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COMPARATIVE SOCIOLOGY 19 (2020) 681-683

COMPARATIVE SOCIOLOGY

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Book Review

Jackson, Simon, & Alanna O'Malley (eds.), 2018. *The Institution of International Order: From the League of Nations to the United Nations* (Routledge Studies in Modern History 38). Oxon & New York: Routledge. xvi + 248pp., ISBN 978-1138091504, £120.00 (hb)

The *Institution of International Oder* provides a novel perspective on the origins of international cooperation, providing a 'multi-local history of internationalism' (p. xii). The volume consists of nine chapters, a prologue and epilogue. By pooling expertise on a variety of themes, periods and geographies, Jackson and O'Malley illuminate how internationalism was negotiated by protagonists beyond the habitual centre of international politics. Ostensibly universal norms were remade through local practice and campaigns, and institutions were born in the 'periphery' (p. xiii). Instead of playing off critical and positivist International Relations theorists, the authors encourage them to deliberate, providing the 'contexts and narratives' of internationalism to sharpen and refresh modes of enquiry, based on the social scientific staples of eventfulness and 'ideal-typification.' This provides the basis for a reconceptualisation of the origins of the international community as we know it today, in multiple ways.

Firstly, multiple chapters elaborate on the engagement of representatives outside of the major empire-states of the 'Old World' and the major-powers of the Cold War era with internationalism. This includes analyses on conceptualisations of internationalism in Japan (Chapter 8) and Lebanon (Chapter 1) through the lens of key actors. The edited volume also covers attempts from actors from Latin America (Chapter 2) to influence the 'rules of the game' for international institutions during their constitution. Existing biases towards the perspectives of powerful states challenged actors when they attempted to influence the design and workings of international institutions. During the existence of the League of Nations, identity politics introduced by European actors exacerbated differences we today label as sectarian in the Middle East (Chapter 7). The United States (Chapter 3) used

 | DOI:10.1163/15691330-12341524

internationalism opportunistically. These observations correspond to the institutional realist conception of institutions as tools for major powers.

However, the work also illuminates the transformative influence that global institutions had on states, even on the major powers that supposedly controlled them, when these found themselves 'out of sync with the times.' The discussion on 'native labour' in the Portuguese Empire (Chapter 9), illuminates how international institutions placed expectations on and thereby impacted the activities of this Empire as it participated in international fora, eventually leading to profound changes in its activities. In addition, participation in international institutions allowed actors to identify common interests and establish alliances that helped transform the initial power dynamics under which institutions were established.

Secondly, although civil society activism is often thought to have flourished after the creation of the United Nations, the authors argue that in the early days of the League of Nations, activism by civil society organisations, like the Liaison Committee of International Women's Organisations (Chapter 6), played an important role in agenda-setting, influencing the take-up of these topics in the United Nations later. This illuminates a more profound struggle over some topics than would appear to be the case based on the United Nations timeline alone. Especially the chapter on the right to petition (Chapter 4), which shows the continuous efforts of Jewish Non-Governmental Organisations to legitimate claims for protection, presents often overlooked activities that greatly impacted later discussions on the topic of human rights. Humanitarian aid (Chapter 5), often seen as 'perfectly natural' within the mandate of the United Nations, also receives a more comprehensive history by extending the period of analysis to the League of Nations.

A last insight provided by the work is the enormous potential of data-collection and dissemination as a tool for instigating change. International women's organisations shaped how and through which categories and assumptions the League of Nations addressed women's issues (p. 150). The Portuguese Empire was incentivised to engage in self-scrutiny and disseminate information about slavery in its territories to the international community (p. 212). Thereby, data provided (counter-)evidence that brought states under increased scrutiny, rectified proliferating misconceptions and provided new information for policy-adjustments. Arguably, data-collection remains a major contribution of the international system, enlarging the potential of actors to challenge existing perceptions on long-discussed topics as well as those that arrived on the global agenda more recently, like climate change and sustainable consumption. A case in point is provided by the staggering 232+ indicators used to review progression on the United Nations Sustainable

Development Goals. For this framework, the role of civil society is also stressed to supplement and triangulate existing data.

The editors conclude by providing a relatively optimistic perspective on the future of global governance. As international institutions were politicised from the start, the idea that they have become 'more politicised' and 'less governable' than before is based on 'problematic, stylised renderings of internationalism's past' (p. 239). All in all, the volume certainly provides an interesting contribution for political scientists, sociologists and history scholars interested in global politics.

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