

“differed considerably” from that suggested by the secretariat (p. 148). NATO’s International Staff was constrained in the case of the 2011 Libya intervention, first by NATO’s late entry into the game and then by the elaborate generic planning rules that skewed institutional power in favor of NATO’s military authorities. Finally, the EU’s anti-piracy mission ATALANTA demonstrates a case of secretariat marginalization by way of non-delegation, an approach developed by the UK through 2008 as it found itself marginalized in its opposition to an EU mission. Therefore, it came up with the idea to offer to run such a mission through a national UK operational headquarters rather than a proper collective EU mechanism.

The overall conclusion is, as mentioned, that states tend to impose unnecessary costs on themselves by way of their choices of restrictive control. Costs are inevitable in principal-agent relations, but based on these case studies, Dijkstra concludes that secretariats actually do not unduly grow in size, can offer smart ideas for policies, and can professionalize the coordination and management of interstate relations (pp. 213–14). There are exceptions, of course, and EU enthusiasts will be alarmed to note that they mainly concern the EU. Still, the point is clear: states could benefit from enhanced IO secretariat agencies.

Dijkstra finds that interstate rivalry is containable, even as national rivalries run deep. In the case studies, we repeatedly encounter French investments in the EU; UK reservations on the EU; U.S., German, and other interests in maintaining the status quo within NATO; the struggle by new NATO members to gain an institutional foothold; mistrust from the global south toward the perceived dominance by the north of the UN Department for Peacekeeping Operations; and so on. Nonetheless, Dijkstra’s starting point with the rationale for cooperation (principal-agent theory) leads him to plead for the rationale of further cooperation.

Analysts, such as myself, who predominantly work with the international and institutional consequences of political diversity—what Stanley Hoffmann once termed “the logic of diversity”—will find this conclusion thought provoking. It is probably possible to engender common approaches by way of secretarial buildup, but the potential of secretarial buildup is probably also strictly limited. Focusing on secretarial capacity is in a sense putting the cart before the horse: secretarial capacity flows from the underlying alignment of national political priorities—from the sense of international order that particular states support.

Underlying political alignment would explain why NATO’s International Staff works fairly well in this comparative perspective and also why the EU and the UN are struggling. But even NATO is like the EU and UN: vulnerable to outsized membership, having expanded now to twenty-nine member states. The trusted fallback option of appealing to U.S. leadership is wearing a bit thin, though it may still last. The rise of China, populist politics, and other factors certainly create a situation where NATO visibly experiences the same disintegrative pull as these other organizations.

Hylke Dijkstra should be commended for inviting this dialogue between rationalist theory and theories of power politics. The latter will question his policy conclusions and the reach of his empirical observations, but this is part of the dialogue. The bottom line is that every analyst of international cooperation will benefit from Dijkstra’s careful assessment of institutional trends in the UN, NATO, and the EU. The book is well written, with admirably clear case studies, and the invitation to dialogue deserves to be taken seriously.

## Hug: Institutionally blind?: International organisations and human rights abuses in the former Soviet Union

by Nicole J. Jackson, Simon Fraser University

*Institutionally blind?: International organisations and human rights abuses in the former Soviet Union*, by Adam Hug, ed. London: The Foreign Policy Center, 2016.

Adam Hug’s book examines the enormous challenges facing international institutions in promoting human rights and good governance in the former Soviet Union (FSU). Each chapter outlines the role of a different organization or institution, highlights major challenges that it faces, and asks how it can better perform given significant political, economic, and strategic constraints. The editor then summarizes the key recommendations for the organizations, which include the EU, Council of Europe, OSCE, economic institutions, national parliaments, and NGOs.

After the Soviet Union collapsed in 1991, a host of international organizations rushed into the region to facilitate the “transition” toward a market economy and Western liberal democracy. At the time, many academics worked in the field of “transitology” and tested theories of “democratization” on the newly independent states. Twenty-five years later, the reality is that there has been little or no such political “transition” in twelve of these countries (i.e., all the former Soviet countries minus the Baltic states). In fact, in several cases, we have witnessed the consolidation of authoritarian regimes and the partial withdrawal of international institutions. In parallel to this evolution, scholars now write about the diffusion of non-liberal norms, methods, and institutions across the region—and beyond.<sup>1</sup>

The authors in this collection lament what may be more accurately termed the qualified failure of these organizations rather than the institutional “blindness” referred to in the book’s title. They take the normative stance that security across the region would be enhanced by improved human rights and governance, a view that is not shared by the regimes they are examining. The collection does not engage with the theoretical scholarship on the topic but instead succeeds in giving detailed, critical and up-to-date assessments of these organizations’ human rights promotion capabilities. This is important and timely as global governance today seems to be increasingly dominated by geopolitics, realpolitik, and hard security interests.

The authors show that overall, despite some positive contributions (they highlight, for example, the Council of Europe’s [CoE] Venice Commission, which gives independent legal advice to states), Western organizations’ mandates and policies have become more limited, pragmatic and less focused on human rights. The EU, for example, now prioritizes stability and economic ties in its European Neighbourhood Policy and in its approach toward Central Asia. The Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) has seen the erosion of its “human security” agenda and the ousting or degradation of its field missions throughout the former Soviet region and is currently facing myriad challenges in trying to deliver impartial and independent election monitoring. The European Bank for Reconstruction and Development

1. Nicole J. Jackson “Trans-Regional Security Organizations and ‘Statist Multilateralism’ in Eurasia,” *Europe-Asia Studies*, January 2014; “The Role of External Factors in Advancing Non-Liberal Democratic Forms of Political Rule: An Analysis of Russia’s Support of Authoritarian Regimes in Central Asia,” *Contemporary Politics*, 16:1, 2010.

(EBRD) is still rhetorically committed to fostering transition in states “committed to multiparty democracy and pluralism” but continues to invest in authoritarian Kazakhstan and Azerbaijan.<sup>2</sup>

The authors are in agreement that the degradation of the human rights agenda is partly the result of Russia’s and other states’ strategies to counter democratic norms, policies, and “Western interference” in their sovereignty. For example, it is well known that Russia has passed a series of laws designed to limit the cooperation of Russian NGOs and the West, such as the 2014 “Foreign Agents” law and the law on “undesirable organizations.” In 2015, another law was passed that declares rulings of international bodies are “impossible to implement” (p. 49) and that the Russian constitution may take priority over international law.<sup>3</sup> The implementation and ramifications of this latest law remain to be seen, but together these developments point to Russia’s complete pushback of what it perceives to be any Western encroachment on its (legal) sovereignty.

Many of the authors also focus on how the West and its own rhetoric and practices are sometimes complicit in post-Soviet authoritarian resistance. For example, Russia’s rejection of the European Court of Human Rights’ (EctHR) rulings is shown to have been partly influenced by London’s own questioning of the court’s judgements (in relation to prison voting).

Other chapters highlight the political nature of the organizations (for example, one chapter details Azerbaijan’s “capture” of the Council of Europe), the inconsistencies of the institutional approaches, and the “mixed messages” that the various actors are sending. For example, the chapter on the EU traces the downgrading of its “value agenda” but also shows how the partial retreat in values is less evident in the European Parliament (EP), which is more vocal on human rights issues but has little impact on decision making. In turn, the different bodies within the EP (delegations, committees, political groups) are convincingly shown to take positions that are often not in alignment and are sometimes undermined by political, financial, and other pressures. Thus, for example, political groups in the EP include politicians with different agendas (including some from former Soviet states) who informally shape debates on human rights. Parliamentary delegations have included politicians sympathetic to post-Soviet regimes who have acted to undermine resolutions.

The only real weaknesses of the book stem from the fact that the chapters are quite short and most use as examples Russia or Azerbaijan (the chapter on the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative focuses on Kazakhstan and Azerbaijan). The book as a whole fails to capture the different dynamics governing each state’s unique relations with the various institutions. Also, because there are eleven chapters, each of which examines a different organization or institution, the publication as a whole sometimes loses its coherence. Thus, the very interesting chapter on Interpol, and its current reforms to address human rights issues, is a related but a very different issue, since the organization’s mandate is to respond to terrorism and crime. There is also a chapter that uniquely examines a regional (non-Western) institution: the Interparliamentary Assembly of CIS. It is interesting that this institution continues to be active, and its symbolic and legitimizing role could be fruitfully compared to other post-Soviet institutions (e.g., the Collective Security Treaty Organization [CSTO] and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization [SCO]).

As mentioned above, the authors do not attempt to engage with a more sophisticated literature on diffusion, promotion, countering, or implementation of norms and practices. Instead, they are concerned with developing a series of recommendations for those actors engaged in promoting human rights in the former Soviet region. Some of these recommendations are more practical and realistic than others. For example, a chapter on the limited role of UN global human rights institutions calls for helpful practical changes, such as writing up

findings in local languages. There is a general call for more transparency within organizations and a specific call for EU parliamentary delegations and groups to be more carefully vetted in terms of both composition and leadership. This may be important and possible, but it would have only a minor impact on EU objectives and implementation. It is even less likely that OSCE would change its decision-making process such that only key decisions are taken by consensus, as is recommended by one author. At the end of the publication, the editor highlights many varied recommendations, some very general and some much more specific. These include, for example, that European nations show a greater understanding of the political impact their domestic criticisms of international institutions can have on the debate in FSU countries and that regional and global development banks provide clearer incentives for lending for democratic development and governance reform.

How can the human rights agendas of Western organizations become relevant, clear-sighted, and effective? This book does not provide definitive answers but does engage the reader with critical and thought-provoking analysis and develops some clear signposts to lead the way. In 2016, Western organizations’ *raison d’être*, policies, and practices are increasingly under attack in the context of Russia’s annexation of Crimea and military involvement in Ukraine; Brexit and the rise of conservative and nationalist politics in Europe; and sanctions on Russia and the dramatic decline of remittances for many post-Soviet states. This publication is a clarion call to pay attention to how and why organizations have not been meeting their human rights commitments and to rethink institutional goals, design, and implementation.

2. However, the EBRD is no longer in Uzbekistan, has limited relations with Turkmenistan, and has frozen its lending to Russia since its military involvement in Ukraine.

3. The law was signed by President Putin on 14 December 2015. For more information on the law, see Alexandra Sims, “Vladimir Putin signs law allowing Russia to ignore international human rights rulings,” *The Independent* (online), 15 December 2015, [www.independent.co.uk/news/world/europe/vladimir-putin-signs-law-allowing-russian-court-to-overthrow-international-human-rights-rulings-a6773581.html](http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/europe/vladimir-putin-signs-law-allowing-russian-court-to-overthrow-international-human-rights-rulings-a6773581.html).