

**Jack Corbett, Xu Yi-chong, & Patrick Weller (2021). *International organizations and small states: Participation, legitimacy and vulnerability*. Bristol: Bristol University Press. ISBN 978-1-5292-0768-2.**

Corbett, Yi-chong and Weller's impressive new volume examines why and how small states act through International Organizations (IOs), despite their limited resources, and why and how IO secretariats seek to involve small states.

In Chapter 2, the authors argue that small states emphasize (or perform) their vulnerability to create a niche role in international institutions, draw other actors' attention to their needs, and ultimately make a difference in IOs. Competently performing vulnerability involves three strategies: rhetorical action, collaboration, and active participation in IOs. In Chapter 3, the authors contend that IO secretariats, meanwhile, are compelled to engage small states and strive to increase these states' effectiveness in multilateralism to maintain the IO's "throughput legitimacy" (balancing input and output legitimacy) as a global actor. To generate both input and output legitimacy, IO secretariats promote norms and principles, uphold rules and traditions, and facilitate mutual assistance and cooperation. The book then examines how small island developing states and IO secretariats pursue these strategies, through case studies across a range of issue areas: climate change (Chapter 4), economic governance (Chapter 5), and public health and intellectual property (Chapter 6). Through effective use of interviews with diplomats and IO officials, as well as in-depth case knowledge, the authors clearly demonstrate how small island developing states act through IOs to pursue their goals, despite their limited size and resources.

The comparisons, in Chapter 4, of small island states' efforts in the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and International Maritime Organization (IMO), and, in Chapter 5, of their engagement in the International Monetary Fund, World Bank, and World Trade Organization, offer useful lessons regarding how different IOs governing the same broad issue area provide small island states with varied opportunities. For example, in examining the IMO, the authors show how small island states used their distinctive expertise in shipping issues to politicize this relatively small and technical body, increasing their influence, and, ultimately, achieving progress on reducing greenhouse gas emissions from the shipping industry. In addition, by analyzing small states' efforts in IOs that deal with different issues, this book provides examples of both material successes (e.g., in climate governance) and symbolic gains with little material changes (e.g., in economic governance).

The authors also address important factors that affect these outcomes. For instance, while most small island states have permanent representation in New York, far fewer do in Geneva; this limits their ability to participate in, and influence, Geneva-based IOs like the World Health Organization or the World Intellectual Property Organization. Although this book does not address security IOs, the insights here could be usefully applied to examine security multilateralism as well, and to compare the dynamics in security IOs to the issue areas addressed in this book. For example, in the process leading to the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons, small states also highlighted their vulnerability to nuclear weapons to shape deliberations over the governance of nuclear weapons.

However, despite the centrality of legitimacy in the authors' argument regarding why the involvement of small states is essential for IOs, the book leaves several questions related to legitimacy unanswered. First, who is the audience that decides or must be convinced of the IO's legitimacy? The authors could do more to clarify whose perceptions of legitimacy matter

for IOs, especially since small states have engaged very little in the World Health Organization and the World Intellectual Property Organization, despite efforts on the part of these IOs' secretariats. What are the implications of such a situation for these IOs' legitimacy? Second, if IOs do not pursue inclusivity and do not seek to engage small states, to what extent does this actually undermine their legitimacy? States often act through exclusive fora, such as the G7, G20, or the OECD, indicating that inclusivity is not always a requirement for multilateralism. Third, if efforts to promote throughput legitimacy fail, what are the consequences? As the authors note, states rarely withdraw from IOs. What other consequences might result from a lack of throughput legitimacy? Although the book notes that norms of sovereign equality and the right to development compel IO secretariats to be inclusive of all member states (even the smallest), it is unclear to what extent failure to fully implement these norms undermines the IO's legitimacy, and what the practical consequences of losing legitimacy would be.

The authors use small island developing states as a proxy for small states. While the focus on these small states is helpful to understand how the most vulnerable small states act through IOs, as well as to examine non-European small states, it raises questions regarding the extent to which these states are similar to other small states (e.g., small advanced economies like the Nordic states or landlocked small states like Moldova or Eswatini), especially in their engagement with IOs. In the rich, detailed case studies, the authors highlight the unique challenges small island states face due to climate change and their dependence on global trade, given their insularity. Future work might compare how different types of 'smallness' or diverse attributes of small states affect the strategies they use in IOs and their ability to make a difference.

Overall, this book makes a significant contribution to the study of small states in world politics, and the study of IO dynamics. As the authors note, existing literature has largely focused on the role of large states, secretariats, and/or non-governmental organizations in shaping IOs. By shining a light on the strategies small states use to pursue influence in IOs, this book will be extremely useful for scholars of diplomacy and IOs to better understand the role of small states in IOs, the interactions among various actors, and the outputs produced by IOs. The book's excellent case studies also provide a model for qualitative research on IOs. For scholars already focused on small states in world politics, this book provides a valuable complement to scholarship on the commonly studied European small states by demonstrating why and how small island states seek to use international institutions to their benefit.

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