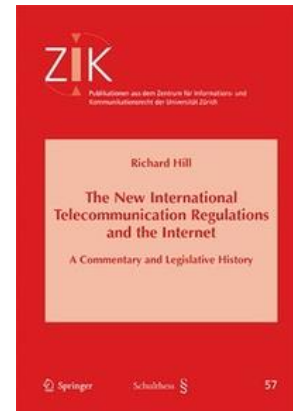Richard Hill, **The New International Telecommunication Regulations and the Internet: A Commentary and Legislative History**, New York, NY: Springer, 2014, 190 pp., $109.00 (hardcover).

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In December 2012, news of a UN effort to take control of the Internet spread like wildfire around the world. The story related to the World Conference on International Telecommunications (WCIT), alleging an attempt by authoritarian and nondemocratic governments to assert greater control over digital information flows through the International Telecommunication Union's (ITU) International Telecommunication Regulation Treaty. Coverage was extraordinarily one-sided, reflecting a lack of understanding over the history of regulating international information flows, as well as the stakes and agendas involved while often projecting a naive myth of the undeniable value of free flows of information.

Richard Hill's *The New International Telecommunication Regulations and the Internet: A Commentary and Legislative History* (2014) offers a detailed account of the history of the ITU's role in (a) regulating and managing international information exchange, (b) the various issues at play at the WCIT, and (c) analysis of each of the major stakeholder's positions at the negotiating table. While the book "is primarily intended for practitioners" (p. xii), its insider account—Hill has held various senior staff positions at the ITU and led the secretariat's policy team at the WCIT—provides an impressively meticulous report with stark relevance to any researcher interested in the state and future of international and Internet governance, cyber security, privacy, and freedom of expression online. Rarely are researchers able to access such clear and comprehensive details of closed-door diplomacy, particularly on a topic of such significance.

The book brings some clarity to a truly muddled and highly contentious issue: Internet governance. For starters, Hill reminds us that governments, universally, and throughout their histories, have regulated and managed international information flows. The vast majority of these regulations have little to do with free speech; rather, they aim to facilitate a highly functional system of international communication and a fair distribution of the revenue that results.

Placing negotiations about Internet governance in the broader context of the ITU's role in coordinating international information flows allows for an important historical and comparative perspective. For example, Hill points out that the core components of the Internet's operation are "centrally controlled" by Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers (ICANN) and Internet Assigned Numbers Authority (IANA), while no such control mechanism exists for telephone numbers that are "designated and administered at the national level" (p. 30). In the specific case of telephone numbers, allowing for control at the national level actually enables innovation and experimentation, with

regulators able to adjust how numbers are constituted and distributed based on local needs and capacities.

Reading through how each delegation grappled with the challenges of managing global information flows, one can easily draw a line from the New World Information Communication Order (NWICO) movement and UNESCO debates through the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) and directly to the status quo (see MacBride, 1980/2004; Mansell & Nordenstreng, 2007). Many of the same debates continue to dominate the discussion, including what rights do governments have to control information flows coming into their sovereign territory; what limits are there on a citizen's right to free expression and access to information; and how do the current structures governing transnational information exchange favor the established, dominant actors in Western countries? These questions have been central to the subfield of international communication and are addressed in different ways by Boyd-Barrett (2006), Deibert (1997), Hills (2007), Mattelart (2003), Meuller (2010), Nordenstreng and Schiller (1979), Price (2002), Thussu (2009), Pool (1990), D. Schiller (2006), H. Schiller (1976), and others. Yet, if the WCIT's negotiations are any indication, differences in opinion over the regulation of international information flows has only increased with the advent and spread of Internet-enabled communication devices.

The book's duteous archive of the back and forth between member states in the lead-up to and during the WCIT negotiations is a helpful reminder of how technocratic decision making can also be politically contentious. The careful examination of the various economic and political controversies connecting to the slightest of changes in regulations highlights how inherently political the design principles of technology can be. In particular, highlighting the long list of problems that many developing countries cite regarding the current regulatory framework, including "loss of revenue, excessively high prices, lack of infrastructure, insufficient competition and transparency, lack of consensual mechanisms for dispute resolution and service provision, fraud, and low levels of access to infrastructure and services" (p. 143), reminds Western scholars that these debates are not simply about freedom of expression and information control. The detailed account of the WCIT debates also provides a compelling case study in understanding the process of negotiating international treaties, the different strategies involved, and how variables such as transparency and inclusion can shape the outcome of debates.

At times, Hill seems preoccupied with the question of whether or not the WCIT should be considered a success or failure. While this is a natural point of focus, given the stakes involved, such a framing may take away from the broader issues and actors involved, as well as from the different ways in which the WCIT negotiations shaped other policy-making fora and decision-making bodies. This is to say, even if the WCIT failed to achieve the desired level of consensus, by outlining where differences remain among stakeholders, the negotiations may themselves spark important policy changes in other venues. While it is too early to tell, the combination of the U.S. negotiation position in Dubai and the revelations of its robust surveillance operations have sparked a global movement to reconsider how the Internet is governed and what role (if any) the U.S. government should have in the process. Just five months after the WCIT, at the ITU's World Telecommunication Policy Forum, governments already seemed more willing to cooperate on highly contentious matters, including cyber security.

Hill also protests the conflation of human rights and freedom of expression issues with the technical and economic issues that is, historically, at the core of the ITU's mission. Noting that questions of rights are much more contentious and ill-suited for a body whose aim is to manage and coordinate international information exchanges, the example of the WCIT negotiations provides compelling evidence that the intentional introduction of such controversial issues can easily politicize and slow the negotiation process. At the same time, one must consider the clear and inevitable crossover between purely technical decisions and human rights norms. Anonymity online, for example, could be treated from a purely technical perspective but also from a human rights perspective. How policy makers handle such delicate matters without fully exploring them from both the technical and human rights perspectives remains to be seen.

While Hill alludes to the powerful role of the private sector, the text lacks a detailed discussion of the ways in which corporations shape ITU deliberations and agendas. One notable exception is when Hill highlights Google's clear stakes in supporting so-called Internet freedom (pp. 50–51). A broader assessment of the role of powerful corporate actors in shaping the ITU's work is an area ripe for further research. Particularly given the large number of non-state actors involved in and around the Dubai proceedings, as well as ITU's history of engaging the private sector, the book's primary focus on governments seems to tell only one part of the story.

The New International Telecommunication Regulations and the Internet offers researchers a rare opportunity to better understand how international negotiations surrounding contentious technological questions take place. Focusing on the ITU and its 2012 WCIT meeting, the monograph highlights the role of the world's oldest intergovernmental organization in managing the exchange of information between states. Debates about Internet governance typically focus on such powerful states as China and the United States, as well as on important nonstate actors, like ICANN and the Internet Society (ISOC). This detailed account of the ITU's history and role in navigating the controversial minefield of coordinating international information flows is a welcome addition to the body of empirical work on international communication and, specifically, Internet governance. In particular, by highlighting the deeply political nature of questions of technological design, the geopolitical and economic interests at stake, and the unique challenges faced when confronted with a treaty-making process that includes thousands of stakeholders, Hill pushes scholars and practitioners alike to move past decade-old debates and focus on improving the system for coordinating information flows in a more equitable and sustainable fashion.

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