country’s politics for much longer, and therefore will likely remain even after Mugabe is gone.

In addition to using political settlements to identify existing elite bargains and analyze crises in the country’s history (i.e., critical junctures) that portended a break from existing rules of the game, Bratton shows that new rules of the game have not been forthcoming. Instead, once established, the power politics equilibrium reproduced itself at all critical junctures—moment of conquest and creation of colonial government, period of settler rebellion, early independence, and after the 2008 crisis—as those in power relied on exclusive political settlements to defend their position.

One consequence of the absence of a usable history of inclusive elite settlements in Zimbabwe is that it undermined the power-sharing model as a viable path to political reform in the country. Bratton examines the 2008 power-sharing deal to illustrate this point. Negotiated in bad faith by Mugabe and ZANU-PF, the agreement allowed a discredited ruler “who had lost an election to stay in power” (p. 234). Worse still, according to Bratton, the power-sharing deal gave Mugabe and hardliners in the party the time to regroup and tighten their control, leading into the manipulated 2013 elections. As the author notes, during the government of national unity period, the civilian—military coalition was more skillful at playing the power politics game than the opposition. For its part, the opposition commendably opted not to pursue a militarized opposition to Mugabe, but regrettably failed to gain control of the institutions of coercion in the power-sharing government and then naively hoped that international pressure and constitutional reform would create an equal playing field. Since ZANU’s control of coercive institutions remained, while international pressure waned and constitutional reform sputtered, it is no wonder that Mugabe and ZANU-PF won the 2013 elections, extending authoritarian rule.

Despite Bratton’s important corrections to the way that authoritarian resilience in Zimbabwe has been explained to date, the book is less satisfying on some themes. First, while power politics has been introduced as the organizing framework of politics in the country, why power politics stuck and survived in Zimbabwe and not in other similar countries is not entirely clear. Second, Bratton’s account leaves somewhat undertheorized and unresolved the central question of the relationship between power politics and legitimacy. Yes, he is right that a continuum of political legitimacy fundamentally runs from coercion to persuasion. But once history, conditions, and elite interests conspire to create a world of coercion (power politics), what becomes of persuasion (legitimacy)? Is power politics alone enough to gain power and secure incumbency?

Bratton’s theoretical framework seems to suggest yes or, more generously, is silent on these questions. However, his nuanced discussion of Zimbabwe’s political history seems to imply that mastering coercion alone is not enough to secure incumbency. How else are we to interpret his contention that the settler colonial system “never gained full political legitimacy; ultimately, race-based minority rule proved unsustainable” (p. 34). Or, for that matter, how are we to understand why in the early postindependence period we see incumbents investing “in improving access to agriculture and social services for the bulk of the population, most of whom were small-scale ‘communal area’ farmers” (p. 57). Legitimacy is present in the narrative account of Zimbabwe’s political history but absent in the theoretical exposition of the power politics framework to the obfuscation of its limitations.

These limitations are also apparent in the decision of Mugabe and ZANU-PF to enter into a political settlement with Morgan Tsvangirai and the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC), having used intimidation, coercion, and violence in the 2008 elections. To explain this turn of events, I think we need to go beyond power politics and recognize that in domestic politics, even authoritarian rulers need a modicum of legitimacy. As Rousseau put it in The Social Contract (1994), “the stronger party is never strong enough to remain the master forever, unless he transforms his strength into right, and obedience into duty” (p. 48). So, while political power in 2008 was retained through violence, it was then immediately followed by a power-sharing agreement that, while negotiated in bad faith by Mugabe and ZANU-PF, nevertheless offered a path to legitimizing ill-begotten power.

These quarrels aside, Power Politics in Zimbabwe offers a refreshing and institutionally grounded account of authoritarian resilience. It is compelling, thoroughly researched, and immensely informative. The book will no doubt appeal to readers who found personalized accounts unsatisfying. As Bratton clearly shows in this book, Zimbabwe’s predicament cannot be attributed to the actions of a single individual, no matter how apparent that seems. Power Politics will also generate a great deal of discussion among Zimbabwe specialists as they confront the lessons and implications of Bratton’s provocative analysis.


— Tariq Thachil, Yale University

The study of social-service provision in low- and middle-income countries has appropriately focused on the capacity and motivations of states. Governments remain the dominant providers of basic services for citizens of the global South. Yet available evidence suggests that non-state service providers are playing an increasing role
in these regions. Despite their growing importance, the political causes and consequences of such provisioning have lacked systematic scholarly attention. This volume thus makes an extremely valuable contribution by placing the politics of non-state service provision front and center. Two leading scholars of non-state providers (NSPs) have assembled an impressive collection of essays, which cover broad conceptual and empirical terrain.

The organizing principle of these contributions is to focus on non-state actors who attempt to directly provide or indirectly facilitate access to basic welfare services. This inclusive framework incorporates a broad array of NSP types: corporate social responsibility wings of foreign oil companies in Azerbaijan and Kazakhstan (Chapter 3), faith-based organizations in Tanzania (Chapter 6), and informal brokers in India (Chapter 9), to name but a few. The authors also consider NSPs that have widely varying relations with the states in which they operate. Private firms in Argentina bid for contracts from the government to provide water to fee-paying consumers (Chapter 4), and nongovernmental organizations in Kenya (Chapter 5) often substitute for poor government services in health and education, while sectarian health-care providers in Lebanon (Chapter 7) deliver services financed by the public exchequer.

Such diversity can often undermine the coherence of an edited volume, but here it is a major asset. First, an inclusive conceptualization of NSP types is necessary for motivating research on an understudied topic. Second, by selecting individual contributors who have studied each of these varied NSPs through intensive fieldwork, the editors leverage the comparative advantage of edited volumes in offering both depth and breadth. Third, an inclusive framework provides opportunities for unexpected comparisons that prior studies of NSPs, which have focused on specific providers in isolation, are unable to make. For example, the literature on the welfare efforts of religious parties across Asia and Africa has rarely attempted to explore parallels with secular providers. Yet Chapters 5 (Jennifer Brass) and 6 (Michael Jennings) highlight how secular NGOs in Kenya and faith-based organizations in Tanzania are similarly inclusive, locally rooted providers that have largely salutary effects on local welfare provisioning.

The heterogeneity of organizational types examined in the volume does carry certain costs. For example, Anirudh Krishna’s work on informal brokers in India (Chapter 9) and Lauren MacLean’s analysis of informal social networks in Côte d’Ivoire and Ghana (Chapter 8) are two of the most compelling contributions in the entire volume. Yet both examine how non-state private actors (often individuals) enable citizens to access state services. Such mediation seems markedly distinct from organizations that directly deliver services themselves. Given that many, if not most, citizens in the global South draw on friends, families, and local power brokers for help in accessing government services, the inclusion of these intermediaries as non-state providers does raise concerns of conceptual stretching.

In addition, the variety of cases examined can sometimes hamper efforts to advance precise, falsifiable, theoretical claims about the political causes and consequences of NSPs. However, the editors smartly eschew such efforts, and instead use the cases to develop a theoretically motivated typology that identifies particular attributes of NSPs as especially worthy of future attention (Chapter 2). Specifically, Melani Cammett and MacLean emphasize the importance of organizational attributes over particular ideological orientations in determining the impact that NSPs have on three crucial outcomes: citizen access to welfare, accountability to beneficiaries, and state capacity. Specifically, they focus on whether NSPs are motivated by profit, have formalized procedures and locally rooted leadership, and are inclusive in those whom they deem eligible for their offerings.

Such inductive theorizing is the best way to leverage the volume’s rich empirical material. However, firmly linking any particular organizational attribute and outcome is difficult. For example, formal organizations with routinized and transparent procedures appear more likely than informal organizations to improve access to welfare. Yet Krishna and MacLean show how informal brokers and social networks play a crucial role in enabling poor citizens to access public services. Similarly, the emergence of multiple NSPs can weaken accountability pressures by complicating whom to hold responsible for service provisioning. Yet Alison Post carefully shows how the entry of private water providers in Argentina increased expectations regarding service quality, and thus actually elevated accountability pressures from dissatisfied consumers. Isolating the impact of NSPs on state capacity is perhaps the most difficult task, given that such effects are inevitably conditioned by prior state capacity.

Yet these challenges do not minimize the considerable contributions of this volume. Cammnett and MacLean are thoughtful editors who anticipate and acknowledge the difficulties of imposing theoretical parsimony on the complexities revealed by their contributors. Instead, they embrace this complexity in ways that yields tangible theoretical dividends. The clearest illustration of these payoffs is in the ways that the authors show how the political consequences of non-state social welfare are shaped by longer histories of state-based service provisioning. For example, Cammett’s chapter traces the historically limited role of the Lebanese state, and the concomitantly extensive role of NSPs, in providing welfare. Consequently, even as public financing of service provisioning increased, a large portion of these resources was funneled to entrenched and powerful NSPs, who remain responsible for much of the actual
delivery of services. Similarly, MacLean argues that variations in the ways in which colonial and postcolonial states in Ghana and Côte d’Ivoire mediated risks in service provisioning and agriculture importantly shaped the depth and breadth of provisioning furnished by non-state social networks.

Relatedly, the volume provides a nuanced perspective concerning how NSPs were affected by market reforms adopted by many low- and middle-income nations during the 1980s and 1990s. The authors avoid mechanical arguments that neoliberal reforms hollowed out state-based providers, automatically enabling NSPs to thrive. Instead, they illustrate how a range of political factors mediated the impact of reforms. Linda Cook’s chapter shows how the dense bureaucracies of Soviet health care resisted being privatized as part of a larger restructuring of the post-Soviet Russian economy. However, economic stagnation did force down the official pay of public health-care providers, incentivizing them to collect informal “private” payments from beneficiaries. By contrast, Brass’s chapter shows how reductions in state spending on health and education in Kenya during market reforms did lead to a growing role of NGOs. However, such growth occurred only after the Moi administration hostile to NGO activities gave way to the Kibaki presidency that saw these groups as political allies.

Overall, The Politics of Non-state Social Welfare makes a substantial contribution to the study of social provisioning in the global South. The volume would be a useful addition to undergraduate or graduate courses on the political economy of development, and individual chapters could be taught in courses on NGOs, religious politics, distributive politics, and political parties. Most importantly, the rich collection of essays succeeds in illustrating the vast potential for future work on an understudied and increasingly crucial topic.

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— Joshua Simon, King’s College London

“We believe,” the editors of this volume declare in their preface, “that in general, Latin America needs more state rather than less, and that Spain’s experience shows that without strong, stable, and efficient public institutions, peace, justice, and the possibility of plenty become unattainable.” In this way, Centeno and Ferraro clearly indicate the contemporary relevance of the methodologically diverse and geographically wide-ranging historical studies that follow, which together explore—more comprehensively than has ever been done before—why Spain struggled for so long to build strong, stable, and efficient public institutions, and why many countries in Latin America continue to suffer the ill effects of having much less state than they need. The editors also provide a useful framework for explaining the (under-)development of state capacity, defining four different dimensions of power that reinforce one another and that, when exerted in concert, allow the state to work its positive effects upon society. They begin with concepts of “territorial” and “economic” power drawn from the influential work of Charles Tilly, describing the capacity of a state to impose order, repulse attackers, extract resources, and promote economic development within its borders. To these two standard dimensions of state capacity the editors add a third and fourth: “infrastructural power,” which captures the state’s ability to “process information, build organizational structures, and maintain transportation and communication systems,” and which depends most critically on the creation of a professional bureaucracy insulated as far as possible from the corrosive influence of partisan politics; and “symbolic power,” the inherently nebulous but nonetheless crucial capacity of a state to be “taken for granted,” or viewed by both its functionaries and its subjects as both legitimate and inevitable. The most important contribution of the volume is to suggest that Spain and Latin America’s often-observed deficits of territorial and economic power reflect less well-studied shortfalls of infrastructural and symbolic power.

The individual chapters, all written by leading figures and many reporting original research unpublished elsewhere, are organized not according to the academic discipline or area specialty of their authors, but according to the dimension of state capacity that forms their focus. As a result, the reader is treated to truly interdisciplinary discussions of territorial, economic, infrastructural, and symbolic power, as each has functioned or failed to function throughout Spain and Latin America. A particular strength of the collection is its authors’ attention to cross-national variations within a region that is too often treated as homogenous. A broad survey by Frank Safford of nineteenth century state-building in five major Latin American states sets the stage, identifying Chile and Brazil as outliers that fortune favored with relative success in their efforts to consolidate control over territory after independence. Two chapters, by Jeffrey Needell and Joseph Love, examine imperial and republican Brazilian, respectively, in greater depth. Needell argues, convincingly, that monarchical government conveyed considerable advantages in the post-colonial conjuncture, allowing the Brazilian state to appease regional elites jealous of their autonomy and thus avoid or suppress the civil wars and secessions that ripped apart its republican neighbors. A fascinating chapter by Iván Jaksic illuminates Chilean exceptionalism by focusing on the contributions of a single figure: the Venezuelan polymath Andrés Bello, who spent the latter half of his life in Chile, overseeing the new nation’s educational systems and writing a Code