

such entities alone: only comparisons between small and not small reveal the very characteristics of smallness. However, rather than comparing explicitly the practice of democracy in small states with larger ones, Corbett and Veenendaal are, in their own words, making explicit comparisons between small states as against implicit comparisons between smaller and larger states. This distinction between explicit and implicit comparisons is not fully explained in the text and comes close to being equivalent to a distinction between good and not so good comparisons. A better solution, perhaps, would have been to select randomly or by some systematic method or criterion a set of, for example, 30 or so large states to form a manageable group for purposes of systematic comparisons of large and small. One variant of such a strategy would have been the selection and study of any number of matched pairs; for example, countries that differ in terms of the crucial independent variable, such as size, but differ only a little or not at all in terms of other conceivable independent variables.

The book has a useful and balanced appendix on background data, designed to give readers an overview of the 39 states that are discussed in the book. Another appendix registers previous publications on small states by the two authors; some 30 entries over the last seven years testify to the intensity and diligence with which their project has been accomplished. A reference list runs more than 30 pages, each reporting 30 or so entries; the list registers practically everything worth reading and knowing about the study and organization of small state politics. All told, aforementioned criticisms notwithstanding, *Democracy in Small States* is a thorough, well-researched, highly interesting, and well-written book by two prominent scholars in the study of small states and islands. It is an obvious strength of the presentation that the authors are capable of summarizing and presenting ramified research findings in a concise and lucid manner.

### **Thirsty Cities: Social Contracts and Public Goods**

**Provision in China and India.** By Selina Ho. Cambridge:

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During the summer of 2019, the city of Chennai in southern India encountered a water crisis of vast proportions. Residents waited hours for private water trucks. Schools, businesses, hospitals, and hotels were forced to suspend operations. Climate change was only partly to blame for what many called a “man-made crisis” brought on by rapid urbanization and poor planning. Chennai’s water crisis heralded a future of extreme water scarcities in urban India. An Indian government report issued in 2018

predicted that 21 Indian cities faced imminent ground-water depletion. In *Thirsty Cities*, Selina Ho puts urban India’s chronic undersupply of water in comparative context with urban China, where water provision has posed equally daunting challenges but where, as she amply demonstrates, the outcomes are far more positive.

By every measure—tap-water coverage, water supply, consumption, monitoring of water loss, and metering of water to collect relevant fees—urban water provision in China surpasses that of India. The capacity of the Chinese state at local levels to provide public goods and services has been amply demonstrated for well over a decade (see Lily L. Tsai, *Accountability without Democracy*, 2007); similarly, the shortcomings of the Indian state in public goods provision have been widely chronicled. Although most political scientists seek out explanations for this large gap in public service provision in the realm of formal institutions—administrative, political, electoral, and the like—the author advances an argument that relies heavily on the importance of an informal institution, which she terms the “social contract.” The social contract is defined as “an *agreement* between state and society, in which citizens *consent* to give up certain rights to their governments so that they can rule in exchange for the governments’ *obligation* to provide for the people, whether in material or normative forms” (p. 32, emphasis in original). As Ho notes in several places, social contracts are based on norms and expectations between state and society, with sanctions and punishments when states fail to meet these expectations. Social contracts can be inferred from policies, speeches, and declarations found in elite discourse. Ho claims that social contracts usually originate during periods of nation-building and then tend to lock in, remaining unchanged over time.

The linkages among social contracts, formal institutions, and public goods provision are laid out in chapter 2. The discussion then turns to individual treatments of the Chinese social contract (chap. 3) and the Indian social contract (chap. 4). Based on a reading of sources on Chinese governance (though primarily from post-1980 China), the Chinese social contract is characterized as “performance-oriented,” which leads to institutional designs in which the central government assesses local officials based on the delivery of public goods. In the author’s reading of Indian sources, primarily drawn from post-1947 rather than premodern or colonial-era texts, the basis of the social contract in India is said to be rooted in populist and socialist norms of governance.

Part II of the book covers the empirical cases of urban water management in China and India. Following an overview of formal institutions related to urban water provision in China and India, the discussion turns to paired case studies of Beijing and Shenzhen (chap. 6) and New Delhi and Hyderabad (chap. 7). A concluding chapter makes tentative claims about the types of social

contracts found in other polities, with the suggestion that Singapore shares with China a performance-based social contract, whereas Venezuela and Brazil possess social contracts similar to the populist-socialist form found in India. The notable exception for China is the Maoist social contract, which was predicated on ideology and ideological commitment over performance—but this was the exception that proves the rule to the broader pattern of a performance-based social contract informing state–society relations in China. In the concluding chapter the author also addresses the potential claim of “cultural determinism” by offering some conditions under which social contracts might change, though as she acknowledges, change occurs only very gradually (through the slow evolution of norms) or rarely (via exogenous shocks or historical ruptures).

One of the risks in using the term “social contract” to refer to underlying norms associated with the expectations of government by the governed is the term’s close association with Western political theorists writing in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries about the origins and limitations of sovereign power. Ho discusses briefly the ideas of Hobbes, Locke, and Rousseau, but chooses not to give a close reading to the much-earlier classical governance texts found in Chinese and Indian discussions of statecraft. She does note that in China, most rulers have sought to protect the population from the direst forms of deprivation and disaster, such as famine and floods. Failure to provide relief from these crises offers legitimate grounds for popular rebellion, as Mencius intoned. But even in this most explicit of formulations in which rebellion is justified against the sovereign, there was no agreement based on mutual consent between state and society, as implied in most conceptions (and in Ho’s own definition) of social contracts.

The more interesting puzzle is not, as posed in chapter 1, why authoritarian rulers in China do better at the public provision of water than democratically accountable rulers in India, but rather why Chinese officials so willingly adopted private sector participation in water projects and utilities while in India similar proposals provoked widespread opposition. Public–private partnerships (PPPs) were widely accepted in China, which in 2012 accounted for 14 of 15 total water sector PPPs in East Asia (p. 123). The case studies of the four cities trace the opposition to PPPs in water utilities in New Delhi and Hyderabad, and the relative success in injecting foreign and domestic capital into state-run water utilities in Shenzhen and Beijing. The fact that municipal authorities in China have far greater fiscal autonomy and responsibilities compared to their Indian counterparts is noted frequently throughout the chapters, and it constitutes a potential rival explanation for water provision. Building infrastructure increases officials’ chances for promotion within the Chinese Communist Party and government

hierarchies. This intra-party norm has helped spur China’s growth- and infrastructure-led development. By sharp contrast, urban officials in India (elected or otherwise) face rigid constraints in raising local revenues and shouldering expenditures, leaving state-level legislatures and administrative agencies to balance urban public goods provision with demands from rural sectors.

The social contract concept may shed light on why some authoritarian regimes provide high levels of public services while other autocracies fail to do so (and why some democracies might outperform others in public goods provision). Yet it is worth noting that Chinese citizens pay a high price for the provision of water and other public services, including world-class infrastructure projects—in the form of pollution, corruption, escalating public debt, curbs on individual freedoms, and few viable channels to challenge authorities when public services are not provided or when infrastructure fails. Nonetheless, *Thirsty Cities* offers a bold approach for understanding how differences in public service provision may arise from variation in informal institutions that connect state and society and less so from formal institutions that are more commonly the focus in comparative studies of public policy.

**Strategic Frames: Europe, Russia, and Minority Inclusion in Estonia and Latvia.** By Jennie L. Schulze. Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2018. 416p. \$31.95 paper. doi:10.1017/S1537592719003232

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In 1991, the national leaders in Estonia and Latvia reclaimed sovereignty after 40 years as constituent republics of the Soviet Union. The parliaments of the newly independent states gave automatic citizenship only to those residents who could trace their or their ancestors’ citizenship in the country to 1940, thereby excluding the majority of Russian speakers who had migrated to the tiny Soviet republics after World War II. Hundreds of thousands of Russophones in the two countries became stateless as a result; to become naturalized, they would have to demonstrate a level of proficiency in the national language that most Russian speakers did not have. Without citizenship, they could not vote in national elections and had to apply for “alien passports” to travel internationally.

Western governments closely monitored these developments, concerned that the exclusionary policies in the Baltics would lead Russia to intervene “to rescue” their kin, raising tensions that could lead to interstate war. The Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), Council of Europe (CE), and the US government, in particular, worked to persuade the newly independent states to liberalize their citizenship, education,