BOOK REVIEWS

Fragile States, by Lohar Brock, Hans-Henrik Holm, Georg Sørensen & Michael Stohl. Polity Press: Cambridge, UK, 2012. 200 pp. ISBN-13: 978-0745649429

In an era when good governance features prominently on the global development agenda, there seems to be a corollary spotlight on state fragility. In this book – a quick read that covers much ground – the authors wade into the conceptual waters of state fragility with the following aims: (i) sketching more clearly its conceptual parameters, including its core characteristics; (ii) dissecting its connection to violent conflict; (iii) analyzing the role that international society has played in relation to fragile statehood; and (iv) laying out two proposals for tackling its intractability. These analyses are conducted through the prism of three case studies: The Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), Afghanistan, and Haiti.

Fragile states are sometimes called "weak states" or "failed states"; at times, the terms are used interchangeably, and at other times, distinctions are made. From the onset, the authors explicitly resist the urge to extensively engage the debate surrounding terms such as 'fragile', 'weak', 'failed', 'failing', 'quasi.' Instead, they aver that "the question of labelling is not crucial here; as long as we accept that summarizing concepts are needed, who wins the terminological beauty contest is less important" (p. 15). Their exhaustive exploration of the characteristics that actually constitute fragile statehood does perhaps sufficiently buffer them from criticism for their aversion to terminological debate. However, it ought to be briefly noted that nomenclatural imprecision may not necessarily present major heuristic challenges, but ontologically, the wide ranging possibilities of 'fragile/ weak/ failed' may be a catch-all phrase that merely complicates efforts to tackle issues that do require actual differentiation.

However, one of the book's strengths is its elucidation of the three core characteristics of fragile statehood, which center on the realms of government, economy, and nationhood. The first of these characteristics refer to the inefficiency and corruption of institutional and administrative structures whereby the legitimacy of the state is almost non-existent: "there are no effective mechanisms for holding leaders accountable to the populations" (p. 16). The second characteristic is constituted by a deficient and fragmented economy whereby consistent provision of even rudimentary services for the populace is often all but impossible: "fragile states lack coherent national economies which are capable of sustaining a basic level of welfare for the population and of providing resources for running an effective state" (p. 16). The third characteristic concerns nationhood, whereby any concretized coalescence around the notion of an imagined national community is non-existent: "in these states, ethnic identities connected to tribal, religious and similar characteristics continue to dominate over the national identity. The national community of sentiment has not grown strong, partly because the state has not been able to create effective citizenship" (p. 17).

Brock et al. adroitly compare state formation in Europe circa 1648 and onward to today's states. The comparison explains how imposition of a violent colonialism contributed significantly to discontinuities, clientalism, and nepotism that are germane to fragile states, while simultaneously acknowledging that "state formation proceeds in dissimilar ways and moves in different directions" (p. 6). The authors aver that "fragile states owe their continued existence to the 'world culture' of the sovereign nation-state which emerged with decolonization and triumphed with

the break-up of the 'Socialist World System'" (p. 39). However, it is at this junction that they part ways with 'radical dependency theory.' They concur with its basic tenets regarding the role of external domination in facilitating the weakness of fragile states, but critique it for its omission of or lack of comprehensive attention to endogenous factors: "fragile states have emerged from a mixture of domestic and international conditions, both of which are fundamentally unlike anything experienced by the successful states in the West" (p. 10). This nuanced analysis, upon which I will elaborate below, is the core strength of this book.

That state fragility is a consequence of both endogenous and exogenous factors is a cornerstone of this book, and by deploying the DRC, Afghanistan and Haiti as three geographically disparate case studies, the authors are able to highlight these factors. They feature, *inter alia*: a long history of external domination, including colonialism and subsequent interventions; protracted violence; identity politics; self-seeking elites; and grossly mismanaged resources which become a "curse" rather than a source of widely distributed economic benefit.

Because violence is often such a staple of fragile states, Brock et al. expend considerable effort in deconstructing the connection between violence and state fragility: they "do not argue that there is a deterministic, law-like relationship between state fragility and violence" (p. 48); but acknowledge that "state fragility...is both a cause and a consequence of violence" (p. 47). Within the calculus of violent conflict, the authors do consider the role of resources, economics, and identities, but posit that these are 'enabling factors', that may prolong/fuel the conflict, rather than being the 'basic causes' of the conflict/violence; that is, these are all subordinate to the "political processes that generate and perpetuate violent conflict" (p. 52). While it is an arduous task to disentangle the political from the socio-economic, Brock et al. anchor their analysis within a structure/process perspective, which factors in the impacts of colonialism, the Cold War, neoliberal politics and economics, and the U.S.-led War on Terror (subsequent to the 9/11 attacks). In this context, it may be useful to consider a dynamical systems approach to studying state fragility, as a way of overcoming the urge to prioritize political factors over the socio-economic. Such an approach involves visual mapping of the complicated and multi-layered connections of myriad factors (For an application, see for instance Peter Coleman's 2011 work, *The Five Percent: Finding Solutions to Seemingly Impossible Conflicts.*)

Despite the authors' weighing of both internal and external factors to state fragility, they pivot to a critique of interventionism, arguing that "both domestic and international conditions make interventions problematic undertakings" (p. 97). They posit that the increasingly reified notions of sovereignty and non-intervention that were promulgated in the decolonizing era have been tested and/or sullied as a result of the botched affair in Somalia, the international paralysis over the Rwandan genocide, the delayed Bosnian intervention, the Iraq war and the most recent Libyan revolution. In fact, these suggest an incoherent global template for interventionism, despite the 2001-created agenda entitled 'Responsibility to Protect'. Brock et al. demonstrate how the hesitancy by nations of the West and the Global South is not unfounded, since the impacts of interventions (both military but especially development aid) in the three case studies – DRC, Afghanistan, and Haiti – have been mostly nullified by the fragility of those states and the endogenous conditions that constitute them.

The authors conclude that the aforementioned presents the global community with a significant dilemma between respecting national sovereignty and protecting citizens from "genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity" (p. 162). This dilemma is aggravated by the fact that the international community seems to lack the capacity to foster sustained stability

within fragile states. In the face of these conundrums, Brock et al. offer two proposals: (i) the need to "re-examine external conditions and forms of engagement that foster or support the mitigation of fragile statehood" and (ii) that the global community should "be ready to do more, and with much greater speed in emergency situations" (p. 165). A requisite component of the first proposal involves an overhaul of international development, whereby effective self-help is fostered and the more economically advanced economies revisit the disequilibrium of "trade relations, market access, investment rules, financial regulation, the rules and regulations of the international organizations, and 'transnational bads', such as smuggling, the drugs trade, the arms trade, [and] international terrorism" (p. 167).

These are indeed worthwhile recommendations, though more effort should have been expended on their elaboration. Nonetheless, this book represents a strong contribution toward widening our understanding of fragile states; and despite the far-ranging analysis of both endogenous and exogenous factors that shape state fragility, the authors are perhaps quite right when they insist that "fundamental social change must come from [within and] not from outsiders" (p. 136).

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Citizenship Education in Commonwealth Countries, by Tristan McCowan and Sonia Gomez. London, UK: Commonwealth Secretariat, 2012. 100 pp. ISBN-13 978-1849290715.

Citizenship Education in Commonwealth Countries analyzes the use of citizenship education as an educational intervention to promote respect and understanding in different Commonwealth countries. According to McCowan and Gomez, "given that half of the 2 billion people in the Commonwealth are under 25 years old, citizenship education, whether implicit or explicit, represents a window of opportunity to influence a world of active citizenship and peace for the next generation" (p. 25). With this in mind, *Citizenship Education in Commonwealth Countries* offers a complex look at citizenship education in a global era. The authors explore both what it means to be a citizen in a global society and how to create cosmopolitan citizens through education. Spanning the range of issues associated with citizenship education from theorizing citizenship to implementing interventions, McCowan and Gomez provide useful insights into innovative teaching strategies that foster respect and understanding in cosmopolitan citizens.

In the most traditional sense, citizenship "involves a relationship between the citizen and other citizens or the state, and involves concessions and privileges on both sides" (p. 14). Because citizenship education has often been framed by patriotic citizenship in a given nation-state, it has failed to address issues of international conflict. However, defining citizenship in a global era proves particularly complicated, as members of diverse ethnic and religious groups claim citizenship within the same national boundaries. In this context, the ideal cosmopolitan citizen emerges – not a national citizen focused on competing successfully in global markets, but a cosmopolitan global citizen who displays empathy through respect and understanding for diverse groups of people. Aiming to build cosmopolitan citizens through education, McCowan and Gomez employ Martha Nussbaum's three capacities: critical self-examination, world citizenship, and the narrative imagination.

Across different Commonwealth countries, citizenship education has been practiced in different ways and to varying degrees. McCowan and Gomez review those practices in case studies of