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***Digitized Statecraft in Multilateral Treaty Participation: Global Quasi-Legislative Behavior of 193 Sovereign States.* By Takashi Inoguchi and Lien Thi Quynh Le. Singapore: Springer Nature, 2021. ISBN 978-981-33-4484-6. Figures. Appendix. Index. Pp. xvii, 287. \$149.00.**

Review by Melisa Perut and Etel Solingen

This new volume published by Takashi Inoguchi and Lien Thi Quynh Le represents a monumental contribution to our understanding of how global orders are built. Just as many are predicting the decomposition of the liberal international order in existence since the end of World War II, Inoguchi and Le analyze the cumulative achievements of 600 multilateral treaties between 1945 and 2019, which they characterize as “quasi-social contracts” undertaken by 193 sovereign states. Those multilateral treaties, they argue, were both vehicles and agents of the liberal world order as we have known it.

Relying on a sophisticated quantitative design, the volume advances that different combinations of six variables define treaty attributes: (1) the speed of treaty ratification, (2) the age of treaty deposition, (3) the number of treaty participants, (4) the treaty’s policy domain, (5) states’ speed of ratification, and (6) the geo-historic-cultural region within which states are nested. Those treaty attributes, in turn, shape sovereign states’ calculi regarding their modality of participation.

Inoguchi and Le proceed to reduce the complexity of their dataset through a principal component analysis that yields three main components, *speed*, *angle*, and *strategy*. Speed refers to whether states are agile or cautious when participating in multilateral treaties. Angle represents whether states are inclined to prioritize global commons versus individual interests. Finally, strategy captures whether states lean more to aspirational bonding treaties, which focus on expanding ideals and norms without attaching constraining clauses, versus mutual binding treaties, which include sanctions against non-compliance. The authors use these three components to draw the digitized statecraft profiles of sovereign states.

An especially original contribution is the identification of regional differences with respect to the number and density of treaties. Agility tends to be the norm in the Sinic East while Islamic East members are more cautious in treaty ratification. The volume provides an extensive analysis of statecraft calculi in the “Sinic East,” where the expansion of treaty participation has unfolded in tandem with the region’s dramatic economic growth. States in the “Sinic East” are not only active in multilateral treaty participation, but the number of treaties they join is comparable to that of the US and the Reformed West, which includes the Netherlands, Germany, and Sweden. Yet there is significant diversity in the Sinic East’s approach to multilateral treaty participation and that is also reflected in their statecraft. The data suggests that China ratifies treaties with agility; favors treaties related to global commons; and prefers aspirational bonding. Aspirational bonding refers to the strategy of harmonizing preferences towards achieving idealistic goals among sovereign states in the absence of binding or constraining multilateral treaty clauses. Japan, while similar in speed and angle compared to China, prefers mutually binding treaties. North Korea is cautious in decision; angled in individual interest; and also oriented to mutual binding.

The herculean effort behind this study is both captivating and convincing. Regarding the categorization of the higher-order policy domains, one may argue that states may be more attentive to certain multilateral treaties than others and that such preferences may vary over time. Treaties can also be categorized according to the existential threat potential of the relevant issue area. For instance, the volume bundles labor and health together but the Covid-19 pandemic displayed how the governance mechanisms for these two issue-areas had differential effects on states. Inoguchi and Le emphasize that the growth of multilateral treaty participation is an indicator of cooperation among sovereign states in an effort to solve problems without passports. However, participation and problem resolution are not necessarily correlated for all global issues. In the case of the Paris Agreement, despite high levels of participation, nationally determined contributions have fallen short of reaching the agreement’s climate goals. In global environmental governance efforts, neither aspirational bonding nor mutual binding are, thus far, keeping emissions levels aligned with IPCC’s guidelines.

The security implications of digitized statecraft are thought provoking. Applied to the South China Sea dispute, Inoguchi and Le's three dimensions of global legislative politics provides a powerful lens to analyze the calculus of the region's inhabitants and possible outcomes. China, as mentioned, is agile in the speed of treaty ratification, its angle is global commons, and its strategy is aspirational bonding. Vietnam is more cautious in the speed of treaty ratification, its angle is individual interests, and its strategy is more mutually binding compared to China. The Philippines, compared to the rest of the South China Sea region, appears to have the fastest treaty ratification, relatively angled toward individual interests and mutually binding in strategy. Malaysia is cautious in treaty ratification yet has a high angle score for global commons. However, it also adopts a mutually binding strategy with treaties as long as they are more or less strictly mutually binding. Brunei is cautious in treaty ratification, focuses on individual interests, and is aspirational in strategy. Indonesia is relatively agile in treaty ratification; its angle is global commons and applies a self-restraining strategy with the Association of South East Asian Nations while also leaning more towards aspirational bonding. Thailand is neither cautious nor agile in speed, its angle is global commons, and its strategy is aspirational bonding. Singapore is cautious in speed, its angle is individual citizens' interests, and its strategy is aspirational bonding. The variety in speed, angle, and strategy in multilateral treaty adaptation in the region raises the question of whether parties can reach a multilateral agreement.

The multilateral treaties analyzed by Inoguchi and Le and the survey data they present show that, at least in the Sinic East, citizens believe in the national capacity to deal with military conflicts and are apprehensive of external interferences. Yet evidence shows that even if there should be military conflict, it should not be excessive and bilateral solutions should be the primary focus to maintain peace. China's multilateral treaty participation characteristics, speed, centralized policy direction, commitment to global commons, and aspirational bonding indicate it is moving toward more multilateral treaty participation. Inoguchi and Le suggest that economic growth is closely tied to multilateral treaty participation. As states become more financially secure and integrated into the global system, they are incentivized to join or form multilateral treaties. Thus, in the context of the South China Sea, we can expect

stability through diplomatic efforts as long as economic integration prevails.

This impressive, erudite volume, its novel framework, and methodology represent a new frontier for future empirical work on global cooperation. Whether one addresses pandemics, climate change, security, technological competition, cyber threats, or AI, no study of regional and global multilateral cooperation can afford to neglect this major building block in our understanding of international cooperation.