstra

*International Organizations and Military Affairs* (Routledge, 2016).

It is a truism that in the study of international organizations the academic disciplines of law and politics hardly ever meet. We share an interest in international organizations (or in fact in international organization), but we remain interested in different questions. The result is reflected in the fact that we publish in different journals and participate in different conferences. Almost everyone will know the experience of being the only lawyer in a room full of political scientists (or vice versa): one can bring in arguments from one’s own disciplinary debates, but the arguments often never really fit into the ongoing discussion and the contribution is to be embedded in a number of disclaimers and, if possible, a joke to at least be accepted as a fellow human being.

Yet, it remains important to try and make use of the findings of political science (as it obviously makes sense for political scientists to understand the legal framework of their topic of study). In 2015, Kenneth Abbott published a collection of 67 articles written between 1944 and 2014 by different leading authors on the law and politics of international organizations to reveal “the degree to which the activities and even the law of international organizations are embedded in politics”. Indeed, the topic of law and politics in international organizations is far from new.

In a way, the book under review here serves as a test case to see to what extent the topics that are analysed relate to ongoing discussions in the law of international organizations. The author of the book is indeed a political scientist, but the topic—the role of international organizations in military affairs—certainly resonates in legal academic circles. Hence, this review is different from most others: it does not aim at assessing the quality of the book as such (as, after all, your reviewer would have to be a political scientist to make a fair assessment); rather it will try and identify themes and approaches that may be relevant for the study of international institutional law.

To start with, and interestingly enough, the book is largely about institutionalisation. Institutionalisation of planning processes for instance, the role of international secretariats, and the relation between member states and the organization. The main question is phrased as follows: how do the member states of international organizations control international secretariats in the area of military affairs? The role and position of member states in international

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organizations is a recurring theme in the law of international organizations, usually on the basis of the notion that member states are both part of the organization’s institutional set-up but can also be separated as distinct (sovereign, if one prefers) legal entities. The focus on secretariats (rather than on councils with member states’ representatives) in this book is crucial for one of its main findings: member states wish to exert control over the secretariats, but they largely disagree as to the way in which this should be realised. The background is formed by something that is also not unfamiliar to students of international institutional law: secretariats best represent the organization’s autonomy and are therefore well-equipped to deal with issues that should not depend too much on states’ individual preferences. They provide stability and continuity, reduce transaction costs and are able to build-up expertise. At the same time, and in particular in relation to sensitive military affairs, member states do not easily give up control and have a tendency to develop oversight mechanisms to control the activities of secretariats.

In six case studies, empirical data is gathered to shed more light on the control member states exert over secretariats of three key security organizations: the UN, NATO and the EU. Under the heading ‘The politics of institutional development’, three case studies deal with the United Nations Department of Peacekeeping Operations (‘DPKO’), the NATO International Staff, and the European External Action Service (‘EEAS’). Another three cases (‘The politics of military mandates’) address the United Nations mission in South Sudan, NATO Operation Unified Protector in Libya, and the EU anti-piracy operations off the coast of Somalia. The case studies reveal that “control mechanisms are omnipresent and almost permanently on the minds of the member states. Oftentimes member states are so anxious about potential agency loss that they avoid delegation altogether or keep secretariat officials out of critical parts of the policy process.”2 The study nevertheless reveals a large differentiation across the three organizations and that “conflict between the member states affects the choice of control over the secretariats of international organizations”.3

It is interesting to note that the study points to member state preferences and the extent to which member states succeed in agreeing. Students of international institutional law would probably expect to see differences based on the type of the organization, its autonomy vis-à-vis its members or certain decision-making rules. Yet, the case studies show something else: “With respect to institutional development, the data show tighter control over the UN and

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3 Ibid., 208.