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BOOK REVIEWS

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Critical Interventions on Statebuilding

International Statebuilding: The Rise of Post-Liberal Governance by David Chandler. Abingdon: Routledge, 2010. Pp. 195 + x + bibliography + index. £22.99 (pbk). ISBN 978-0-415-42118-8.

Regulating Statehood: State Building and the Transformation of the Global Order by Shahar Hameiri. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010. Pp. 214 + xii + notes + bibliography + index. £57.70 (hbk). ISBN 978-0-230-25186-1.

The remarkable expansion in the practice of international statebuilding has generated a vast scholarly literature. Most of this work is of the ‘lessons learned’ variety: it asks why statebuilding interventions (SBIs) have failed to live up to their promises and proposes amendments. However, there is also a lively and growing critical literature which sees it as part of a ‘liberal peace project’ or an exercise in biopolitics. Two new books on the topic offer very different—and arguably more fundamental—critical analyses, and are indispensable contributions to this growing literature.

David Chandler’s *International Statebuilding* departs from the usual pattern of criticising the effects of SBIs, instead asking a more radical question: what is the problem to which statebuilding is thought to be the solution? What understanding of ‘weak’ or ‘failed’ states are we operating with that makes statebuilding appear as a possible, indeed necessary, response? Chandler argues that ‘autonomy appears to be the problem which requires management’. That is, people in target states are thought to lack the ‘capacity’ to make sound political choices by themselves; intervention is required to build institutions, civil society and so on, to enable people to use their ‘autonomy safely and unproblematically’ (2010, p. 3). Within this paradigm, sovereignty no longer impedes intervention but necessitates it, because it implies an autonomous political space in which people may make the wrong decisions without appropriate ‘capacity-building’ (p. 45). Statebuilding thus reconfigures sovereignty from a right of non-intervention, expressing the autonomous self-determination of a political community, into a variable of technical-administrative capacity to manage autonomy in a responsible fashion (ch. 3). Similarly, as Chandler shows in a devastating case study of European Union intervention in Bosnia,

democratisation processes in SBIs are not implemented to liberate people to make their own decisions, but to create constraints to govern the future exercise of agency and prevent the recurrence of conflict (ch. 5).

Chandler argues that this paradigm does not, contrary to most of the existing literature, suggest that statebuilding is ‘too liberal’—quite the reverse (ch. 2). This critique is common to both problem-solving and critical scholars: Roland Paris, for example, criticises SBIs as overly liberal when prioritising democratisation over institutionalisation; Oliver Richmond identifies statebuilding as part of the ‘liberal peace project’. But, Chandler argues, classical liberalism starts with the assumption that individual autonomy is a good thing. Liberals view democratisation and self-determination as unleashing freedom and autonomy, not as involving the creation of new institutional constraints on them. Chandler’s central challenge is thus that the idea at the heart of statebuilding—that autonomy needs managing—is actually a fundamentally illiberal one: it is a form of *post*-liberal governance. Because the ‘too liberal’ critique is so common in the literature, this challenge demands a response from most quarters and is thus sure to stimulate productive debate. Chandler’s attempts to read the post-liberal paradigm across other forms of intervention, particularly development economics and civil society-building, should also provoke arguments with specialists in those subfields, as he doubtless intended.

Indeed, there is plenty for critics to get their teeth into. Two problems stand out. The first is that, following Foucault, Chandler conceptualises post-liberal governance as essentially content-free and non-goal-driven; it is merely ‘a continual process of relationship management’ (p. 72). Consequently, he essentially ignores the specific *content* of SBIs. In what precise way is autonomy being governed? Who benefits and who loses? Chandler offers no answers. Critics will emphasise that SBIs typically erect state institutions on the basis of neoliberal economic ideology. They may have an illiberal starting point but, consistent with arguments about the ‘liberal peace project’, their end goal is to construct a neoliberal order populated by rational, utility-maximising individuals—*homo economicus*.

Second, and related to this, although Chandler will maintain that this project assumes autonomy must be governed, arguably *every* social order involves the (re)production and management of *specific forms* of individual agency. Chandler critiques institutionalist, constructivist, and other approaches that emphasise how agency is either shaped by institutional incentives or is socially, politically and economically produced and constrained (pp. 74–84). But this leaves him implicitly defending the view that full, unproblematic autonomy is an irreducible human attribute, present in the state of nature before the social contract—a view Chandler himself describes as ‘mythology’ (pp. 74, 92). This asocial conception of autonomy is a fundamentally *normative* one which emerged only with the social-material processes associated with capitalism (MacPherson 1962). Even then, this individualistic ethic did not take hold automatically: it had to be instilled through various mechanisms—the marketplace, education, etc. Liberal societies have thus always tried to govern populations by producing a certain

sort of autonomy while mythologising-rationalising it as pre-social. Post-liberal governance may be even more problematic than the liberal myth, but it is not necessarily best criticised by harking back to an ahistorical and asocial conception of human autonomy.

Shahar Hameiri's brilliant first book, *Regulating Statehood*, presents a rather more ruthless, forward-facing analysis of contemporary statebuilding, explicitly rejecting Chandler's 'nostalgia' for earlier forms of sovereign statehood (p. 209). Hameiri also eschews the usual attempt to evaluate SBIs in terms of whether they are successful in building states, arguing that this can only involve benchmarking outcomes against a fictional, ideal-typical view of what states should look like (ch. 1). Instead, he asks a far more pertinent question: what forms of statehood are contemporary SBIs actually producing? His compelling answer is: transnationalised, regulatory statehood. SBIs are conceptualised as 'multi-level regimes', operating to transform target states from within by establishing dominant 'regulatory' bodies within transnational spaces inside or near governing apparatuses, which then set the rules and goals for the rest of the state (ch. 3). These non-majoritarian institutions are thus insulated from their own societies, but heavily penetrated by international agencies and their neoliberal agendas. SBIs are thus not simply trying to 'build' states as we classically understand them, but to 'regulate statehood', that is, to fundamentally transform the nature of target states. This highly sophisticated analysis is borne out well in fascinating case studies on the Solomon Islands and Cambodia.

Hameiri explicitly concurs with Chandler on a number of core issues, underlining the 'anti-political' nature of SBIs, and emphasising that statebuilding does not express an 'all-powerful and disciplinary global liberalism', but the continued centrality of state-based forms of regulation (pp. 40, 33, 28). The differences between these authors, however, are more significant. In particular, Hameiri's treatment of SBIs is grounded in a coherent and powerful explanatory framework and strong, detailed case studies. Unlike Chandler, Hameiri contends that 'regulating statehood' is driven by substantive goals: the management of supposed security 'risks' thought to arise from maladministration in developing countries, and the installation of market-friendly governance (ch. 3). Crucially, rather than trying to criticise this by defending a romanticised, liberal notion of sovereign statehood, Hameiri emphasises that states always involve power relations and that the task, therefore, is to explore how power is being redistributed by SBIs. Drawing on state theory and political geography, he carefully identifies 'linkages between interveners and domestic social forces', and traces the 'social and political dynamics that shape the exercise of state power' (p. 33).

With this powerful intellectual framework, Hameiri is thus able to explain the determinate content of SBIs, and how and why new forms of statehood are being produced, in a way that Chandler is not. For example, he is able to identify the neoliberal content of many SBIs by tracing them not only to the immediate interests and identities of the forces manning these interventions, but also to the economic and social transformations in powerful Western states that have shifted power towards transnational capital, destroyed the power of

organised labour, and given rise to a post-ideological form of ‘risk management’ that drives contemporary SBIs. The emphasis on social conflict shaping SBIs also explains what actually emerges in practice, rather than merely lamenting the gap between plan and reality as most of the existing literature does. Externally inspired neoliberal projects may find some support among like-minded domestic forces, but more often they will be diverted by powerful, entrenched elite groups in ways that serve their interests. For instance, Cambodia’s ruling party has been able to channel statebuilding interventions in ways that insulate and indirectly service existing patronage networks while isolating and depoliticising opposition groups.

Ideally, more attention should have been paid to explaining differences in outcome. In contrast to Cambodia, elites in the Solomons, for instance, have been comparatively unable to resist external statebuilding efforts, which have profoundly disrupted their traditional patronage systems (though money politics has largely been substituted instead). Hameiri neglects to analyse this discrepancy, suggesting only belatedly that Cambodian elites were better able to dominate the key regulatory institution which set the terms for the SBI—in this case, a donor–government interface body—and thus twist it to their ends (p. 212). This merely raises the question of how they were able to do so.

Finally, Hameiri demonstrates that SBIs are not simply isolated operations in far-away lands, but have major relevance for governance in intervening states themselves, and for international order more generally. He shows, for instance, how the transformation of the Australian Federal Police from a small domestic police force into an agent of international statebuilding in the Solomons, Papua New Guinea and elsewhere has involved the reshaping of the Australian state (ch. 5). The apogee of this is the ongoing domestic operation in the Northern Territories designed to forcibly restructure aboriginal communities, which is explicitly described by the government as an ‘intervention’, illustrating the way in which the internal/external distinction is blurring in intervening as well as target societies. *Regulating Statehood* is a path-breaking, important and intellectually stimulating book, which ought to be issued quickly in paperback to facilitate a wide readership in the statebuilding subfield and beyond.

Both books under review admirably share a concern to go beyond merely describing the gap between the apparent intentions of SBIs and their practical results and then either criticising the plans for being ideologically misguided or proposing technocratic solutions. As Chandler rightly highlights, a more productive approach is to ask why such interventions have become so remarkably ubiquitous today—to ask, in other words, what these interventions tell us about political attitudes in intervening states rather than merely target states. Yet, as Hameiri’s work underscores, full understanding of the outcomes of SBIs must involve analysis of the forces that come together in any specific instance, both intervening and intervened upon, in a historically and sociologically informed fashion. This research agenda has begun to be advanced in a recent special issue of this

journal, on statebuilding versus 'state formation' (*Journal of Intervention and Statebuilding* 2010, 4(2)). Scholarship in this direction has the potential to profoundly enrich and deepen our understanding of the statebuilding phenomenon.

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The Method Makes the Manuscript: Key Texts in the Theoretical and Methodological Advancement of the Study of Civil War

The Logic of Violence in Civil War by Stathis N. Kalyvas. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006. Pp. 508 + xvii + appendix + bibliography + index. £16.99 (pbk). ISBN 978-0-521-67004-3.

Insurgent Collective Action and Civil War in El Salvador by Elisabeth J. Wood. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003. Pp. 257 + xvii + epilogue + appendix + notes + bibliography + index. £22.99 (pbk). ISBN 978-0-521-01050-4.

Inside Rebellion: The Politics of Insurgent Violence by Jeremy M. Weinstein. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007. Pp. 375 + xv + appendix + bibliography + index. £17.99 (pbk). ISBN 978-0-521-86077-2.

The last ten years have been an exciting and stimulating period for scholars focused upon the study of civil war. Publications have grown exponentially, academic communities have continually expanded and civil war scholars have assumed a position at the heart of methodological advancement within the social sciences. The three texts under review have been at the centre of these developments, becoming essential reads within the literature on violence and conflict. Undoubtedly each represents an ambitious and comprehensive project, constituting notable advancements to the field. Broadly speaking they each seek to develop our understanding of the variance in motivations, intensity and patterns of violence adopted by insurgent movements. Going beyond correlation analysis, each study represents a return to favor of case based work within conflict studies, combining a range of methodologies to present compelling accounts of the micro-foundations of violence.