

weaknesses. In the process, we learn a lot. The project succeeds in strengthening claims about NGO influence on specific negotiations. It fares less well in being able to make structured, focused comparisons about NGO influence across cases. The authors ultimately conclude that rather than examining overall negotiations, analysts should focus on specific issues within a negotiation. Doing so may make it even more difficult to compare across cases but should lead to more relevant conclusions about the effectiveness of environmental NGOs operating in the new world of global environmental governance.

Dai, Xinyan. 2007. *International Institutions and National Policies*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

*Reviewed by Amanda Kirk*  
*University of Massachusetts Amherst*

The perennial questions asked by students of multilateralism are whether international institutions matter, and, if so, how and why do they matter? Xinyan Dai is not making a novel enquiry in her book *International Institutions and National Policies*, but she is providing a fresh and compelling answer. The usual way of addressing these questions is to focus on the “carrot and stick” of incentives for compliance and sanctions for non-compliance, with a regime’s effectiveness determined by how well these mechanisms achieve measurable indicators of progress toward the institution’s aims (e.g., a reduction in the concentration of a given pollutant or an increase in the numbers of an endangered species), controlling for factors outside the regime (e.g., the closure of a polluting industry due to exogenous economic forces). Another approach is to examine whether domestic legislation that correlates with the directives of the regime has been passed. Again, it is necessary to look for factors coincidental to the regime that could have influenced such legislation. It is here that Dai enters the fray. Her central argument is that international institutions can indirectly empower domestic constituencies to monitor and enforce compliance, a more subtle way of influencing national policies than the traditional carrots and sticks.

Dai parses her study into three distinct channels of enquiry, or puzzles, as she terms them. The first concerns the monitoring of states’ compliance with (as distinct from implementation of) treaties. Do international institutions monitor compliance, she asks, and, if so, how do they do it? The second puzzle follows from a negative answer to the first: if international institutions lack the ability to monitor and enforce compliance, what compels states’ compliance? The third and final question that Dai poses is driven by the second: how do weak international institutions influence states’ compliance?

Her approach to the first question involves describing the incentive structures built into various financial, trade, security, human rights and environmental regimes for compliance monitoring. States are self-interested actors and they can often employ domestic stakeholders to monitor compliance for them when

it suits them. It all depends on their relationship to the victim constituencies. These constituencies, which Dai refers to as “victims of noncompliance,” can perform the compliance monitoring that the institution is unable and the state is unwilling to undertake. She describes four distinct scenarios for the monitoring of regime compliance. In the first, the treaty organization itself has the resources and authority to monitor compliance, a scenario associated with only a few agreements such as the International Monetary Fund and the Non-Proliferation Treaty. In the second, the state and the victims have a shared interest in monitoring compliance, as exemplified by the World Trade Organization. The third scenario involves monitoring by victims with the assistance of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) where there is no alignment of interest between states and victims, such as one might find in human rights conventions. The final scenario is associated with environmental agreements, and here it is NGOs who provide sometimes unsystematic monitoring of compliance, where states lack interest and victims lack ability to do so. Dai’s use of different types of regimes here strengthens her argument by broadening its scope. It is hard to fault her well-researched and carefully analyzed conclusion that monitoring arrangements depend upon the availability of these victims to serve as low-cost monitors, and upon the interest alignment between the victims and their states. One possible problem here is that the scenario of an interest alignment between victim constituencies and states is used as both a prerequisite and an outcome of compliance. But this quibble is a molehill next to a mountain of good scholarship.

The resolution of the second question involves formalizing the findings of the first answer into a game-theoretic model that expresses national compliance as a reflection of the political leverage and monitoring abilities of domestic constituencies. These characteristics vary from constituency to constituency and from country to country, and Dai uses the 1985 Sulphur Protocol to the Long-Range Transboundary Air Pollution (LRTAP) Convention as an example of how countries with better-informed constituencies that have more domestic political clout achieved greater compliance. Her analysis here takes into account the fact that there will be competing constituencies at the national level, some of which may be harmed rather than helped by compliance.

Putting aside formal modeling and moving more toward constructivism’s theoretical territory, Dai tackles the third puzzle by demonstrating that the existence of international institutions, even weak ones, changes states’ perceptions of their interests by a normative effect that increases the power of domestic pro-compliance constituencies, and by a practical effect that increases their access to information, thus altering the domestic strategic landscape. This effect of increasing the political leverage of domestic constituencies gives power to international institutions otherwise perceived as weak. The examples that Dai uses to illustrate this conclusion include the LRTAP Convention and the Helsinki Final Act from the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe.

One advantage of Dai’s analytical approach is the way she conscientiously

seeks to avoid the usual pitfalls of rational choice theory. Her model assumes the instrumental rationality of actors without associating their motivation exclusively with material gain. This approach broadens her argument to encompass a constructivist perspective on normative influences on actors' behavior. She relaxes the unitary actor assumption about states to develop her theories about the important influence of nonstate actors.

Another benefit of Dai's book to scholars of international relations is the spotlight she turns on nonstate actors, which is uncommon, by her own account, in previous rationalist literature. The role of nonstate actors in regime formation is well-trodden scholarly ground outside of neoliberal institutionalism, but Dai's angle on the boost that they get from the mere existence of international institutions, and how this alters the strategic environment in favor of compliance, is an important piece of the puzzle masterfully put in place.

Hamblin, Joseph Darwin. 2008. *Poison in the Well: Radioactive Waste in the Oceans at the Dawn of the Nuclear Age*. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press.

*Reviewed by Priya Kurian*  
*The University of Waikato*

The story of the development and spread of nuclear weapons and nuclear energy over the last 60 years is not a pretty one. Just as ugly is the issue of disposing of radioactive nuclear waste, for which there is still no satisfactory solution. Even today, discharge of liquid radioactive waste into the sea continues in a number of places, including from Britain's notorious Sellafield plant. Britain's victory in ensuring legally sanctioned sea discharge in the face of a vigorous environmental movement from the 1960s is part of the fascinating story that Hamblin charts in his book.

Hamblin offers a study of the competing interests of science, politics, diplomacy, and the too-often cynical world of policy-making surrounding the nuclear industry after World War II in Britain and the United States. As Hamblin notes, the former Soviet Union's routine violation of international norms and agreements on marine pollution by large-scale dumping of radioactive waste has been public knowledge at least since the early 1990s when it was officially acknowledged by the Yeltsin administration. But while Western democracies deemed communist states to be inherently, indeed pathologically, anti-environment, what is not common knowledge is that democratic nuclear powers, led by the United States and the United Kingdom, routinely dumped nuclear waste into the sea for decades. Hamblin paints a detailed picture of the struggles for authority between groups of scientists, between institutions, and between governments in the United States and Europe, against the backdrop of the Cold War and the nascent environmental movement.

The book explores four central themes emblematic of these struggles for authority between competing groups: the "power of threshold values in setting