

perceptions of legitimacy could add an interesting perspective to Brenner's future research in this field (see Alicia De La Cour-Venning, "Revolutionary Law Abidance: Kachin Rebel Governance and the Adoption of IHL in Resistance to Myanmar State Violence," *International Criminal Law Review* 19 [5], 2019). Similarly, Andrew Ong's study on the internal dynamics of the political culture of the Wa rebellion could offer Brenner opportunities for thinking about whether, and under what circumstances, his focus on grassroots relations can be applied to other, perhaps more top-down, rebellions such as the Wa (see Andrew Ong, "Producing Intransigence: [Mis]Understanding the United Wa State Army in Myanmar," *Contemporary Southeast Asia* 40 [3], 2018).

Seeing as much of Brenner's argument developed from his "manifold everyday interactions" (p. 24), I wish we would have seen and heard more, both from the grassroots themselves and from his ethnographic journey. For example, the pronouncements on the opinions of the grassroots are often not underpinned with direct quotes, unwittingly tilting the favor and the focus on elites, whose voices seem to be included to a greater degree. This does not detract from Brenner's argument but simply means that I would have liked to hear more from the grassroots, in their own words. In a similar vein, more detail from his ethnographic journey would have been welcome. How did his choice of methods and his own positionality as a male researcher affect the type of data he was able to collect? How did it shape where he went and to whom he spoke? Did he mostly speak to men? What did this mean for the type of knowledge produced in this book? Brenner suggests that his methods forced him to "unlearn and relearn as much as learn" (p. 25), but he leaves us curious as to what this learning process entailed. I would have loved to see a more reflexive discussion on learning processes such as these to illuminate how his choice of methods, and his very being, ultimately informed the type of knowledge produced.

I also think that Brenner misses a productive opportunity to engage with feminist and gender studies. In making the case that we need to analyze conflict in the borderlands with a relational ontology, we need to take seriously the workings of gender. Recent studies on rebel behavior complicate the dynamics of social order in South and Southeast Asia. My own work (Jenny Hedström, "The Political Economy of the Kachin Revolutionary Household," *Pacific Review* 30 [4], 2016) has, for example, shown that the "rebel social contract" in Myanmar relies on a gendered division of labor in which women are pushed to provide the public goods that Brenner identifies as a critical element for maintaining grassroots support (p. 21). Moreover, Srila Roy's important study into the Maoist revolution in India troubles the suggestion that legitimacy among the Maoist comrades was crafted through everyday social interactions between the leaders

and the movement (Srila Roy, *Remembering Revolution: Gender, Violence and Subjectivity in India's Naxalbari Movement*, 2012); instead, Roy shows how the struggle was legitimated through everyday gendered violence that cemented social relations and provided a *raison d'être* for the conflict. In other words, it is not that Brenner is wrong to emphasize the relationship between the grassroots and the elites, but rather that the rebel social contract is infused with gendered relations of power and violence. Engagement with this body of literature would have strengthened Brenner's overall argument and allowed him to uncover more of the internal politics of rebellion and conflict in Myanmar's borderworlds.

These (small) critiques notwithstanding, Brenner has meticulously crafted an argument about rebel politics that is rich with ethnographic details and theoretical insights. In providing a view from *within* rebel politics, Brenner identifies the dynamic relations of social life as giving form and shape to political violence. Rather than seeing the sometimes "uneasy relations" (p. 15) between competing leadership factions and the grassroots as necessarily troubling rebel behavior, Brenner suggests that they lead to productive tensions, which are able either to hamper or propel rebellion forward. This insight adds critical knowledge to our understanding of how broader questions of peace and conflict in a country can be affected by the messy, everyday relations that communities and elites engaged in rebellions have, making Brenner's book essential reading for any student or scholar interested in learning more about rebel politics in general or the Kachin or Karen rebellions in particular.

Contentious Compliance: Dissent and Repression under International Human Rights Law By

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— Christian Davenport , University of Michigan
cdavenport@umich.edu

The field of state repression/human rights violation has developed into what could positively be described as a vibrant, ever-expanding, and creative body of research with scholars constantly pushing in new directions, or negatively as a somewhat sprawling, fragmented, and unwieldy body of research. Whichever characterization you prefer, the outcome is clear. Some scholars focus on specific explanatory factors (e.g., an aspect of democracy and military intervention) while giving limited attention to the other variables within the model (e.g., economic development or inequality and naming/shaming). Some focus on specific forms of state repression (e.g., personal integrity violations) while giving limited attention to other forms (e.g., civil liberties). Some focus on specific sides of the contentious interaction, favoring either governments

or challengers in their discussions. More recently, some have focused on specific geographic locales (e.g., China), whereas others have focused on global patterns. As a result, we have generally lost a sense of comprehensiveness, thoroughness, and context. It is not quite clear what we know because examinations of new species of bushes and trees have been favored over evaluations of the forest.

Enter Courtenay Conrad and Emily Ritter's *Contentious Compliance: Dissent and Repression under International Human Rights Law*. In many ways, this book represents a groundbreaking intersection of previously isolated strands of research presented with a highly sophisticated, thorough, approachable, and often innovative analysis. For example, earlier research tended to highlight either domestic factors (such as judicial independence) or international factors (such as international law/treaties), but Conrad and Ritter persuasively argue that this is problematic, because the two reinforce one another. Similarly, prior research tended to highlight either factors concerning the government (e.g., repression) or behavioral challengers (e.g., dissent, terrorism, and civil war), but Conrad and Ritter maintain (invoking one of the many valuable lessons taught us by the late, great Will Moore) that one should never consider one without the other. Earlier research also tended to highlight either formal theory or quantitative evaluations of some type of repression/human rights data, but Conrad and Ritter bring these two worlds together. Although the combination is unique in the literature, the foundation of the theory is not: the authors adopt a variant of the cost-benefit model that has predominated in this body of research since (almost) its inception.

The outcome of this effort is compelling. If one is focused on international treaties having an impact on repression/human rights violation, then one might be either disappointed with or extremely excited by the book, because this is only part of the story and potentially the less interesting half. Domestic judicial institutions play an important role, because they can exact significant costs on political leaders. Indeed, if they are functioning, there is very little value added to international treaties. If one is used to discussing either repression or dissent, then one might be disappointed with or extremely excited by the book, because the behavior of the two not only influences each other but they are both influenced by international and domestic law. To understand repression, one has to place the behavior into this complex context. Finally, if one is used to reading formal theory with no empirical test or reading quantitative articles with little to no developed theory, then one might be disappointed with or extremely excited by the book, because the authors draw on the strengths of both approaches.

Conrad and Ritter's most interesting theoretical punchline is not arrived at easily, but it is important. On the one hand, if a leader is believed to be staying in power and

would lose a great deal by losing this position in power, and domestic courts are not very strong, then this is the context within which international law can have a potentially big impact. On the other hand, if a leader is on the way out and is transitioning to something after office that is quite lucrative, and domestic courts are fairly strong, then this is the context within which international law will not have much effect. After investigating specific repression/human rights data from 1981 to 2011 for 195 countries that correspond to three international treaties—the CAT, ICCPR, and CEDAW—along with data on mobilized dissent, the authors' main theoretical arguments are supported. However, although I praise the effort to bring together the different strands noted earlier, I would also note that there is somewhat uneven treatment of the strands.

For example, attention is paid to international treaties and law but less to international coercive/forceful power and hegemony. In line with many, Conrad and Ritter assume that individual nations are sovereign and largely determine their own security policies. This assumption elides those circumstances where external actors largely influence what domestic political leaders decide to do and how they do it. Some governments are overtly placed in office by foreign powers and are supported by the latter to such an extent that they are essentially beholden to them. In these contexts, there might be less attention to domestic costs (either courts or mobilized populations), and repression could continue indefinitely. There is very little discussion of how the judiciary fits with other aspects of democracy—that is, whether the judiciary leads or follows other components of democracy—and as Will Moore would often mention, it is not quite clear “why individuals with weapons would listen to individuals without them.” Additionally, it might be important to explore how domestic legal institutions arise and if there is any connection to international legal or political influence. It might also be important to consider whether governments finish what they set out to do when they repress as mobilization and treaty effects are considered.

Similarly, although Conrad and Ritter note that repression increases dissent and dissent increases repression, they fail to consider more nuanced work that shows that not all repression increases dissent. There are circumstances (e.g., large-scale mass atrocities and selective violence) when dissent is limited or completely destroyed. Given how much time the authors spend discussing government vulnerability, it seems odd not to discuss how dissidents are vulnerable. Somewhat problematic is the fact that Conrad and Ritter do not pay attention to precisely what dissidents are pursuing. This should influence the perception of threat.

Finally, although Conrad and Ritter use formal theory to structure their empirical investigation, there are some issues that could use some more attention. For example, it

is not quite clear whether it is reasonable to say that all leaders equally benefit from office while variability in vulnerability is what matters. Dependency literature and world systems theory are very clear about the importance of differential benefits, but from a different perspective the work of Robert Bates also sensitizes us to the lack of value for citizens within certain economies and hence the lack of attentiveness to them as political actors. Although formal and quantitative research are brought together (and well), qualitative-historical work is generally left out. I do not fault Conrad and Ritter for this. This literature is immense, but a review of this work would help us figure out what is there, as well as how it reinforces/challenges the work under discussion. Last but not least, it seems that, given the importance of leaders' perceptions to the main argument some attention should have been provided to the voluminous and prominent work on this phenomenon developed in behavioral economics.

By way of conclusion, Conrad and Ritter have entered a fragmented, somewhat divisive, but thriving field and have made it a bit more coherent and whole. The book moves us closer to pulling together insights from international as well as domestic, and formal as well as quantitative orientations. The next step is ours.

Strategies for Governing: Reinventing Public Administration for a Dangerous Century. By Alasdair Roberts. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2019. 210p. \$115.00 cloth, \$25.95 paper. doi:10.1017/S1537592720002029

— Jennifer L. Selin , University of Missouri
selinj@missouri.edu

In 2020, the outbreak of the COVID-19 viral disease swept across the globe. In response to the health emergency, Antonio Guterres, secretary-general of the United Nations, warned that the COVID-19 pandemic was the world's most challenging crisis since World War II and that it would contribute to enhanced instability, unrest, and conflict within and among states in the international system. As state leaders faced these challenges, questions arose about the best strategies for ensuring security, order, and prosperity and about the institutions best suited to translate these strategies into practice. Put simply, world leaders needed advice about the machinery of government.

In *Strategies for Governing*, Alasdair Roberts calls on scholars to provide such advice. Building off of the classic work, Woodrow Wilson's (1887) "The Study of Administration," Roberts reminds us to think more broadly about how governance and administration determine state priorities and constrain state leaders' choices. This macrolevel approach to public administration focuses on understanding the strategies that state leaders adopt to provide effective, durable, and normatively defensible solutions to modern governance.

The book offers a series of propositions that help explain these strategies. Roberts begins with an acknowledgment of the importance of the state as a conceptual building block. Each state claims exclusive authority to regulate a specified territory but belongs to an international system and therefore must communicate with other states. Understanding the state, rather than government within the state, as the fundamental unit of organization in governance provides scholars with a broad perspective and allows for rich analysis of critical questions about governance.

Within each state, there are leaders who influence state goals and the means by which the state pursues those goals. These leaders act in predictable ways. Leaders will work to maintain and increase both their own and their state's power and legitimacy. Thus, leaders will try to anticipate and respond to perceived threats to authority and will pursue opportunities for increased control. Roberts identifies the means by which leaders do so as strategies for governing.

Strategies for governing describe how leaders react to circumstances in order to organize state activities. Put another way, strategies for governing provide an overall view of how leaders exercise state authority. A key to understanding governance is the recognition that leaders face certain difficulties that make the strategies imperfect. These difficulties relate to uncertainty and to changing circumstances. First, the world is complex, and this complexity is far greater than leaders are capable of analyzing. As a result, leaders face uncertainty about which policies are most likely to advance state goals. In deciding what to prioritize, leaders have to make consequential choices to pursue some state goals at the expense of others. Second, not only is the world uncertain but it also is constantly in flux. As a result, leaders must regularly adjust strategies for governing as specific conditions change. Yet doing so is not easy, because leaders must work within an existing body of institutions.

Every state contains a complex set of institutions and Roberts recognizes four sets of institutions of interest: laws, organizations, programs, and practices. These institutions are the mechanisms by which leaders implement their strategies for governing. When governing, leaders must focus on creating and consolidating new institutions to help achieve state goals while also directing the administration and adaptation of existing institutions.

Given this framework, *Strategies for Governing* identifies key dilemmas that leaders face relating to state institutions and the exercise of state authority. These dilemmas result from such broad considerations as state security, legitimacy, and capacity, as well as from considerations of state institutional design. For example, leaders struggle with questions relating to the desirable level of connection to the international system and how closely to regulate citizen and state behavior to promote human rights while