

According to the mainstream Iranian narrative, Russia's most primary goal in Iran was its imperialistic ambitions. A strong and stable government in Iran would oppose Russian interventions, the manipulation of its internal affairs and the annexation of its territories in Central Asia and the Caucasus by Moscow. Elsewhere the author argues that "...Russian officials could hardly rely on their role at the court alone to achieve their political goals and were increasingly drawn into the local politics of Qajar Iran..." (p. 33). In the upcoming pages he states: "...the Russian military in many situations preferred to seek the cooperation of the nomads rather than to work with local Iranian officials (p. 215). These arguments are problematic and contradictory. Involvement in Iran's internal politics means dealing and interacting with Iranian tribes and commercial agents. As the author himself describes earlier in the volume, these two groups were somehow rivals to the central government's author-

ity and so, these statements are in contradiction with the author's arguments on Russia's primary goal in Iran.

Another key and critical element that should have been analyzed in the book is the role of religious leaders. The role of religious figures was much more important than that of tribes or merchants. But it has been neglected in the research. Maybe their involvement is the main reason for the order (as claimed by the author) in such a so-called anarchical state (p. 214).

Despite some defects, the book is worth reading. It provides a new perspective on Russian entanglement in Iran. There is a huge literature about the great power's politics in Iran during the era, but this book presents an analysis that is close to the Russian narrative. It is recommended to all of those who are interested in Russia's imperial objectives in Iran and beyond.

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## Multilateralism in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century: Europe's Quest for Effectiveness

*Edited by* Caroline Bouchard, John Peterson *and* Nathalie Tocci  
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International politics in the 21<sup>st</sup> century is distinctive in several ways. First, new regional powers have emerged. In addition, certain international organizations, NGOs or non-state actors, have become prominent and unignorable actors in world politics. Furthermore, issues such as security, trade, migration and climate all have become more interconnected. In this respect, multilateral-



ism, which is one of the most contested concepts in international relations (IR), has gained more importance in this century, due to increased interest in solving issues more peacefully with the participation of diversified actors. As one of the prominent actors, the European Union (EU) also has come to the fore with its advocacy of multilateralism in the current age. Thus, Bouchard *et al.* thor-

oroughly research the evolution of multilateralism and examine whether it is implemented effectively by the EU in this edited volume, *Multilateralism in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century: Europe's Quest for Effectiveness*.

This edited book is based on the findings of a three-year, EU-funded research program, MERCURY (Multilateralism and the EU in the Contemporary Global Order). Throughout the volume, the authors try to find answers to the question of whether the EU delivers on its commitment to utilize effective multilateralism. As stated in the Introduction, the fundamental aims of the volume are twofold: firstly, to develop a new definition of multilateralism, and secondly, to specify the EU's contribution to developing effective multilateralism (p. 3).

The volume consists of four parts and fourteen chapters, including an introduction and conclusion. The first part, "Mapping Modes of Multilateralism," which consists of four chapters, is the backbone of the volume. These background chapters provide historic information about the evolution of the concept of multilateralism in IR in general, and in the EU context specifically. By highlighting the varieties of conceptualizations of multilateralism in the literature, the denominator of multilateralism is determined as follows: voluntary and institutionalized cooperation and rules that apply equally to all. The second part, "Multilateralism in EU Policies," explores the relationship between the EU's institutional structure and policy externalizations in order to understand how the EU contributes to multilateral order. In other words, if the EU engages in multilateral actions within a policy area, it is more successful in pursuing its external relations in that policy area multilaterally. The third part, "Multilateralism in Practice: Key Regions and

Partners," is one of the experimental sections of the volume. Part three tests the EU's relations with strategic partners in the southern and eastern neighbourhoods, as well as in the African and Asian regions, within the scope of different policy realms. The last part of the book, consisting of three chapters, "The European Union in Multilateral Fora," scrutinizes the EU's role in institutionalized multilateral contexts, such as the UN, and in non-institutionalized multilateral contexts, such as the G20 and the Middle-East Quartet.

The overall conclusions of the volume indicate some valuable findings regarding the EU's multilateralism and its effectiveness. First of all, although there is no explicit reference to multilateralism in EU texts, the EU has the responsibility to work for a more peaceful and cooperative way to engage in international affairs. Nevertheless, there is a lack of a single and shared understanding of multilateralism, both among EU institutions and among member states, though there is a strong commitment to multilateralism within the EU. On the other hand, there is no clear set of criteria for effectiveness constituted by the EU. Another finding is that the EU's engagement in multilateralism changes among policy areas and in different geographic regions. For example, as argued in Chapter 7, bilateralism is the dominant type of cooperation in the EU's energy and migration policies in the Mediterranean area, while in the development policy of the EU, the case of Africa reveals that there are no clear common principles, and member states implement their own policies. Although all of these gaps and discrepancies seem to be a challenge to the effectiveness of multilateralism, this overall conclusion is accepted as normal in IR. As stated in the volume, "The effective multilateralism advocated by the EU is principles-based and is considered an essential tool for

delivering on Europe's responsibility to work for a more peaceful, cooperative international order" (p. 286).

One of the strengths of the volume is that it offers a theoretically and methodologically rich contribution to the literature. Another fundamental strength is that all of the contributors to the volume try to answer the same questions raised in introduction. Each contributor elaborates on the conceptualization of multilateralism and the uniquely European version of it, as well as its actual effectiveness and the EU's promotion of effective multilateralism. These points of convergence make the volume holistic and give readers the opportunity to get an in-depth look at the subject. The volume is valuable insofar as it also opens new questions for further studies.

For instance, "how is multilateralism preferable to other forms of cooperation, or how is multilateralism understood by other major powers, including the BRICS countries and the US?" (p. 300). Furthermore, unlike books covering multilateralism in traditional policy areas like security, this volume also explores multilateralism in non-traditional policy areas including conflict resolution, migration, and climate change. This is another asset of the volume.

To conclude, this volume sheds new light on multilateralism debates from the EU perspective by innovatively arguing analyzing various conceptualizations and their implementations by the EU. It is strongly recommended to academics and students of IR in general, and European studies, in particular.

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## Identities and Foreign Policies in Russia, Ukraine and Belarus: The Other Europes

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By Stephen White and Valentina Feklyunina

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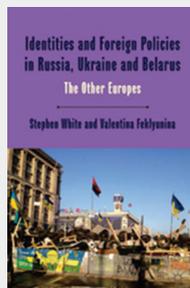
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The newly independent countries across the post-Soviet space faced a set of ontological ambiguities following the implosion of the Soviet Union. In addition, the ethnic, ideological and religious mosaic of the post-Soviet space became more relevant to the political dynamics in the region.

The UK Economic and Social Research Council's research program on 'One Europe or Several?' that began in 2006 was a timely effort and contribution. With the collective



effort of Roy Allison, Margot Light and Stephen White, the project produced its first work in 2006. In *Putin's Russia and the Enlarged Europe*, the authors focused on the attitude of Russia toward the EU and NATO under Putin's second presidential term. To address another part of this very broad research agenda,

Stephen White and Valentina Feklyunina analyze attitudes towards Europe taken by three of the more important post-Soviet countries in *Identities and Foreign Policies in Russia, Ukraine and Belarus*. This review article eval-