

EDITORS' FOREWORD

States have long been a central unit of analysis for political scientists and a focal point for policy making. But recent trends in world politics have affected our appreciation of the role of the state. What purposes do states serve for us today and what does this imply for “state building”? This issue of the *Journal* approaches state building as a multidimensional problem. One dimension is international, in which transitional or nascent governments work to assert their sovereignty within international society. Another is domestic, and concerns the development and extension of capable institutions that can govern within a given territory. There is no set sequence to these processes, as each state building project faces a unique array of international and domestic challenges.

This collection of articles attempts to inform and, at times, challenge the current thinking on the topic. We present a broad array of cases from different regions, different time periods, and with differing results. Cases include Afghanistan, Colombia, the Democratic Republic of Congo, India, Israel and Palestine among others.

Lisa Anderson's essay frames the issue by asking why states have emerged as a dominant form of human organization. She reveals how ethnic and religious communities often provide alternative forms of civic identity, but also how the transition from a state-based system to one more accommodating to such alternatives could prove costly and complicated. Joel Migdal also discusses the challenge to convincing citizens of the primacy of national identity over other forms of political or social organization. But in reviewing the history of older states, namely the US and Israel, he discovers that these problems are nothing new. While Anderson and Migdal explain why states have outpaced competing forms of organization, Rosemary Shinko

uses the example of Palestine to examine how international society may actively deny aspirations toward statehood.

Societal cleavages pose major challenges to the state building process. Samuel Issacharoff shows how constitutional reform may be used to protect group rights in deeply divided societies and argues that these strategies have important implications for a government's ability to withstand political shocks. He is skeptical about the resilience of the ethnic power-sharing model in Bosnia, but is more hopeful about the South African constitutional system because of its restrictions on majority rule. Similarly, Sumantra Bose claims that critical issues of representation and integration of disparate groups should be resolved in the earliest phases of the state building process. By examining the varied experiences of India, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka, Bose shows that incompetence in dealing with these problems early on will likely put the state on a path toward destabilizing conflict. Yet despite societal divisions, citizens may continue to identify strongly with their state. Herbert Weiss and Tatiana Carayannis use original research and survey data to show that citizens in the Democratic Republic of the Congo still consider themselves Congolese despite the complete collapse of state institutions and social services. The authors come to the counterintuitive conclusion that inter-communal violence does not necessarily signal the destruction of national cohesion.

Civil war presents another set of constraints. Two articles propose different strategies for constructing viable institutions in war-torn societies. On the one hand, Michael Shifter and Vinay Jawahar use the example of Alvaro Uribe's Colombia to suggest that securing the country is a prerequisite for a broader agenda of social and economic development goals. The authors acknowledge, however, that security gains have to be reinforced by progress in education, health, housing and employment to prevent backsliding. In contrast, using the example of Afghanistan, Jonathan Goodhand argues that security problems cannot be solved unless underlying market and political incentives for war are changed. In addition, only with international support can a "war economy" be transformed into one that supports peace.

States may have to be adapted to changing international circumstances. Julio Carranza Valdés and Juan Valdés Paz show how after the collapse of the Soviet Union, Cuba's leadership skillfully adapted economic institutions to interact more effectively with the world economy. They argue that international pressures and economic downturns have not destroyed Cuba's commitment to its social policy agenda.

These varied investigations clearly demonstrate that there is no single model for state building. Francis Fukuyama provides an innovative explanation of why public administration cannot be treated scientifically. Our interview with Lakhdar Brahimi reaffirms this point. Brahimi poignantly reminds us that most state building projects are faced with a common hazard: the most important decisions have to be made early on when little is known.

This issue finishes with a series of book review essays that explore a number of important themes, including democratization, state failure, multiculturalism, and rule of law. In addition, we provide an annotated list of “required reading” for those interested in deepening their knowledge.

Current US foreign policy is captivated by major state building efforts in Iraq and Afghanistan. European states and other regional powers are pursuing similar tasks in the Balkans, Africa, and the South Pacific. Theory on how to strengthen institutions and governance around the world has become more dynamic with each new crisis and as a result the United Nations and other international organizations are reconceptualizing their practices. As the editors, we hope that this collection will help sharpen perceptions in what will likely remain a key area of inquiry and policy making.

The Editors