

Laudation

For the Hedley Bull Prize in International Relations 2026

The jury has this year chosen to award **Inken von Borzyskowski** and **Felicity Vabulas** the **Hedley Bull Prize in International Relations 2026**. The jury reported the following:

In this landmark study, the authors address a fundamental yet surprisingly understudied question in International Relations: why states leave international organizations. While international organizations have long occupied a central place in the study of global governance and international cooperation, the phenomenon of exit has received comparatively little systematic attention. Von Borzyskowski and Vabulas break new ground by showing that exit is not simply a symptom of rising populism, anti-globalization sentiment, or the rejection of multilateralism.

Rather, they demonstrate that withdrawal and suspension are recurring features of international politics and often function as strategic tools through which states and international organizations pursue institutional and political change.

The book develops an innovative theoretical framework that integrates voluntary withdrawal and involuntary suspension within a common analytical perspective and a solid methodology. Drawing on an original dataset, that covers 198 states, 534 international organizations, and every recorded withdrawal and suspension since 1913, the authors combine large-N quantitative analysis with archival research, case studies, and interviews.

This ambitious multi-method design grounded in triangulated primary data sources allows them to test their arguments rigorously while generating important, and frequently counterintuitive, findings.

A few of these findings that the study brings to the fore are that exits from international organizations have not increased relative to the expansion of international cooperation, that many states eventually return to organizations they have left, and that while withdrawal carries reputational costs, its material consequences are often more limited than commonly assumed.

These findings significantly deepen our understanding of institutional contestation, bargaining, and change in world politics. By combining theoretical innovation, methodological sophistication, extensive original data collection, and exceptional analytical rigor, *Exit from International Organizations* promises to make an outstanding contribution to the study of international organizations and contemporary global governance. It is a highly deserving recipient of the Hedley Bull Prize in International Relations 2026.

Amy Verdun

On behalf of the Hedley Bull Prize Jury
European Consortium for Political Research

