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Fragile States, Co-Optation, and the Logic of Political Survival

STUDIA I ANALIZY

Abstract: *This article analyzes the issues of managing crises in the context of fragile states, co-optations and, consequently, focuses on the logic of political survival. Excluding particular social groups from exercising power increases the risk of serious internal political tensions and even civil war. Yet, the question remains: why do fragile state governments exclude social groups in the first place if this threatens the survival of the regime? In the political regimes of fragile states, an important response to patterns of social exclusion can be found in the formation of political coalitions. Ruling social groups have sufficient incentive to exclude groups even more powerful than themselves because they cannot credibly pledge loyalty to the ruling group. Hence, potential allies avoid joining coalitions with stronger ruling parties. The above problem of mutual support and joint commitment leads to potentially power-equivalent political alliances. Yet, political regimes of fragile states facilitate the creation of coalitions of less balanced power (co-option) with institutions that alleviate the problems of political tensions and differences. The above arguments regarding forming alliances and political parties are tested based on data on the political groups "grasping" power and their status. Moreover, in political regimes of fragile states, the elites "holding power" are more willing to conclude agreements that balance the political power of all possible coalition partners. In this context, however, the diverse specificity of political groupings determines the degree of balance of the particular political scene.*

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Introduction

The issue of crisis management, co-option, and – consequently – state legitimacy plays a key role in shaping the development policy of each fragile state, where power elites face the challenge of monopolizing their authority. All state power tries to strengthen its legitimacy and authority at the expense of its rivals. Put differently, political elites who wield power strive to make the state apparatus the dominant – or even the only – organizational structure exercising power in a given territory. The above process shapes the foundations of statehood through "real politics," a typical phenomenon for most modern countries. Thus, Charles Tilly refers to this process as "state-making"[1]. In other words, much of the literature on statecraft has been concerned with how rulers mitigate the threat of violence.

Co-option based on the legitimacy of power is important here because it provides the basis for building the apparatus of power with the consent of civil society and not through coercion. Lack of legitimacy is a major cause of state fragility because it undermines the negotiation processes between the state and civil society that are crucial to building state capacity. The legitimacy of power in unstable situations explains why people's ideas about what constitutes legitimate political power differ fundamentally in the formal, rule-based systems typical of Western and "non-Western" states[2].

Particular attention, however, should be paid to factors that emerge when different concepts of state legitimacy coexist or even compete with each other. In political practice, they can reduce the distance between the civic community and the institutions of the formal state. Yet, they can also contribute to many negative phenomena (e.g., delegitimization of power). Thus, state legitimacy is a very ambivalent phenomenon difficult to analyze unambiguously. In this case, more attention should be paid to aspects of legitimacy that result from a common worldview, tradition, and beliefs, as well as how they influence specific political and social conditions.

The issue of co-optation and legitimation is also dynamic. In political practice, the issue of complex choices and difficult compromises is also important here. The perception of legitimacy often looks different from a local point of view than from a regional or international perspective. It is, therefore, worth paying much more attention to the aspects of legitimacy resulting from shared worldviews, traditions, and beliefs, as well as how they influence specific politi-

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1   C. Tilly, *War making and state making as organized crime*, [in:] P.B. Evans, D. Rueschemeyer, T. Skocpol (eds.), *Bringing the State Back In*, Cambridge University Press 1985, p. 181.
2   A.M. Brandenburger, B.J. Nalebuff, *Co-Opetition*, Currency Doubleday 1997, pp. 11–38.

cal and social conditions. It is a challenge because legality is extremely complex and changes over time[3]. Moreover, donors may face difficult trade-offs and choices when local perceptions of legitimacy conflict with international norms. The issue of co-optation and legitimacy, especially in fragile and unstable situations, displays how "external interventions" can inevitably question their legality and undermine the legitimacy of the state.

The research methodology used in this article assumes heterogeneous approaches to the issues discussed. When analyzing the problems of fragile and politically unstable states in the context of the issue of co-optation determining political survival, the method of modeling political processes taking into account emerging security threats was used, as well as constructing scenarios for the development of domestic and foreign policy based on the most probable trends. In turn, in the study of source materials, methods such as content analysis, syntactic and semantic analysis, as well as the reflexivity method were used.

Fragile State *versus* Civil Society

Nevertheless, state and society can be combined, harmonized, and separated in many ways. In strong and stable countries, power structures have strong ties with society and can determine the parameters of the practices and functioning of social institutions. The state is, therefore, embedded in society through its power to define and shape social relations in a way that supports and favors the rule of law. At the same time, such states are separated from society by a relatively clear distinction between private and public spheres.

In fragile and unstable states, there is a greater separation from society and – paradoxically – a closer connection with state structures than assumed by the model mentioned above on which their formal institutions are based. In other words, fragile states are more isolated in that they cannot establish themselves as the highest political authority in their territory, nor can they function effectively throughout their territory and administer their society as assumed by the model. In this sense, fragile states seem isolated or "suspended" above society. Moreover, fragile states are more closely related to society in the sense that in political practice, the boundaries separating the competencies of both structures seem blurry and ambiguous, which means

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3   R. Ficek, *Legitimacy in the Context of the Global Institutions of Power and the Contemporary Determinants of International Politics*, «TEKA of Political Science and International Relations – UMCS» 2022, Vol. 17, No. 1, pp. 26–28.

that the "private" and "public" domains, fundamental for these considerations, tend to become intertwined and overlapping[4].

For these reasons, it is important to distinguish theoretical models presenting and defining statehood issues from the actual practice of political practices and state institutions. In the context of fragile states, there is a large gap between the state understood in terms of the Western model of the rule of law and its practical manifestation concerning politically unstable states affected by numerous socio-political conflicts. It must, therefore, be recognized that many states lack both an administratively effective center of political power and the ability to enforce their claims. In many cases, the functioning of fragile states is based on alternative patterns of organizing administrative structures and forms of governance (RDC; Bolivia; Niger, Laos). In this context, the defining feature of fragile states is the difficult nature of the relationship between the state and society, which assumes mutual concessions and negotiations. In other words, the main problem is not the fragility of state institutions but the lack of constructive connections between state and social institutions[5].

Thus, analyzing the problem of fragile states and political practice should focus mainly on the relations between the state and society. It is not about emphasizing the role of either the state or society but the actual processes taking place, the escalation, intensification, or acceleration of which contributes to the mutual strengthening and complementation of society-state relations while at the same time diversifying and maintaining mutual autonomy. So, the state's specificity is not the only determinant determining its stability, dynamics, and power effectiveness but is perceived primarily by society. In other words, the state and society are realized in socio-political life, contributing to mutual sculpting in a dynamic process of reciprocal correlations and connections.

In the context of "state fragility," one can discuss the state as a system designed by formal-theoretical rules and institutions (following the Western model) or – under the actual rules of operation and political pragmatism (the state *in statu fieri*) – a state shaped through difficult compromises and consensuses with various groups and communities. Similarly, ethnic groups and national societies can be characterized from the point of view of sociological theories, emphasizing the social ties of their members towards the political community or relationships rooted in native traditions and alternative political organizations. These social groups can also be described as difficult-to-

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[4]   A.M. Brandenburger, B.J. Nalebuff, *Co-Opetition*…, pp. 40–64.
[5]   K.P. Clements, V. Boege, A. Brown, W. Foley, A. Molan, *State Building Reconsidered: The Role of Hybridity in the Formation of Political Order*, «Political Science» 2007, Vol. 59, No. 1, pp. 51–52.

define associations of various interest groups and communities that – often do not understand each other – but are closely interconnected for utilitarian reasons[6].

Hence, the question arises: in the case of fragile states, how do local political elites secure and maintain their monopoly of power? Political practice proves that "monopolizing authority" is, by its very nature, controversial[7]. However, monopolizing power is a dynamic and constantly renewing process. Therefore, the threat of violence can never be eliminated but only brought under control or the possibility and probability of its outbreak limited[8]. In the analyzed context, the above form of authority requires relocating, neutralizing, transferring, and adapting political competitors who – for various reasons – may pose a threat of escalating violence against the state[9]. In many cases, the violence used is extremely effective, ensuring relative socio-political order as well as general legitimacy. Yet, state power is rarely absolute, sufficiently effective, and spectacular enough over the entire territory of a given country[10].

All in all, armed conflicts and civil wars can, therefore, be treated as periods in which the state lost control over the problem of violence. Especially in fragile states, the post-conflict period is crucial for stabilizing and rebuilding state power. Many countries currently considered strong states with efficient and effective administrative structures and a high level of legitimacy have experienced the tragedies of their own civil wars. China, France, Japan, Russia, the United Kingdom, and the United States are just a few examples. In this sense, violence and coercion play an important role in integrating the socio-political structures of the state, as well as monopolizing and legitimizing power. However, the policy of sovereign centralization of the state's administrative structures also includes manipulation and control of other entities (violence entrepreneurs) using "persuasion" through more or less peaceful means. Regarding political opponents who cannot be defeated directly on the battlefield, state authorities tend to use the so-called "co-optation"[11].

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[6] A.M. Brandenburger, B.J. Nalebuff, *Co-Opetition*…, pp. 69–70.

[7] J. Driscoll, *Warlords and Coalition Politics in Post-Soviet States*, Cambridge University Press 2015, pp. 30–45; M.A. Stewart, *Governing for Revolution: Social Transformation in Civil War*, Cambridge University Press 2021, pp. 97–136.

[8] J. Driscoll, *Warlords and Coalition Politics*…, pp. 173–196.

[9] D.C. North, J.J. Wallis, B.R. Weingast, *Violence and Social Orders: A Conceptual Framework for Interpreting Recorded Human History*, Cambridge University Press 2009, pp. 13–29.

[10] M.M. Lee, *Crippling Leviathan: How Foreign Subversion Weakens the State*, Cornell Univ. Press, 2020, pp. 46–79.

[11] R. Ficek, *Legitimacy*…, pp. 27–30.

Co-Optation and "Sovereignty Rents"

Co-optation is a continuous process of negotiation and bargaining, and often, controversial talks take place in the shadow of coercion. In exchange for loyalty to the state authorities, those in power offer private awards and gratuities to violent entrepreneurs. In other words, in exchange for their loyalty to official state institutions, violent entrepreneurs 'squeeze' rents of sovereignty from the government[12]. This agreement is undoubtedly important. However, what facilitates it is the use of state power in a selective way and taking into account only the particular interests of the elite "holding power." In other words, the solutions created in this situation resemble a limited access order based on personal relationships rather than on the impersonal, formally institutionalized authority of the state. In this sense, limited or privileged access is not a simple method of corrupting coalition partners incorporated into the elite "holding power" group. Still, it becomes one means of maintaining political stability and controlling a possible outbreak of violence[13].

The triumph of co-optation as a strategy for controlling socio-political violence depends on a delicate balance in which the benefits of subordination to the official majority coalition – as well as other possible sovereignty rents – outweigh the potential benefits of remaining in opposition and challenging the official political strategy of the state. The specificity and nature of the so-called "sovereignty rents" depend on the conditions and relations in state power structures. Just as the state security apparatus is responsible for applying adequate coercive measures, as well as shaping appropriate ties with opponents of the official apparatus of power, state regulatory and enforcement institutions enable the political elites "maintaining power" to use state power to pay "appropriate rents" and other profits. This issue refers to patronage grants and nominations in various civil administration systems in fragile states. This type of practice ensures a seamless transfer of wealth, power, and additional opportunities to obtain valuable appanages, as well as the possibility of participating in the government's system of distributing national income, as well as other material resources under the control of the government administration[14].

Historically, patronage appointments have been key in centralizing state power and building loyalty in Western European countries and other parts of the

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[12] J. Driscoll, *Warlords and Coalition Politics…*, pp. 46–57.
[13] D.C. North et al., *Violence…*, p. 17.
[14] S. Knack, *Sovereign rents and quality of tax policy and administration*, «Journal of Comparative Economics» 2008, Vol. 37, No. 3, pp. 359–371.

modern world. An excellent example of this can be 17th-century Prussia[15], the Tokugawa shogunate during the Edo period from 1603 to 1868 in Japan[16], or the period of absolutist monarchy in France and other Western European countries[17]. In Ottoman Turkey, however, the nomination of militarily powerful local despots as official governors stopped the process of destabilization and political interference by using violence against the state[18]. In Afghanistan, especially during the Hamid Karzai administration, a similar goal was to appoint local warlords as provincial governors[19].

Pacifying dangerous political centers by integrating them with the state – in exchange for the possibility of obtaining private rents and privileges – not only allowed for neutralizing threats from their side but also – in some cases – ensured more effective management of the state.

Ruling elites can also secure the payment of sovereignty rents by selectively enforcing or not enforcing applicable laws. Using this type of procedure in the economic dimension ensures significant financial benefits. Selective treatment of tax law, various permits and concessions, falsified privatization programs, widespread control of enterprises, and manipulation of tax law are just some ways of selectively enforcing – or not enforcing – the law to obtain significant financial profits. The price of this practice is the payment of "sovereignty rents" to those political entities that have undertaken to reject violence and open opposition to the official institution of the state. In exchange for the policy of co-optation, the above entities decided to accept the authorized state institution as well as the political strategies they recommended[20].

Moreover, the state may also tolerate blatant corruption and various forms of bribery. As a result, not only the illegal accumulation of wealth but – above all – the inactivity of a state regime based on kleptocracy is accepted[21]. In many fragile states, however, selective non-enforcement of corruption and bribery

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[15] W. Wippermann, *Preußen, Kleine Geschichte eines großen Mythos,* Herder 2011.

[16] L.S. Roberts, *Performing the Great Peace: Political Space and Open Secrets in Tokugawa Japan*, University of Hawaii Press 2011.

[17] J. Miller, *Absolutism in Seventeenth-Century Europe*, Palgrave Macmillan 1990; P.H. Wilson, *Absolutism in Central Europe*, New York: Routledge 2000, pp. 62–87.

[18] D. Quataert, *The Ottoman Empire, 1700–1922*, Cambridge University Press 2005, pp. 13–53.

[19] C. Malkasian, *The American War in Afghanistan: A History*, Oxford University Press 2021, pp. 80–102.

[20] J. Driscoll, *Warlords and Coalition Politics…*, pp. 85–122; R. Tangri, A.M. Mwenda, *Elite corruption and politics in Uganda*, «Commonwealth & Comparative Politics» 2008, Vol. 46, No. 2, pp. 177–194.

[21] R. Cribb, *The Historical Roots of Indonesia's New Order: Beyond the Colonial Comparison*, [in:] E. Aspinall (ed.), *Soeharto's New Order and Its Legacy: Essays in Honour of Harold Crouch*, ANU Press 2010, pp. 67–80.

can cement loyalty to the state, and the threat of selective enforcement can serve as a non-institutionalized means of ensuring obedience and compliance to the apparatus of power, thereby ensuring government effectiveness. In this sense, the pervasiveness of selective enforcement is not an indicator of state weakness but evidence of ongoing state formation[22].

Co-optation and Its Prearrangements

In fragile states, three co-optation aspects are particularly important for analyzing involvement in state-building issues. Firstly, the relationship between sovereignty rents and the weak states' power apparatus is of fundamental importance for securing the monopoly of power. In this sense, sovereignty rents cannot be treated as bribes given to corrupt politicians using brutal violence in exchange for their co-option into state administration structures. In other words, these types of "bribes" condition their subordination to the state. These are financial resources whose value is related to the integrity of the state and the maintenance of state power. Therefore, the value of a public position (e.g., a minister or a governor) is greater the more effectively the state apparatus of coercion (police, army, etc.), regulation, and enforcement (courts, local administration, etc.) functions[23].

Similarly, selective enforcement will only be attractive if the state is strong enough to restrict the entry and access of political actors to the country's political life or to defend property rights. Since sovereignty rents depend on the power of the state, co-opted political entities are undoubtedly interested in the transformation of the political system of the state under the interests of the community they represent. Therefore, the financial support of these entities is even more valuable when state power is more stable and stronger; co-opted entities participating in state management also gain a share in maintaining and even strengthening state power.

In this way, sculpting statehood and managing violence at the domestic level can significantly strengthen the institutional structures of the state over time. It does not mean that co-opted political entities will not question the state or attempt secession if the configuration of political forces changes significantly in their favor. It also does not mean that the above entities will

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[22] K. Darden, *The integrity of corrupt states: graft as an informal state institution*, «Politics & Society» 2008, Vol. 36, pp. 39–44; B. Hibou, *From Privatising the Economy to Privatising the State: An Analysis of the Continual Formation of the State*, [in:] B Hibou (ed.), *In Privatizing the State*, Columbia University Press 2004, pp. 34–45.

[23] A.M. Brandenburger, B.J. Nalebuff, *Co-Opetition*…, p. 70.

support the creation of the structures of a liberal state organized on the principles of democratic universalism, impartiality, and law. Co-optation can also link the interests of various political entities with the effectiveness of a state oriented towards the so-called "common good." However, the effectiveness and efficiency of the functioning of the state may not be directly related to the structures of government administration[24]. For example, in Prussia, Japan, France, and Great Britain, early solutions to the problems of administrative incompetence of the government apparatus were not intended to abolish patronage but to ensure that patronage was aligned with the competencies of the state executive bodies[25].

Secondly, co-optation and patronage politics are substitutes for violence as a means of political consolidation and integration of elites "holding power." One of the main reasons the ruler's political elites turn to co-optation is that coercion is too expensive, difficult to implement, and burdens the political regime – both financially and morally. Intimidation and violence can also fail. Civil wars that end in negotiated settlements are a good example of this. However, by accepting informal agreements to distribute and secure funds, state power can achieve the same goals as violence without firing a single shot[26]. In the eyes of the West, what appears to be a degenerate form of corruption and bad and dysfunctional governance – typical of fragile states – turns out to be a by-product of a political solution to the oldest political problem of managing violence. Such conclusions do not mean defending corruption or protecting particularism in politics but recognizing their instrumental role in monopolizing power and suppressing violence[27].

Thirdly, generally speaking, the policy of co-option can bring its "positive" effect under one condition. The state must provide appropriate gratifications and financial benefits to unsympathetic political entities using violence to obtain their consent and consent to implement the state's main political strategies. Financial gratifications (so-called sovereignty rents) are an important incentive. However, the process of co-optation always takes place in the

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[24] T. Mkandawire, *Neopatrimonialism and the political economy of economic performance in Africa: critical reflections*, «World Politics» 2015, Vol. 67, No. 3, pp. 574–581; E.M. McDonnell, *Patchwork Leviathan: Pockets of Bureaucratic Effectiveness in Developing States*, Princeton University Press 2020, pp. 165–186.

[25] M.S. Grindle, *Jobs for the Boys: Patronage and the State in Comparative Perspective*, Harvard University Press 2012, pp. 54–55.

[26] B. Bueno de Mesquita, A. Smith, R.M. Siverson, J.D. Morrow, *The Logic of Political Survival*, MIT Press 2003, pp. 129–172.

[27] S.C. Greitens, *Dictators and Their Secret Police: Coercive Institutions and State Violence*, Cambridge University Press 2016, pp. 17–74.

context of coercion[28]. Thus, the state cannot give up the monopoly on coercion and reserves the right to use it as a deterrent against a possible revolt, destabilization of the country's situation due to hostilities, or secession. The possibility of using deterrents is quite serious and credible. In some situations, this is the only condition for political survival. In this context, it is necessary to shape political conditions that would allow the production of a self-enforcing equilibrium[29].

While co-optation and financial gratifications figure prominently in the concept of statebuilding at the domestic level and the monopolization of power, they are virtually absent from the discourse on statebuilding at the international level. To a large extent, this silence reflects the dominance of a stopgap approach in which the built-in assumption of solving the bargaining problem eliminates the need for "financial subsidies and gratuities" as a basis for maintaining political stability and peace[30]. But, many scholars perceive this type of financial transfer (e.g., foreign aid funds, international commitment to statebuilding, etc.) as a reward for conditional compliance with the global strategy of securing political stability and peace and external aid for reconstructing state institutions as an incentive. The current discourse also does not consider the possibility of additional payments. Yet, other payments can be an important means of managing violence, making them an integral part of the political logic of fragile states[31].

What are the domestic implications of the discourse on statebuilding in the context of international conditions? Perhaps the most important form of repercussions and consequences is the specificity of the state's political system, the rules of the game taken into account, as well as the manner and form in which the state exercises power. The above implications have distributional consequences that permeate and transform fragile states' involvement in political life. It is especially visible among political elites, who can neither protest nor threaten violence against the state. The entire range of institutions and rules that international political actors attribute to fragile states carries a specific set of distributional consequences.

Yet, the above consequences are fundamentally incompatible with the co-optation strategies that domestic actors can develop independently, especially when the previous set of institutions and practices do not reflect the

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[28] B.F. Walter, *Reputation and Civil War: Why Separatist Conflicts Are So Violent*, Cambridge University Press 2006, pp. 66–98.

[29] M.M. Lee, *Crippling Leviathan…*, pp. 32–38.

[30] A.M. Matanock, *How International Actors Help Enforce Domestic Deals*, «Annual Review of Political Science» 2020, Vol. 23, pp. 363–371.

[31] L.M. Howard, *Power in Peacekeeping*, Cambridge University Press 2019, pp. 185–200.

situational conditions and political *status quo* in a particularly fragile state. In other words, foreign political entities involved in the process of reforming the administrative institutions of fragile states should take into account such forms of effective management (issues of national security, health, economic growth, etc.) that promote strategies that stabilize the socio-political situation of the country, but also do not pose a threat possibility of obtaining the so-called "sovereignty rents" by the local national political elites "holding power"[32].

Moreover, domestic scientific discourse suggests that stabilizing peace – at least in the near term – depends on the existence of unreformed or partially reformed fragile states. In this sense, the type of state that international actors on the local political scene are trying to create in a particularly fragile state threatens the political and economic interests of the domestic elites "holding political power". The contemporary debate on statebuilding only highlights how the interests of narrow political groups can be yoked to the state's general interest, treating it as a means of ensuring socio-political stability and dealing with violence[33]. In this context, what appears to outsiders as an example of bad management is neither particularly pathological nor a product of political ignorance. All kinds of sovereignty rents are – essentially – a form of side payment that facilitates agreement on distributional issues. In this sense, "bad governance" is a rational response to the demands of sovereign centralization and its power apparatus[34].

The contemporary debate also suggests another explanation for the failure of international commitment to peacebuilding in many world regions. One of the productive aspects of the ongoing discourse is the treatment of international involvement in statebuilding in fragile states as a strategic interaction between international actors and domestic belligerents. International actors have valuable material and human resources necessary for destabilized fragile states. Domestic actors comply with external demands for reform only to the extent required to maintain a steady flow of these resources. Although these dynamics are generally well understood, the contemporary debate on statebuilding in the context of particular unstable states offers a different interpretation: external resources are an unintended additional form of payment for peace and socio-political stability, much like sovereignty rents paid by the state[35].

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[32] K. Eikenberry, S.D. Krasner, *"Good Enough" Governance: Humility and the Limits of Foreign Intervention in Response to Civil Wars and Intrastate Violence*, American Academy of Arts & Sciences 2021.

[33] N. Barma, *The Peacebuilding Puzzle: Political Order in Post-Conflict States*, Cambridge University Press 2016, pp. 152–189.

[34] M. Barnett, S. Fang, C. Zürcher, *Compromised Peacebuilding*, «International Studies Quarterly» 2014, Vol. 58, pp. 608–620.

[35] J. Driscoll, *Warlords and Coalition Politics…*, p. 12.

In his analysis of political consolidation in Central Asia, Jesse Driscoll states: „Foreign aid professionals can have a positive effect on war settlement not despite but because violence entrepreneurs can steal these funds." In other words, domestic political actors do not implement reforms imposed "from outside" sincerely and with the belief that they are effective. Instead, they instrumentalize reforms for their own benefit. The above behavior also extends to reforms in the economic sphere[36].

Typical of fragile states, the partially reformed power administration structures of the state serve as protection against the possibility of being cut off from external financial, material, and human resources. It allows them to retain access to sovereign annuities and other financing options. Similar international arrangements, external payments, and the ability to implement strategies to deter external opponents from maintaining the existing political *status quo*, imposed and approved by the international community, will not last forever. Domestic political actors know that global sponsors involved in statebuilding will one day leave, and international pressure and interest in fragile states will weaken over time. In contrast, the threat of domestic violence from actors hostile to the official state will always remain. Moreover, it must be constantly monitored. Maintaining the state's ability to generate sovereignty rents and other forms of payments in order to maintain socio-political stability and peace – especially in areas affected by destabilization and military conflicts – is, therefore, a rational response to the complex problems of fragile states, especially in the face of the rapidly changing and chimerical attitude of the international community[37].

Towards New Objectives

Both models of shaping fragile state institutions from an international perspective reflect many controversies, divergences, and divergent assumptions regarding the political conditions related to state reform. The above assumptions organize the questions asked by subject experts and determine the answers they receive. In this context, the "provision model" largely downplays the distribution issues and focuses on the involvement problems in forming state structures.

However, the basic problem and barrier in building fragile states state structures is the issue of enforcing the peace agreement. In turn, the "imposi-

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[36] N. Van de Walle, *African Economies and the Politics of Permanent Crisis, 1979–1999*, Cambridge University Press 2001, pp. 152–234.

[37] B. Bueno de Mesquita, et al., *The Logic…*, pp. 215–249.

tion model" focuses mainly on negotiations regarding the distributional consequences of peace arrangements. International-regional-local as well as local–indigenous discrepancies over the wheel and deal suggest that statebuilding disappointments and failures have origins in the very different predictions and preferences over the terms of post-conflict stability and order. Due to different starting assumptions, however, both the provision and imposition approaches show an absorbingly constructive aspect of analyzing the concept of statebuilding from the perspective of international conditions[38].

Irreconcilable differences and the often command-and-resolution form of the international strategy of institutionally building fragile states are often imprecise, ambiguous, and even controversial. In other words, the unspecified assumptions in each of the above statebuilding models show the reason for the researchers of the problem to focus on international political actors and international-domestic connections, also in the dimension of power legitimacy. Analyzing local conditions in the context of building fragile states enriches the imposition approach through local preferences regarding the distributional consequences of the post-conflict socio-political order. At the same time, insight into the situational conditions shows how much the local point of view may differ from the preferences of international political entities involved in the issues of political transformation of fragile states.

Of course, the point here is not to discredit one or another model of systemic transformation and fragile states. In the cases discussed, both the "provision model" and the "imposition approach" show important elements of the political reality of fragile states. However, continuing this research may answer many interesting issues regarding the specificity of models for shaping weak state institutions and the conditions and circumstances of their possible functioning. This is primarily about the profile and diversity of international political actors interested in building the institutional structures of fragile states in their reformed form. Not all domestic political elites have interests that conflict with international entities interested in statebuilding, particularly fragile states. Not all behaviors aimed at "sovereignty rents" are incompatible with an effective strategy for building administratively effective institutions of the rule of law[39].

Many research questions on this topic are related to issues affecting the particular interests of political elites with democratization and liberal politi-

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[38] A.M. Brandenburger, B.J. Nalebuff, *Co-Opetition…*, pp. 71–108.
[39] C. Zürcher, C. Manning, K.D. Evenson, R. Hayman, S. Riese, N. Roehner, *Costly Democracy: Peacebuilding and Democratization After War*, Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press 2013, pp. 131–154.

cal transformation in fragile states (e.g., asset mobility and financial integration can reduce the opposition of wealthy political elites to fragile states' democratization and institution-restructuring processes)[40]. Similar arguments could be applied to the preferences of local political elites towards domestic power structures. However, these preferences in management issues are dynamic and conditioned by legitimacy. In other words, these preferences may change endogenous to the activities of international or domestic entities operating in a given area[41]. The logic of the contemporary ubiquitous populist ideology, faithful to the need to win the hearts and minds of the governed human mass, also refers to the dynamics of changing political preferences[42]. Acceptance and consensus on changing political preferences over time open up new possibilities and alternative acting methods. Thus, different models of actions – both the "provision model" and the "imposition approach" – can overlap, finding appropriate application at key moments of political changes[43].

The political strategy of co-optation in the domestic dimension of shaping the institutional structures of fragile states also indicates intriguing aspects of research analyses. In the context of these analyses, co-option is expressed primarily in the institutional dimension, which organizes the interactions of state institutions with important actors on the political scene, such as entities representing serious arguments of power. The structure of institutions operating in the state and social mediation space is diverse. In this context, it is worth recalling an example of Zambia, where the government administration co-opted traditional tribal chiefs to participate in the system of state power. The main goal was to speed up the country's democratization process, even though the position of "tribal chief" was never a democratic institution.[44] Statebuilding also played a significant role in the colonial era. The Japanese authorities administering Taiwan sought to discipline the local political elite by formalizing a system of punishments and rewards in exchange for obedience to the state. Meanwhile, the American authorities occupying the Phil-

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[40] C. Boix, *Democracy and Redistribution*, Cambridge University Press 2003, pp. 130–203; M. Barnett, S. Fang, C. Zürcher, *Compromised Peacebuilding*…, pp. 611–618.

[41] K. Russell, N. Sambanis, *Stopping the violence but blocking the peace: dilemmas of foreign-imposed nation building after the ethnic war*, «International Organization» 2022, Vol. 76, pp. 126–163.

[42] A. Tajuddin, *Potentials for Democratic Development in Timor-Leste*, «Journal of Global South Studies» 2016, Vol. 33, No. 1, pp. 83–114.

[43] A.M. Brandenburger, B.J. Nalebuff, *Co-Opetition*…, pp. 198–232.

[44] K. Baldwin, *The Paradox of Traditional Chiefs in Democratic Africa*, Cambridge University Press 2016, pp. 101–158.

ippines, in an incompletely thought-out way, contributed to the weakening of the state. In the opinion of the American administration, the interests of the local political elites seemed to coincide with the goals of American policy[45].

The perspective of future research on fragile states in the context of the lawfulness of power also touches on complex issues of statebuilding and nationbuilding, which is of great importance for many countries of the "Third World." In turn, the post-Cold War period of geopolitical changes was associated with a general paradigm shift in the field of international relations but also affected significant changes in the perception of the socio-political conditions of fragile states. Therefore, binary systems emphasizing the one-dimensional "success-failure" pattern no longer reflect the specificity of the conditions of the ongoing processes and the multidimensional reality of the changes taking place.

In other words, the so-called transition from the bilateral system of international relations to the multilateral paradigm of international relations concerning fragile states turned out to be more diverse, complex, and often more counterproductive than the political theory of the past era indicated[46]. The empirical actuality also turned out to be unconventional and atypical. It oscillated between – often distant from each other – poles of success and failure. In turn, focusing on the "imposition approach" – emphasizing domestic preferences in the issue of statebuilding and problems of the distribution of political funds, and at the same time suggesting the variability and dynamics of political transformations – highlights the importance of domestic and international elements in creating a stabilized reality of fragile states. Thus, the main goal of research on the changing reality of weak and falling states in the context of the dynamically changing concept of legitimacy seems to be to capture the differences in the way in which international entities – but also domestic actors of the local political scene – shape the reality of fragile states, using various tools and forms of political pressure[47].

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[45] R. Matsuzaki, *Statebuilding by Imposition: Resistance and Control in Colonial Taiwan and the Philippines*, Cornell University Press 2019.

[46] G. Swenson, *Why U.S. Efforts to Promote the Rule of Law in Afghanistan Failed*, «International Security» 2017, Vol. 42, pp. 114–151; O. Richmond, *Failed Statebuilding: Intervention and the Dynamics of Peace Formation*, Yale University Press 2014, pp. 31–102.

[47] A.M. Brandenburger, B.J. Nalebuff, *Co-Opetition…*, pp. 234–258.

Conclusions

In the case of fragile states, co-option and legitimacy are important because they transform political power into causative power, enabling political control without coercion. In political instability, the lack of co-option and legitimacy undermines constructive engagement between the state and society to resolve crises, which weakens the state's capacity and thus contributes to its instability. Multiple sources of co-option and legitimization often compete and even conflict with each other. Antagonisms between external sources of rightfulness and internal sources undoubtedly deepen political instability. Thus, the wide differences in co-option and perceptions of legitimacy between different areas and communities present governments with difficult judgments about when to negotiate and accommodate competing non-state actors and when to ignore or eliminate them.

Conflicts between pre-existing customary practice and "introduced" laws and institutions can also delegitimize public institutions and question the need for co-option of relevant political actors. Challenges posed by politicians with power rooted in charismatic legitimacy threaten those representatives of political elites whose power is based on both rational-legal and "traditional" sources of legitimacy. Consequently, this contributes to increased instability because it hinders constructive relations between the state and civil society and prevents the institutions of power from defining the final rules of the game or ensuring a common socio-cultural framework within which the citizens of a given state function. International agencies working in unstable situations must put much more effort into implementing their assumptions and securing and controlling the interactivity of their own institutions of influence.

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