

Briefly Noted

Socializing States: Promoting Human Rights Through International Law, Ryan Goodman and Derek Jinks (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013), 256 pp., \$26 paper.

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This is an ambitious work of social science and international affairs that seeks both to explain the success of the international human rights regime as well as provide normative instruction for its improvement. Cross-pollinating from work in international law and international relations, the authors provide a powerful rejoinder to instrumental critiques of human rights by showing not only that human rights treaties and norms “matter” but that activists and lawyers can actively shape better outcomes through institutional design.

Socializing States’ centerpiece is a theory of “acculturation” that overcomes the typical boundary between description and normative advocacy to demonstrate how international norms related to human rights are generated and sustained. Explanations of how states can be influenced to comply with human rights usually fall into either the “material inducements” (carrot and stick) or “persuasion” (argument and deliberation) category. But Goodman and Jinks argue that there is an important third mechanism—socialization—that explains why states behave as they do.

What diplomats and statesmen still call the “international community,” Goodman

and Jinks explain as the “isomorphic” tendencies of states to mimic, copy, and follow a “global script” (p. 75). One prominent example is the proliferation of constitutions and constitutional courts over the previous quarter-century, but evidence abounds in such policy areas as arms control, suffrage, and methods of combat. In the second section of the book, the authors helpfully show how their theory differs from the inducement and persuasion paradigms when designing and implementing enforceable multilateral agreements for human rights. In the third section, they address whether acculturation takes effect on the ground instead of becoming just “shallow” commitments.

Socializing States is a formidable account that sets a clear agenda for future studies of human rights. By fruitfully bringing together international relations and international law, the authors have provided a double service: one to the academy, by using social science to illuminate morally pertinent questions about the world in which we live; and one to the object of their study, by describing how human rights can continue to play a constructive role in international affairs.

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