Brooke Coe, **Sovereignty in the South. Intrusive Regionalism in Africa, Latin America, and Southeast Asia**, Cambridge University Press, New York 2019, 238 pages, £ 75.00, ISBN 9781108496797

In her book "Sovereignty in the South. Intrusive Regionalism in Africa, Latin America, and Southeast Asia" Brooke Coe purports to offer the first study *directly* comparing the phenomenon of intrusive, that is, (state) sovereignty-eroding regionalism. Coe defines intrusive regionalism as "actions carried out by states and (especially) regional organizations – located in the same region as the target state – that encroach upon domestic political or security matters, seeking to monitor or alter state action in some way or affect the outcome of a domestic crisis" (p. 5).

Her main argument can be summarized as follows: In the past decades, we could observe an interesting variation in the way the norm of non-interference was (re-)interpreted by different regional actors in the global South – with African (sub-)regional organizations adopting policies that deeply penetrate the *domaine réservé* of their member-states, thus significantly reducing the scope of the non-intervention principle; Latin American regional bodies, albeit not promoting as far-reaching changes as their African counterparts, also successively diluting the non-intervention norm; and finally, Southeast Asia, despite moderate adjustments, generally upholding a conservative interpretation of the non-intervention principle.

Coe attributes this variation to a coincidence of factors, the first one being the presence or absence of so-called macronationalisms, that is, (emergent) regional identity discourses, which, in the case of Africa and Latin America, had already prior to the end of the Cold War eroded the non-intervention norm to a certain degree, but which did not exist to a similar extent in Southeast Asia. In addition to the regional-identity-factor, Coe introduces two other variables explaining the rise of intrusive regionalism, namely African states' poor economic performance (and their concomitant need for international legitimation); and the spread of democratic regimes in Latin America. According to Coe, both variables led to a greater willingness to adopt interventionist policies. By contrast, neither condition could be found in Southeast Asia, which, according to Coe, explains why the non-intervention norm has remained largely intact there.

There is much to commend about this book. In terms of methodology, Coe's mixed-method design – which includes both quantitative and qualitative elements – seems an appropriate approach to address the phenomenon under scrutiny. Also, the book's general aspiration – to offer a comparative analysis where so far mainly country- or region-specific evidence has been collected – is laudable. I could not agree more with Coe's statement that the "comparative regionalism literature is ripe for such a broadly comparative study. This is due to the availability of excellent work on particular regions written by area experts and to the general dearth of studies *directly* comparing multiple regions" (p. 8). At the same time, however, Coe acknowledges the difficult tradeoff between breadth and depth, and, unfortunately, she does not manage to strike an appropriate balance between theoretical breadth

and empirical depth, in that her sweeping theoretical arguments are often not backed up by appropriate empirical evidence and references. A compelling comparative study would provide enough empirical depth to support the broader theoretical claims, yet unfortunately in the case of *Sovereignty in the South* the lack of empirical substantiation undermines the author's aspiration to offer a theory of intrusive regionalism. Before elaborating upon this point in more detail, however, let me address a number of issues related to the study's conceptual/methodological underpinnings as well as its overall structure, both of which I found somewhat problematic.

As the author seeks to trace changes in the interpretation of norms over time and across regions, she necessitates tools to measure such changes. However, Coe's operationalization of the concept of "norm strength" is somewhat flawed. On p. 44 et seq. Coe addresses the tricky question of how to measure the strength of the non-intervention norm, writing that in order to capture changes over time and across regions, she will consider both "law and practice". This way of operationalizing norm strength, however, entirely ignores that law *is* practice, in that state practice is one of two constitutive elements of customary international law, the other one being *opinio juris*. Therefore, the two allegedly separate tests the author offers on p. 45 - "[f]irst, what is the legal status of the norm and/or practices that violate the norm? Second, how often and to what degree do relevant actors' practices comply with or violate the norm" – are actually not separate at all, as "relevant actors' practices" (test 2) actually co-determine the legal status of the norm in question (test 1).

Another feature of the book that struck me as quite awkward was its structure, and, on a related note, the way the author develops her argument. The succession of the chapters is quite strange: initially, one is under the impression that the author wants to derive her theoretical generalizations inductively, based on the empirical evidence presented in chapters 1 to 5, which analyze the presence or absence of the different explanatory variables in the three regions, and trace how these variables correlate with region-specific interpretations of the non-intervention principle. However, these chapters are preceded by an introductory chapter, which outlines the author's explanatory framework. Confusingly, this chapter already offers much of the information that is later replicated in chapters 2 to 5, which creates a considerable amount of redundancy. It also means that Coe thus essentially uses the same evidence she collected to *build* her theory to *test* said theory.

Moreover, the purpose of chapter 1 remains entirely unclear. In this chapter Coe selectively discusses examples of (military and diplomatic) interventions in response to unconstitutional changes of government, but why do so if later chapters will address this issue again? Also, Coe's choice of empirical illustrations in this chapter is somewhat unfortunate. Instead of discussing, as she does, the crisis in Côte d'Ivoire to illustrate limitations upon the non-intervention principle in the event of unconstitutional changes of government – a crisis where African (sub-)regional organizations ultimately did *not* intervene militarily – the author would have been well advised to choose another crisis to demonstrate the existence of intrusive regionalism on the African continent. In this context, the Gambian unconstitutional change of government comes to mind, where a sub-regional

organization (ECOWAS) *did* intervene militarily for the purposes of protecting democracy. This case would have served the author's argumentative purpose much better than the crisis in Côte d'Ivoire, where intrusive regionalism was *not* carried to its logical extreme, i.e. military intervention. Moreover, linking African intrusive regionalism to Latin American intrusive regionalism, as the author does on p. 42, is a bit of a crude generalization, as African (sub-)regional organizations' responses to unconstitutional changes of governments are much more radical – not only on paper but also in practice, as the case of The Gambia shows.

Another weakness of the book mentioned above is the author's tendency to paint her argument in rough brushstrokes, often failing to back up her sweeping claims with concrete evidence. Let me give you two examples of this tendency (which actually permeates all chapters), one relating to Asian regionalism and the other one referring to African regionalism. Beginning with Asia, on p. 26 the author makes the claim that after the Asian financial crisis ASEAN members justified a modest qualification of the non-intervention norm "in terms of image management in the wake of the economic crisis" – however, she provides no reference to buttress this claim about the causal connection between economic weakness and a re-interpretation of the non-intervention norm. Another example of this lack of substantiation is Coe's argument that, just as in the case of ASEAN after the financial crisis, the intrusive practices adopted by the African Union were the result of economic weakness, which made Africa more vulnerable to donor influence, which in turn led to the adoption of intrusive regional policies aimed at protecting human rights, democracy, and so on. Again, no sources are referenced that would support such a claim. I highly doubt that it was the influence of Western donors that prompted African states to create a right to military intervention (Article 4(h) of the African Union Constitutive Act) which constitutes a clear violation of Article 2(4) of the UN Charter. Why would a regional actor in desperate need of international legitimacy adopt a normative framework that violates *the* foundational rule of the road governing inter-state relations, namely the prohibition of the use of force enshrined in the UN Charter – which also happens to be *jus cogens*? Again, the author's argument would have much benefited from empirical substantiation and adequate references, but instead of tracing in detail the genesis of Art. 4(h) and demonstrating how donor influence/legitimacy-seeking led to its adoption, the author confines herself to pointing out broader correlations between events, without, however, plausibly demonstrating a causal connection between them. Interestingly, she does not even discuss Article 4(h) in any detail (except for a brief reference to the Ezulwini Consensus on p. 194), even though this provision is *the* hallmark of African intrusive regionalism.

In sum, the author's tendency to make sweeping theoretical arguments but then foregoing a detailed analysis of the empirical facts and providing adequate references ultimately means that the book fails to redeem its central promise – to offer a compelling explanation of variations in intrusive regionalism in the global South.

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