

Brad K. Blitz and Maureen Lynch (eds.), *Statelessness and Citizenship. A Comparative Study on the Benefits of Nationality* (Cheltenham: Edward Elgar Publishing, 2011)

Viktoria Potapkina
University of Pompeu Fabra

Imagine being denied access to primary and secondary education. Imagine being unable to ever work legally, to own property or get married. Imagine having difficulties entering a hospital and getting treatment. Imagine it being impossible for you to open a bank account and having no chance of receiving a pension. Imagine being unable to lodge a complaint if robbed or raped, and furthermore, sometimes being the victim at the hands of the police. This is the harsh reality for more than 12 million people around the world who are stateless². Although prohibited under international instruments, statelessness continues to be a corrosive condition that affects almost every aspect of many people's lives. Caused by political restructuring, various forms of discrimination, technical failings such as conflicting laws, lack of documentation such as birth certificates, and/or the ceasing of statehood, statelessness is an important issue that affects and challenges some of the central aspects of international law and human rights discourse.

Statelessness and Citizenship edited by Brad K. Blitz and Maureen Lynch presents itself as an important addition to this topic. It embraces the topic of statelessness from a historical perspective and presents it on a very personal level, incorporating numerous individual accounts, as opposed to the majority of related works, which have treated the issue abstractly, as part of international human rights law. The authors of the book fill in a gap in literature with their work by exploring not only the issue of statelessness, but of the importance of having a nationality and in such a way having access to identification documents and their importance in the every day life. They question whether having a citizenship truly makes a difference and to what degree basic human rights are currently enjoyed by the formerly stateless people.

It is possible to divide the volume into three thematic sections, with Chapter One serving as an introduction to the topic and the book itself. What can be identified as the book's first section, composed of Chapter Two, is a "critical review of the development of international law and the establishment of human rights instruments to prevent and reduce statelessness, followed by an analysis of the gaps in the international legal framework relating to the protection of stateless people" (pp.20). The second section is formed of the volume's eight country case studies – Kenya, Slovenia, Sri Lanka, Ukraine, Bangladesh, Mauritania, Estonia and Kuwait

2 United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) estimates from 2009.

(and neighboring Gulf countries) – in Chapters Three through Ten respectively. The chapters in this section are largely based on semi-structured interviews conducted with formerly stateless people, with a small number of policy and human rights experts, and with representatives of social services organizations in the respective countries. The selection of the eight countries for the case studies was based on a “set of diverse illustrations of the sites where both domestic and geo-political considerations have shaped national policies regarding the granting of citizenship to non-citizens” (p.19). The book’s final section can be read as an evaluation of the benefits of citizenship. Chapter Eleven offers a summary, comparison and evaluation of the eight country cases, drawing parallels between them. Chapter Twelve, the Epilogue, however, offers concrete recommendations to combat the ill treatment of non-citizens, arbitrary citizenship deprivation and denial, and statelessness, so as to ensure that the basic human right to nationality and the associated social and economic rights are enjoyed by all.

It is the last chapter that distinguishes the book amongst others, making it not merely a volume outlining the hardships faced by the formerly stateless, but providing steps that must be taken to end the ongoing situation. In such a way the book effectively seizes being only a manual for students or researchers of the topic, and broadens the spectrum of potential readers to include professionals working in the field of human rights, both in governmental and non governmental sectors. Through case studies of countries taking steps to deal with the issues of statelessness the authors provide an example of what to (not) do when dealing with the problem, and uncover that sometimes the ‘success stories’ are not always successful in every aspect and have yet a number of issues to deal with. However, it is important to keep in mind that this book’s central focus is not on describing the pressing needs of the stateless and their daily struggles; its purpose is not to raise awareness. It sets as its goal to focus on nationality and the potential benefits of gaining it, as well as its problems. As all these are overlapping issues, the author’s rarely make a clear distinction between the two and on occasion the focus shifts between them, albeit unintentionally. The work is also entirely qualitative. It lacks statistics and their consequent analysis. Although the presented case studies are valuable as they are, it would be beneficial to incorporate a few tables or graphs to help the reader visualize the greater scope of the issues at hand.

The authors’ threefold solution is perhaps one of the book’s most outstanding merits. The authors do not merely point to a problem, they also suggest a way of solving it. It includes firstly, the improvement of documentation and an increase in public awareness; secondly, institutional reform; thirdly, the clarification of legal norms related to citizenship; and finally, the enforcement of legal norms. The goal and the central objective of these steps is to “transform public understanding so as to render politically unacceptable the abuse of non-citizens and arbitrary denial and deprivation of citizenship” (p. 211).

These steps are more than welcome in today's world as the legal action previously taken has continued to fall short of what is needed to fully implement the Universal Declaration of Human Right of 1948, which states that every human being is entitled to a nationality. Statelessness still leaves them, albeit to varying degrees, excluded. They are the people who must struggle everyday for their voices to be heard, for their rights to be granted. They are more often than not unable to claim the services that only states can provide. They, by definition, belong to no state at all, yet if they all belonged to one nation, it would be one as large as Greece. They are our world's growing population of stateless people with no citizenship rights. One must hope that the world hears more and more about them and that their struggles end with the receiving of formal citizenship in the near future. *Statelessness and Citizenship* truly is a book that takes us a step closer to a possible solution. It is an important, well written and memorable read for anyone concerned with current global problems.

Graeme R. Robertson, *The Politics of Protest in Hybrid Regimes: Managing Dissent in Post-Communist Russia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011)

Kawu Bala
Bauchi State Judiciary

Is it possible to call a regime that features political campaigns or the ritual of succession through election as democratic? Ever since the collapse of the Soviet Union the world is seeing arrangements that are between "liberal" and "authoritarian" systems. Whether or not election suffices in democracy the answers will be negative. When a political landscape is saturated by interest people will protest and there would be counter protest. These are the issues Graeme R. Robertson's *The Politics of Protest in Hybrid Regimes* purport to analyze in Russian politics.

Robertson is concerned with "hybrid regimes," and he presents a "field work" on Russia. He attempts to tackle the question of protest in Russia especially in recent memory. Will it be that elections are manipulated by elites just "to stay in office"? People have learned to declare their views openly since the end of the Cold War. To Robertson, "protest in the street" has been at least as important as elections in determining the fate of governments" (p. 1). Governments have been brought down and leaders made to change tactics and policies. There is politics behind protest and that is what the author wants his readers to accept.

This is the crux of Robertson's reflections in Russia under Putin. What justifies his assertion is his case study of repressive Russia even though it is seen speaking the