Stefano Ruzza, Anja P. Jakobi, Charles Geisler (eds.), Non-State Challenges in a Re-Ordered World: The Jackals of Westphalia

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Reviewed by David Brenner
University of Surrey

The sudden rise and quick expansion of ISIS has shocked the international community. This is even more so as a US-backed coalition of regional powers has struggled to wrestle back large swathes of territory from the non-state armed group despite overwhelming air power. Ironically, the anti-ISIS coalition's most effective fighting force on the ground are the Kurdish Peshmerga forces, another non-state armed group, whose own aspirations to independent statehood poses an additional challenge to the Iraqi state. Despite this significant threat that non-state armed groups pose to international order, the sovereign state remains at the heart of enquiry in the discipline of International Relations (IR). To be sure, Security Studies have long highlighted the threats from non-state violent actors, including transnational terrorist groups and insurgencies. Students of globalisation also show how increasing transnational flows have empowered non-state actors more generally, including civil society groups and multinational business conglomerates, vis-à-vis the state. Yet, the most certain way to steer heated debate amongst IR scholars is to contest the primacy of the state in the international system.

The volume "Non-State Challenges in a Re-Ordered World: the Jackals of Westphalia" does exactly this and it does so in a convincing, constructive and engaging way. Edited by Stefano Ruzza, Anja Jaboki and Charles C. Geisler, the volume assesses how far non-state violent actors have eroded a Westphalian world of sovereign states. To achieve this, it draws on different theoretical approaches beyond orthodox IR theories. These including historical sociology, political economy and strategic studies. While some of its contributions are of a conceptual nature many are also backed by thorough empirical evidence, covering a wide array of case studies, including insurgency groups, criminal networks, businesses and private military contractors on multiple continents from Europe to Central America and Africa. Structured in three parts, the volume manages to thread this variety of perspectives and empirical contexts together in a commendable way. In doing so, it builds a compelling overarching argument that non-state challenges to the state's monopoly of violence invite state responses that do not simply enable the state to maintain or regain the upper hand in its tug of war with the non-state. Instead of re-establishing Westphalian sovereignty, state responses often rely on the co-optation of and cooperation with a variety of violent non-state actors. This process develops

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a momentum of its own and can ultimately lead to the creation of hybrid orders in which state and non-state orders become inextricably intertwined.

The volume's first part illustrates the different challenges that violent non-state actors pose to the state's monopoly of violence, for instance, when competing in the delivery of public goods, which in effect opens up new non-Westphalian spaces of contestation and complicity. While chapter three by Edgardo Buscaglia and chapter five by Spencer Schwartz and Charles C. Geisler show how insurgents, as well as multinational corporations, can exploit state fragility for their own gain, chapter two by Fabio Armao and chapter four by Vincenzo Ruggiero notably show how capitalism itself rests on a logic of competition with the state. These analyses shed important light on the structural causes of state fragility, which has often been missed in analyses that are centred on agential questions of leadership. The volume's second part analyses the ways in which state actors have sought to respond to these challenges. The chapters by Sarah Zuckerman Daly, Diane E. Davis and Guillermo Ruiz de Teresa and Peter Chalk investigate the variety of possible interactions that can emerge between state and non-state actors in such contexts, ranging from contestation to co-optation and even cooperation, on a conceptual and empirical level. Beyond evaluating the effectiveness of state responses, these contributions also foreshadow the third part of the volume. This last element draws out the implications of the developing assemblages between state and non-state actors for state-(re-) building in spaces of contested sovereignty. While Giampiero Giacomello's and Stefano Ruzza's close reading of Clausewitz in chapter twelve admirably debunks the popular myth that classical strategic theory has little to offer in non-Westphalian contexts, the authors are also to be commended on not falling into the trap of simply deploying bellicist scholarship on the European state formation in the contemporary context. Instead, the multiple contributions in this section critically caution against a simplistic deployment of the war-state formation nexus in the context of the 21st century. While Alexander Gheciu, Jose Miguel Cruz and Kimberly Marten describe certain degrees of resource and violence monopolisation by interacting state and non-state actors in cases ranging from Romania, Bulgaria, El Salvador, Guatemala and Afghanistan, their examples show that this does not necessarily lead to the strengthening of old, or the forming of new, cores of statehood. In fact, the emerging hybrid orders might well erode state government additionally.

In doing so, the edited volume contributes to the wider debate on the changing roles of the state (and non-state) in International Relations, with a good balance of theoretical and empirical debates. It also provides a much needed correction to what has sometimes become an overly optimistic understanding of hybridity in the peace and statebuilding literature. While the contributions already adapt a wide range of conceptual lenses, exploring the topic from a postcolonial point of view could have provided an additional beneficial angle on the core issues of the volume: Westphalianism. This is even more so as the editors and contributors explicitly acknowledge that a global Westphalian world of sovereign states has only ever existed in the imaginations of (western) International Relations scholarship. In addition to this analytical fallacy, a post-colonial perspective would also reveal the normative pitfalls of the 'Westphalian commonsense' (Grovogui 2002), which maintains that the state is, or at least should be, a force for good, while the non-state is inherently less legitimate. Indeed, postcolonial scholarship reminds us that colonial expansion and the consolidation of European-like statehood in most parts

of the Global South was foremost based on the violent restructuring of societies. The ripple effects of this can still be felt today as the source of most contemporary ethnonational non-state violence in post-colonial societies (Mamdani 1996). In other words, it is the colonial state of the past that remains one of the biggest challengers of the postcolonial state of the present. Linked to this is a methodological issue underlying most empirical scholarship on non-state armed groups. The perspectives of non-state actors are insufficiently captured as there is little direct engagement with them in the process of data gathering and knowledge creation. In many of the volume's examples this is understandable, not least with regards to legal, ethical and safety concerns. This notwithstanding, a postcolonial perspective can be helpful to uncover some of these hidden voices (or shed light on their silences) and ultimately contribute to our understanding of international relations.

That said, the above points are not so much a critique of the volume as they are a suggestion on how to move the research on contemporary (non-)state formation forward. In fact, they reflect a common cause with the editors and their contributors that there is much more scope and need to reflect on the current and future trajectory of global political order beyond the state. Their volume thus makes an excellent contribution to this debate and will be of great interest to scholars from across a variety of fields within International Studies.

References

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