Book Review

Rick Fawn


Professor Rick Fawn's unceasing interest in the OSCE, Central Asia, and East-central and Eastern Europe has given him the opportunity to accumulate immense knowledge on a wide range of interrelated topics. In *International Organizations and Internal Conditionality: Making Norms Matter*, Fawn analyses the “internal conditionality” of two international organizations (IOs): the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) and the Council of Europe (CoE). The choice of the two is well-founded: These two European/Euro-Atlantic organizations offer fewer “material benefits” (2) than either the European Union (EU) or the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). Furthermore, the OSCE and the CoE have been studied far less than the other two organizations.

Fawn starts from Western values and argues that they are universal. One is tempted to agree with him—especially if one changes the level of analysis and pays attention to the individual as subject of those values. However, there are serious problems with starting at the state level. It is noble to argue that democracy is superior, but the road to democracy is bumpy and the results of following it are often inconclusive. Should we not recognize that “stability” is also a value in the international system and that the push towards “democratization” often ends up in failure and causes massive human suffering? In sum, given his starting point, Fawn may well deprive the reader of a more complex and permissive understanding. Western discourse may confine our understanding to European countries, and it will not contribute to clear ideas about a number of states that matter a great deal in Fawn's analysis, including Russia, Kazakhstan and Tajikistan.

When drawing conclusions from the concept of internal conditionality, Fawn submits that the, “value of the resistance by the government(s) and the
quality of the responses by the IOs vary ... [and] both resistance and responses take different forms" (236). However, this is where the analysis based on the universality of Western values may face a challenge. An IO’s response is based on the opinion of a few of its large members, and, frequently, on the opinions of others that join the bandwagon. It is essential to see that states subjected to internal conditionality more often perceive that it is not the collective wisdom of the states that assemble in the organization that put them under pressure, but instead that they are put under pressure by a few states that pursue their own (often realist) agendas. However, there is an important counter-argument: Do states not behave hypocritically when they join an IO with a set of promises to live up to and then realize that the institution only partially meets their expectations?

The cases detailed by Fawn—the role of the OSCE in election-observation missions, the Chechnya war, Tajikistan, the Kazakh Chairmanship, and the CoE’s contribution to the abolition of capital punishment—are well-selected and quite persuasive. But is “internal conditionality” a major scholarly invention, or does it only refine the classical “conditionality-socialization” duopoly? In the case of the OSCE, it is in fact the adequate mix of these two factors that avoids the alienation of members that do not perform as well as others. In addition, it is allegedly due to the existence of internal conditionality that “external conditionality” exists. If states find it worthy to seek relations with an IO, and even more if they want to become members, it is clear that external conditionality is effective. It is well-documented how strongly East-central European states wanted to join the two IOs in the case of the NATO and EU enlargements. It is not as widely known, however, how the large number of candidate countries contributed to the legitimacy of the EU and NATO. It is enough to mention the anecdotal remark of Gerhard Schröder, who was the German Chancellor at the time: “The admission of new members is proof that NATO continues to be attractive” (quoted in Dunay 2013, 62).

In the case of the far less visible enlargement of the CoE, states wanted to join to gain formal recognition of their democratic records. This process predated their accession to NATO and the EU. However, after these countries joined the CoE, it was noticed that the organization had limited means to influence their behaviour. Even when member states have some means, they are slow to use them. When problems become really severe, “conditionality” falls back to a few powerful members of the same organization. Consequently, there is reason to conclude that internal conditionality, if it exists, is far less effective than external conditionality.

Fawn does not always stick to his generally high intellectual rigor. When he presents the case for the abolition of capital punishment and the strong