of past thinkers and apply them to our own problems today, and his conclusions deserve a wide audience.

Aid Dependence in Cambodia: How Foreign Assistance Undermines Democracy. By Sophal Ear. New York: Columbia University Press, 2012. 208p. $60.00.
doi:10.1017/S1537592715004181

— Sonja Grimm, *University of Konstanz, Germany*

In this book, Sophal Ear criticizes the negative impact of the foreign aid supplied by the international donor community since 1992 on Cambodia's postconflict development. According to Ear, dependency on foreign aid undermined the government's will to do good governance and taxation, breaking "the link between government accountability and popular elections" (p. 12): "It is by weakening accountability that foreign aid most harms governance, by increasing the incentive for corruption and diluting political will" (ibid.). As a consequence of such aid dependency, corruption rose to a high level.

Further negative consequences studied in the book are the rise of social and economic inequality despite economic growth in recent years (Chapter 2), the government's weak response to the Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza (HPAI) crisis ("bird flu") (Chapter 3), and the failure to build up civil society beyond elections (Chapter 4). Ear blames both the Cambodian government and donors for failing to overcome aid dependencies. Members of the government are accused of showing little political will to change the situation so as not to lose personal gains (p. 45). Donors are criticized for their "insufficient . . . attention to dysfunctional models of institutional development" (p. 48). When corruption or violation of the rule of law is observed, aid money is rarely suspended and corrupt acts go unprosecuted or unpunished (p. 47).

Aid Dependence in Cambodia is a very personal account of the country's postconflict development in a situation of aid dependency. The author, born Cambodian, moved to the United States from France as a Cambodian refugee at the age of 10. In the United States, Ear received training in economics and political science at the universities of Princeton and Berkeley. After finishing his doctorate, he lived three years in Cambodia working as a consultant for various development agencies and then became an assistant professor at the U.S. Naval Postgraduate School, Monterey, California. This life story, presented in the first 15 of 160 text pages, shapes the analysis intensively, making it a personal, participatory, thick description of today's (fragile) Cambodian state in several policy fields.

From a political science point of view, however, critical distance and analytical rigor are missing. The author details neither his theoretical frame nor his methodological approach. As regards theory, some parts of the study refer to a substantial body of the aid effectiveness literature, but the author does not use this body to formulate a consistent theoretical frame that would guide the within-case studies. References to the peace- and statebuilding as well as the democratization and democracy-promotion or political economy literatures that appear to be relevant to the study of postconflict Cambodia are completely missing. Unfortunately, the book does not synthesize what has been written elsewhere on aid effectiveness or on Cambodia's postconflict transition. Consequently, its theoretical contribution to the current aid effectiveness debate cannot be identified.

As regards methodology, the research framework is likewise underdeveloped. The study does not provide a consistent account of the influence of the independent variable (aid dependence) on the dependent variable (governance quality) throughout the three within-case studies on economic growth in the garment, rice, and livestock sectors (Chapter 2), health management during the HPAI crisis (Chapter 3), and human rights activism (Chapter 4). In these chapters, intervening variables, such as weak institutional capacity, brain drain, weak accountability, corruption, and donor pressure, as identified in the beginning of the book (p. 18), are not traced in a systematic, comparative analysis in order to study their impact on governance quality. Sometimes, these variables are treated as factors influencing governance quality (as independent variables) and sometimes as factors affected by aid dependency (thereby turning them into further dependent variables), but most often, they are not discussed at all. Furthermore, the difference between "weakening institutional capacity" (one of the identified independent variables) and "quality of governance" (the dependent variable) remains blurred; in fact, the latter is equated with "weak governance" throughout the book.

Even more puzzling is the fact that Chapter 2 is not on aid dependence but on varieties of growth. In this chapter, which is based on an earlier study published elsewhere, Ear seeks to explain why there is growth in some sectors but not in others, yet he does not discuss the influence of aid dependency on these sectors at all. The chapter does not provide empirical evidence substantiating the book's argument that weak governance negatively influenced Cambodia's development as a consequence of severe aid dependence.

The book claims to be an important critical account of aid dependency in Cambodia's postconflict context, showing negative consequences, such as the persistence of weak governance, the rise of inequality, and the lack of progress in democratization. Whether this is particular for Cambodia or valid for the whole universe of postconflict societies cannot be decided on the basis of the book's claim, as the specific *postconflict* context is not systematically taken into account. Instead, the analysis reads in large part as the description of a static relationship of "donors" and "recipients" in a specifically Cambodian

https://doi.org/10.1017/S1537592715004181 Published online by Cambridge University Press

development setting over various policy fields. The study does not detail the constraints on the donating and receiving ends of the equation, nor does it go further into the interaction processes taking place between the different actors involved. The interaction of actors necessarily shapes the outcomes of development cooperation in different policy fields and should therefore be considered. Differences in donor interests, strategies, and policies are likewise not taken into account. Other intervening factors, especially those on the domestic side, are not systematically considered either. In its subtext, the study rarely goes beyond a simplistic notion of "the donors" as responsible for promoting the persistence of governance weakness inside Cambodia.

The author concludes the book with some—rather conventional—suggestions for how to make aid spending more effective. Ear proposes, firstly, to punish corruption with greater consequences, secondly, to support the creation of umbrella civil-society organizations, and thirdly, to strengthen civil society as a whole (pp. 140–142). In his eyes, "[t]he nation needs to fundamentally alter the relationship between its people and their government through taxation, which will bring accountability" (p. 142). Considering the dispersed empirical information provided, one wonders how to do so. How to manage such a transition in practice, how to overcome the deeply entrenched system of corruption and clientelism, how to develop a system of good governance, and how to reduce aid dependency are, unfortunately, not given further reflection. In the end, Ear owes the reader an alternative to the world's current system of aid that has obviously many unintended side effects, not only in contemporary Cambodia but also elsewhere.

Given its substantial theoretical and methodological flaws, *Aid Dependence in Cambodia* cannot be considered a groundbreaking study that further advances comparative scholarship on aid effectiveness, statebuilding, and democratization in postconflict settings. At the same time, it is informative for those who are interested in studying the post-1992 development of Cambodia in various sectors and policy fields.

Political Self-Sacrifice: Agency, Body, and Emotion in International Relations. By K. M. Fierke. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2013. 302p. $104.99 cloth, $34.99 paper.
doi:10.1017/S1537592715004193

— Brian Frederking, *McKendree University*

What is the meaning of dead and dying bodies? *Political Self-Sacrifice* explores individual acts of martyrdom—including self-immolation, hunger strikes, and suicide terrorism—with a sophisticated interpretive approach to world politics. This is an impressive work that grapples with many important issues in world politics: the role of religion in constituting political meaning, the role of global media in communicating meanings and emotions, the ability of individual action to have systemic effects, and the role of "martyrdom" narratives in challenging the legitimacy of political elites.

K. M. Fierke analyzes the discursive debate over whether to call an act of political self-sacrifice "suicide" or "martyrdom." Suicide is an individual act that violates a social code—it is irrational, sinful, criminal, or selfish. Suicide fits the sovereign narrative and isolates the individual from the community. Martyrdom is a social act that speaks a truth or criticizes an injustice; it challenges the sovereign narrative and binds that individual within a marginalized community. When understood as martyrdom, acts of political self-sacrifice constitute resistance against forms of sovereign authority.

Fierke relies on a variety of interpretive approaches, including Ludwig Wittgenstein's arguments about "forms of life" and "language games"; John Austin's arguments about speech acts; Erving Goffman's arguments about symbolic communication; and Michel Foucault's arguments about the ways in which power shapes and disciplines the body. The concept of political self-sacrifice is contextualized with a discussion of religious rituals and ancient practices of sacrifice and martyrdom, tracing discursive battles over whether someone is a criminal or a martyr to the days of early Christianity. The role of religion in constituting the meaning of political self-sacrifice is one of the many interesting themes of the book. Going well beyond the obvious example of certain forms of Islam and suicide terrorism, Fierke also shows how Christian and Buddhist traditions help shape the meaning of dead and dying bodies.

The author both repudiates and appropriates the rational choice literature. After showing how game-theoretic approaches cannot account for the rationality of political self-sacrifice, she utilizes a more interpretive approach to games, tweaks the familiar prisoner's dilemma game, and introduces the "warden's dilemma." When faced with resistance (e.g., a hunger strike), a warden can either continue the punishment or engage in dialogue in an attempt to change the rules of the game. If the warden continues the punishment and the hunger strikers die, then the discursive outcome of the game is either to win by successfully branding the resisters as "criminals" or to lose by creating space for the discursive creation of "martyrs." The key to the outcome of the game is whether the larger community blames the warden or the prisoners for the deaths. Who, ultimately, is the criminal?

Fierke argues that the visual image of a suffering body can enable altered understandings of political space. Such images evoke emotions that circulate and influence the "body politic." These emotions are "sticky" when connected to historical memory and social norms: "The self-sacrifice of the individual body becomes an expression of the loss of collective sovereignty, which materializes the injustice experienced by the community and thereby

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