

## CHAPTER 3

# LET'S PLAY EQUALS OR STOP PRETENDING: RECOGNIZING THE MINISTATE IN INTERNATIONAL SOCIETY

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### ABSTRACT

This article expands on Adam Watson's discussion of organized inequality and the 'ministate' in international society. Watson, a diplomat-scholar associated with the English School of International Relations, maintained that change in international society occurs through resolving the contradictions that emerge between our ideals and realities on the ground, further noting that we have to reconsider the status of chronically aid-dependent states as one such contradiction. While recognized as states, these chronically-dependent states fall far from meeting the material conditions of statehood and a stark gap has thus opened between their legal existence as states and their ability to deliver the functions of a state. The 'ministate' is a possible new category of existence for these entities that can resolve the contradictions that have emerged in our contemporary international society around the question of (failed) statehood. The MIRAB economics model, meantime, demonstrates that aid-dependent development is possible. Can we, then, actually proceed with recognizing aid-dependent states as ministates? The article considers two possible pathways to ministatehood, voluntary renunciation and derecognition, and considers the implications of a two-tier international society of donors/recipients following our failure to build an international society of equals.

**Keywords:** English School, Adam Watson, inequality, foreign aid, MIRAB

## 1. Introduction

'When I travel', says Saad Ali Shire, the foreign minister of the self-declared state of Somaliland, 'I am treated like a foreign minister. We deal with the UN and the international community as an independent country. We are treated de facto independent' (interview with Keating, 2018). But Shire is not a foreign minister as Somaliland is not recognized as a state but an autonomous region of Somalia. Keating is puzzled with the contradiction between the legal and practical circumstances in this case. The impoverished and hardly functioning Somalia enjoys international recognition with all the rights and privileges associated with statehood. Yet the relatively well-functioning and prosperous Somaliland does not officially exist. How, Keating (2018) asks, can we account for this odd situation?

This article contributes an English School of International Relations (ES henceforth) perspective on such contradictions by turning especially to Adam Watson's (1997) idea of recognizing new categories of existence in international society. The Somaliland case is related to the 'first principles' (Wight, 1977) or the 'constitutional legitimacy' (Watson, 2007) of international society in the ES literature which are intersubjectively agreed by the overwhelming majority of the members of international society. The ES has also developed a games analogy where international society is likened to a game of 'let's-play-sovereign-states' (Manning, 1975, p. 132). Chief among the rules of the game is the 'equality' of all the players. But the game also masks unsettling issues like profound inequalities between the players. I earlier argued with reference to EU-Africa relations that it has turned into a 'let's-play-equals' game where the players are aware of the structural inequality between them but pretend otherwise (Ruacan, 2016).

Watson (1997) is proposing that we stop pretending and recognize new categories of existence such as 'ministates' with a focus on two entities: de facto states and Jackson's (1987) quasi states (Watson, 1997, pp. 69-76). Both are 'client or subordinate political entities' due to their limited size, stage of development or experience (Watson, 1997, p. 75). As Caspersen (2009) notes, the situation of de facto states is akin to quasi states as they often rely on a patron state. Watson maintains a similar position and suggests that both can be treated similarly once an internationally recognized category is created (Watson, 1997, p. 76). In the rest of the article, I employ the phrase 'ministate' to refer to both entities. A more recent term coined by Johnston is 'aid states' which are heavily dependent on aid and shaped by donors and foreign NGOs (interview with Beaumont, 2021).

In economics, ‘ministates’ have been studied under the Migration, Remittances, Aid and Bureaucracy or MIRAB model by Bertram and Watters in the mid-1980s mainly out of donor-recipient relations between New Zealand and the small South Pacific islands. MIRAB functions as workers from the islands migrate to New Zealand; start sending remittances back home; New Zealand keeps sending aid and the aid-administering island bureaucracy becomes a major employer on the islands. MIRAB demonstrates how aid has become a decisive factor in the continuation of economic life on these islands and maintains that this near complete dependency on a donor represents an entirely new system (Bertram and Watters, 1985).

MIRAB and what Watson (1997, 2007) calls a post-Westphalian aid-donor system are similar to each other. As Bertram stressed, MIRAB is an unorthodox approach that challenges the World Bank approach to development which prefers private sector and exports. Yet MIRAB demonstrates that aid-dependent development is also sustainable - just not self-sustainable. The standards of living in MIRAB nations are also relatively high. One caveat is that MIRAB presumes the continuation of aid by donors which is often tied up with geopolitical considerations. With this in mind, Bertram maintains that MIRAB can be strengthened with contributions from related disciplines like sociology or history (Bertram, 1999).

Watson’s work is a suitable ally to MIRAB as it is itself a challenge to the Westphalian orthodoxy in IR theory and a historically-informed framework for understanding those geopolitical conditions that keep our aid-donor system going. Besides, the international political economy dimension of Watson’s as well as the ES’ work has remained weak. MIRAB’s demonstration of the economic dimension of the aid-donor system will be a way of addressing this particular weakness in the ES when the two are synthesized.

I start the article by defining the ministate and the benefits that can be obtained by recognizing it. The Montevideo Convention’s (1933) definition of the state is the most widely used one although defining a small/ministate is a different matter. This contribution defines the ministate in relation to the post-Westphalian aid-donor system that has emerged particularly strongly in the post-Cold War era (Watson, 2007). The second section discusses broader constitutional issues of legitimacy and equality in international society and why, from an ES perspective, we need to recognize the ministate. How change occurs in international society is the guiding question in this section. Aside from revolutions or major wars/peace settlements, Watson (1992) points to an evolutionary route to change in what he calls the ‘legitimacy / practice nexus’ that works through resolving the contradictions between them. Recognizing the ministate is one way of resolving contradictions in contemporary international society.

The third section considers voluntary renunciation and derecognition of statehood as the two possible pathways to ministatehood. Voluntary renunciation was discussed in the late 1960s and early 1970s but derecognition is a recent debate. I also consider in this section some radical proposals for the reconstruction of derecognized states and stress the need to balance these against the lessons of history that Watson lays out in his pendulum metaphor. Accordingly, any attempt at reconstructing states would need to strike an optimum mix of peace, liberties and material advantage to those on the receiving end (Watson, 1992).

The final section discusses 'order through world society' which can follow the derecognition of persistently failing states especially where 'world society' refers to peoples in the ES literature (Bull, 1995). When we discuss 'peace' and 'liberties', we ordinarily have in mind international peace and freedom from foreign rule. But failed states challenge these assumptions. Order through world society relies on the peoples rather than the state machinery. If order is a 'pattern of human activity that sustains elementary, primary or universal goals of social life' (Bull, 1995, p. 4), and if some states are unable to deliver these, then the people can with help from international donors. From the MIRAB end, this means replacing the 'B' (bureaucracy) with the 'P' (people).

## **2. Aid, Chronic Dependency and the Ministate**

Previous studies tried to define and enumerate ministates. Crowards (2002) defined them using cut-off points on population, land area and income, and found 79. Others, using different cut-off criteria, came up with different figures. However, as Keohane (1969) reminds, cut-off points are arbitrary. Keohane reviewed other works that attempted to define small like the (in) ability to provide for one's own security - but that left the only non-small states as (nuclear) superpowers. To overcome the definitional impasse, Keohane stressed that 'small' is related to how a state is situated in a particular international system (Keohane, 1969). 'Systemic dependence' as emphasized by Comai (2018) and Rezvani (2016) either on a patron state or on international aid is one defining criterion.

In MIRAB, a 'small' state has 'price-tracking status' in the world economy, lacks a successful export staple and has political access to aid and migration (Bertram, 1999, p. 114). As Bertram adds, there is often a colonial history between the donor(s) and the recipient(s) (1985, 1999). For Watson, the ministate is defined in terms of excessive and enduring dependence on foreign aid in a system directed by a hegemonic core of donors; the pouring of aid to former colonies is also related to ongoing 'possessiveness' of them by at least some former colonizers (Scipio, 1965, p. 156).<sup>1</sup> Accordingly, Watson notes that we

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1 Scipio is the pseudonym that Watson assumed to author *Emergent Africa*.

can range the two-hundred or so independent states in the present international society in a recipient-donor list, according to how much help they get or give. At the top we will find some fifty obscure small states quite unable to manage by themselves, and at the bottom some twenty rich powerful donors led by Japan, United States and Western Europe, supporting the whole core-periphery structure on their shoulder like Atlas. One interesting thing about this list is its durability. A similar list drawn up fourscore years ago, say in 1920, would range the political entities in much the same order, though two thirds of the states in the list were then formally classed as dependencies (Watson, 2007, pp. 72-73; emphasis added).

Durability of this situation is key. Hattori notes that if aid were a transitory phenomenon, it would decrease over time yet donors and recipients have mostly remained the same in the post-Cold War era (Hattori, 2003, p. 234). Numerous studies focus on international aid as policy tool or a development question yet there exists little theorization of aid as a broader systemic issue (Hattori, 2001). MIRAB offers a strong theorization of aid-dependent development in economics but IR still lacks a firm theory on this. Hattori (2003) adds that a focus on the moral dimension of aid is also missing from the literature. But aid, understood as ‘unreciprocated gift’, is a moral practice with strong roots in the Western tradition especially. Today’s institutionalized multilateral aid system, structured around the OECD’s Development Assistance Committee, has benefits to the donors as well and reflects Western societies’ tradition of philanthropic giving (Hattori, 2003).

Watson does theorize aid on the two fronts that Hattori (2003) identifies as missing in the literature: aid as a structural issue and aid with a moral dimension, underpinned by two principles: prudence and moral obligation (Watson, 2007). Behind this system is a ‘diplomacy of justice’, a term Watson (2007, p. 85) borrows from Vincent, underwritten not only by interests but also a heightened sense of moral responsibility towards the recipients. Watson’s work is thus worth engaging if only because it fills significant gaps in the literature.

Aid is not a colonial tool since, among other reasons as Brown reminds, there is no desire in today’s concert of donors to rule the recipients (2013, 273). During what Bull called *The Revolt Against the West*, a lot has been achieved in our attempts to establish an equal post-colonial international society; starting with the repudiation of unequal treaties imposed during colonial rule, the Afro-Asian movement beginning in Bandung in 1955, landmark instruments like the UN Convention on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (1966) and a New International Economic Order in the 1970s (Bull, 1984). Yet the Revolt did not produce lasting outcomes. Faron and Laitin (2004) emphasize that weak states are now a chief threat to the international system and maintaining aid to them is increasingly a burden on the donors.

Why carry this burden? As Henrikson stresses, the survival of states is a solidarity test and we have to recognize the special circumstances of struggling states in a 'new deal' for international society (2001, p. 80). One possible option in this deal could be to recognize ministates. The benefits of this new category would be multiple to unrecognized entities especially. Lake points to one as a 'principled status...legitimated by the international community' which would shorten conflicts and de-radicalize the parties since unyielding categories like a fully independent state create the opposite effect (Lake, 2003, p. 318).

A recognized status would enable these entities access to Official Development Assistance, valid export certificates, international insurance and to other international public goods. It could also resolve the 'independence vs. viability' dilemma as Caspersen (2009) notes for de facto states which need to balance the option of independence from the patron state and viability as an independent state. Finally, a recognized status would include them in international society's moral agenda. Schoiswohl proposes the creation of 'an entity with some sort of personality, which correspondingly endows it with its international legal status to the extent necessary to meet the needs of international society' (2004, p. 212). The benefits of a new category are therefore multiple. An additional benefit is that it resolves the contradictions between the theory and practice of international society. The section below discusses this point.

### **3. Transforming the Constitutional Legitimacy of International Society: Recognizing the Ministate**

International society rests on intersubjectively agreed foundational norms. In the ES literature, Watson (2007) refers to these as the 'constitutional legitimacy' of international society. The agreement that we will be (nation) states is a chief example. According to Watson, these principles change when deep contradictions arise between them and practical realities. Within the 'legitimacy/practice nexus', practice eventually alters the legitimacy (or theory) of international society. As he describes:

Law and theory and the sense of what is proper and fitting are culturally conditioned and associated with tradition and precedent. They are therefore comparatively solid and resistant to change; and so is the legitimacy they confer. Practice, on the other hand, is much more influenced by expediency and empirical advantage. It is fluid, and like water adjusts quickly to new levels as circumstances alter. But while legitimacy holds back changes in the rules, it shifts imperceptibly over time, to come closer to long-established realities. Time and familiarity legitimize practice' (Watson, 1992, p. 130).

Manning (1975) likened international society to a game of playing sovereign states. I maintained earlier that this has turned into a game of pretending to be equals departing from EU-Africa relations (Ruacan, 2016). In Watson's analysis, 'the relationship of tropical Africa and the Caribbean to the developed areas of the world is basically still what it was a century ago' (Watson, 1997, p. 64). What is different is that we avoid saying so and dispense with the game of equals.

Can we keep playing these games? Too much inconsistency between the theory and practice of international society weakens its fabric and creates disorder as Watson (1992) warns. McKeil explores what such 'disorder' entails and underlines that one of its implications is confusion over the rules, the status of diplomatic relations and uncertainty over what actions can be taken (2020, p. 4). The confusion over the status of the 'foreign minister' of Somaliland constitutes a relevant example.

For Watson, the most pragmatic approach for clearing the confusion is to list states in order of dependence on aid and formalize inequality (1997). Once inequality is acknowledged, different types of governance models can be discussed. Krasner extensively discussed these under his term 'shared sovereignty' arrangements (Krasner 1999, 2001, 2004). The literature on shared sovereignty recognizes quasi states but underlines that it makes the European state the ideal against which others are judged. Most, if not all, non-European states then become failures (Clapham, 1998; Grovogui, 2002). Krasner and Risse (2014) argue that we need to discuss areas of 'limited statehood' which can be understood in sectoral or in territorial terms. In the fourth section, I add to these 'order through world society' which answers calls for a limited statehood through bypassing central governments or the 'B' in MIRAB.

As a diplomat, Watson has had first-hand experience of the developing world. He was the head of the Africa department of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office between 1956-1959. Later, he became a Senegal-based roving ambassador tasked with holding talks with the leaders of de-colonizing Africa. He ended his diplomatic career in 1968 and moved to the academia (Bernstein, 2007). He started examining the case of developing states and tried to build a moral case for treating them differently. He maintained that the assumption that 'states are sufficiently alike to be treated as members of the same set is more than a fallacy. It is a myth which influences our concept of international reality and distorts our judgement' (Watson, 1997, p. 69). He summarized the case for recognizing new categories by stressing that a

disturbingly large number of the supposedly equal members of our international society come under the heading of ministates. To recognize that their function in the international system is different from that of the United States or Singapore is a step, perhaps a necessary step, towards finding a more satisfying place in international society for ministates. A satisfying role needs to acknowledge and indeed foster their formal independence and self-reliance, and to develop a sense of partnership with the sources of aid. But the ministates need to accept an outside say in their domestic affairs. And we all need to recognize that states with different structures, have different functions in world society' (Watson, 1997, p.75).

Nationalism and pride constitute major obstacles to recognizing alternatives to statehood (Watson, 1997). Nevertheless, Krasner (2001), among others, insists that we can come up with pareto-efficient categories of statehood. Watson's ministate is one such pareto-efficient category. But how can the actual category of the ministate come about? The next section considers the two possible mechanisms: (1) voluntary renunciation of rights and duties of statehood by the states in question themselves (2) derecognition of their statehood by others.

#### **4. Pathways to Ministatehood: Voluntary Renunciation and Derecognition**

Voluntary renunciation of statehood already occurs. In August 1995, Bermudans voted to remain as a British overseas territory by a margin of three to one (The Independent, 1995). Bermuda is now one of the most prosperous territories in the world due mainly to its offshore finance sector (BBC News, 2018). Baldacchino (2010) considers Bermuda and other non-self governing territories against the benefits they obtain from not being an independent state. Neither is there a desire to be independent in most. He points to at least 16 non-self governing territories (14 are small islands), mostly former colonies, which serve as financial hubs or military outposts. That we are 'surprised' by their lack of desire for independence has to do with 'the value-laden discourse of mainstream political science along with the scrutiny of the United Nations Committee on Decolonization belie an enduring obsession with the mantra of sovereignty as an intrinsically laudable, and almost historically unavoidable, evolutionary route' (Baldacchino, 2010, p. 191).

Comai (2018) adds that we need to stop assuming that all political entities desire independence and self-sustainability, and points to MIRAB which very well demonstrates the possibility of dependent development – to Russia in his analysis of unrecognized states in the post-Soviet space (2018). This is a point reinforced by Rezvani (2016) who showcases

the advantages ‘partially independent territories’ enjoy compared to the alternative of independence.

A post-Westphalian approach will enable us to interpret aid differently too. Migration, aid and remittances have usually occurred yet as Bertram and Watters stress, they ‘now determine[s] the evolution of the system’ (1985, p. 497; emphasis in original). In this decisive role, aid ceases to be a supplement to income and becomes income itself. Donors/recipients subsequently form a single socioeconomic unit (Bertram and Watters, 1985). Watson pointed to a similar aid/donor system between the United States and the Caribbean islands. He called this an ‘imperial system’ where several small islands depended excessively on the USA (Watson, 1968).

Practical steps were taken in the international community to address small states. Two proposals, by the USA on 26 September 1969 and by the UK on 25 May 1970, were brought before the UN on their membership obligations. The USA proposed ‘associated membership’ for states that could not satisfy membership obligations other than the basic one of being ‘peace loving’. An associated member would still be a member of the General Assembly but would not vote or hold office. The UK proposed voluntary renunciation of membership rights which could potentially be resumed later. However, neither the US nor the UK proposal was deemed acceptable by the UN Legal Counsel who most likely found them in violation of the letter and the spirit of the equality principle (Schwebel, 1973, pp. 110-112).

The second pathway to ministatehood is through derecognition by other states. As Holm and Sending stress, there exists a reified recognition regime in international law where recognition is a one-off act unaltered by the subsequent behaviour of the recognized state (Holm and Sending, 2018). For long, recognition in international law has been ‘declaratory’ rather than ‘constitutive’ although normative approaches to recognition are rising (Erman, 2013). For Buchanan (1999), a justice-based approach to recognition is now essential. States which do not meet some minimum requirements in respecting human rights must not enjoy the rights and privileges of statehood.

Taylor discussed a program of ‘proactive cosmopolitanism’ where we, under the UN umbrella, derecognized states that systematically violated human rights and outlined a highly interventionist ‘state enhancement’ agenda. Taylor suggested that this agenda is necessary to prevent the collapse of international order. Proactive cosmopolitanism sets ‘the unfit as the unsovereign’ as Taylor (1999, p. 561) says, and actively intervenes to make states fit again.

Such a radical state enhancement can be a controversial and an overambitious project.

Controversial since it involves too much. In proactive cosmopolitanism, the radical state enhancement process begins as soon as a state is derecognized by the UN. It includes a series of measures from a UN-issued certificate of good governance to a code of conduct for politicians, an arms registry and approval of a new constitution by a designated international agency (Taylor, 1999, pp. 561-563).

Overambitious since Watson (1992) has demonstrated that such undertakings do not last long. In one of his latest works, Watson (1992) has identified a spectrum of four ideal-type historical international states systems with two extremes. The spectrum ranges systems from too little to too much intervention amounting to direct foreign rule. The two extremes have both failed across history. Too little intervention left liberties untouched but failed to check the excesses of states in pursuit of more power and cost us peace. Over time, more stringent international measures have been introduced for maintaining peace more effectively. Too much intervention may have delivered peace and material advantage but cost local communities their liberties. These have eventually generated a backlash against foreign rule (Watson, 1992).

Broadly speaking, the history of the international system can be told in terms of a to and fro movement between the two extremes of this spectrum. The one historical trend that emerges is that the spectrum's middle area, where there is an optimum mix of peace, liberties and material advantage, works the best. Watson also developed a metaphor to explain all of this. He likened this spectrum of systems to a constantly swinging pendulum that gravitates toward the middle once it reaches extremes (Watson, 1992).

Taylor's (1999) agenda is too close to extreme interventionism in my opinion. A more optimal and practical criterion for interventionism, also implied in Watson's work, is to consider the burden a state imposes on the rest of the members of international society and aim towards burden reduction. The two concrete examples Watson points to are if the state concerned pollutes the environment or if it fails to curb its population increase (Watson, 1982, p. 37). 'Environmental interventionism' is indeed an emerging debate that has flared up after Brazil's inaction over Amazon wildfires (Douglas, 2019). A state that pollutes the environment, causes excessive population growth or produces mass refugee flows does impose a burden on the rest of international society. Consider Syria - a state that has burdened Türkiye<sup>2</sup> especially alongside Jordan and Lebanon with mass refugee inflows since 2011. This

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2 According to official UNHCR figures, Turkey has become host to the largest number of refugees in the world with 3.6 million Syrians and 330.000 refugees from other nationalities. See <https://www.unhcr.org/tr/en/refugees-and-asylum-seekers-in-turkey>

burden could be the basis upon which Türkiye, Jordan and/or Lebanon can derecognize Syria. The proactive cosmopolitan agenda should be limited to easing the specific burden a state imposes on the rest with an enhanced role for world society supported by donors. This is how ‘order through world society’ can come about as Section IV discusses.

There exists no general procedure under international law for derecognizing a state. It is not a common practice in modern times but not without precedent either. In 2000, India derecognized the Saharawi Arab Democratic Republic it had recognized back in 1985 (Dasgupta, 2000). A classic example is the derecognition of Taiwan by the USA in 1978. Other examples include the derecognition of the Government of Democratic Kampuchea (the Pol Pot regime) by the UK in 1979 and by Australia in 1981 (Auron, 2013, pp. 480-481). From an ES perspective, the question of recognition is related to the order and justice dilemma discussed by Bull (1995). Recognizing or not recognizing a secessionist movement can be a choice between prioritizing a precarious inter-state order over justice for peoples and vice versa. State recognition/derecognition is also a political act as again the recent switching of recognition to China over Taiwan by the Solomon Islands reportedly in return for Chinese aid and other assistance (Power and Tobin, 2019). Indeed, the legal debate around recognition centered around the question of whether recognition is a technical or a political matter.

Kelsen (1941) and Lauterpacht (1945, 1947) have shaped this debate. Lauterpacht tried to create a technical approach to recognition to minimize the influence of power relations and the arbitrary nature of the process. He pointed to a right to be recognized which meant that others had a duty of recognition (Lauterpacht, 1947). Once recognition is construed as a right, its withdrawal becomes a cautious matter. Lauterpacht suggested that withdrawal should be a technical, exceptional, non-politicized and a collective undertaking by the international community. Recognition would usually be withdrawn from an extinguishing state to recognize a successor (s) (Lauterpacht, 1945).

Kelsen (1941), however, did not argue for a right or a duty of recognition. Neither did he take issue with the ‘withdrawal of recognition’ but an *actus contrarius* which establishes a new status. Kelsen examined recognition under two categories: political and legal. Political recognition, the act of sending diplomats and or concluding treaties, is a choice for the recognizing state. Legal recognition must follow a decision as to what a state is under international law. As that law is shaped by state practice, it will be onto other states to decide what a state is (Kelsen, 1941, pp. 605-608). A state can also reverse this decision. For Kelsen, any state

is entitled, under general international law, at any time to establish the fact that a community which has been a state in an international law sense, has ceased to be such, because it no longer fulfils the condition prescribed by general international law. The establishment of such a fact is not a withdrawal of recognition. The establishment of a fact cannot be withdrawn, it can only be replaced by another establishment, namely, the establishment that the previously established fact no more exists. It is... an *actus contrarius* when compared with the act of recognition (Kelsen, 1941, p. 613).

The ministate would come about through an *actus contrarius* as a new status under international law. This allows sidelining the established rules of international society such as working with official government representatives. *Actus contrarius* essentially enables 'order through world society' or ignoring the 'B' in MIRAB.

A deeper normative question is the purpose of recognizing a state as Auron (2013) underlines. Why do states exist to begin with? The answer is related to the ideal of a 'good life' that is a celebrated concept in political theory. Wight (1960) maintained a distinction between good life vs. survival, associating the inside of states with the good life and the outside with survival. Yet the presence of many ineffective states turns this assumption very problematic. It is time to recognize that a 'good life' can be attained with international assistance and under different categories of existence such as ministates.

The literature on derecognition assumes that it will ordinarily be followed recognizing an alternative or emerging government. This need not be the case, at least immediately, and we can focus on empowering world society actors over chronically ineffective central governments towards a good life. I have been referring to this approach as 'order through world society' which bypasses governments to address the needs and aspirations of frustrated citizens. Recent events in Lebanon suggest that donors may have started sidelining corrupt governments already.

### **5. A Good Life, Order through World Society or MIRAB without the 'B'**

Haiti would be 'better off without aid' or 'at least, without the bad kind of aid that allows the administration and the elites to continue without changing', says former UN special representative Joël Boutrou (interview with Beaumont, 2021). Conditions in Haiti, example of an 'aid state' in Johnston's terms, have deteriorated since the 2010 earthquake despite receiving \$13bn from donors. In aid states like Haiti, Johnston explains, basic public services are almost non-existent or outsourced to NGOs while a wealthy elite enjoy many privileges. This has created a situation where there is a 'separation between the people and a government that is not governing' in Johnston's analysis (interview with Beaumont, 2021).

Aid to the central governments has become a fundamental problem in the development enterprise due to misallocation and corruption. Meantime, from Indonesia to Somalia, private and non-governmental actors, with the help of diaspora communities where one exists, have proven more successful in developing their communities (Menkhaus, 2014; Gisselquist 2014, Hameiri and Scarpello 2018).

Consider Somalia. As Menkhaus (2014) explores, over two decades of efforts by the international community to build a successful state there have failed. (Menkhaus, 2014). We should not, however, overlook the relative success of local/non-governmental actors there in providing an alternative governance infrastructure. Informal governance networks, business associations, sharia courts, women's associations, town elders or airport authorities are remarkably more successful than the Somalian central state - a situation Menkhaus (2007) calls as 'governance without government' which is also the case elsewhere. Through these successful non-governmental actors, Menkhaus underlines, Somalia can turn into a 'functional failed state' with 'weak institutions but with a durable social compact and other critical features that allow for basic security, economic activity and peace' (Menkhaus, 2014, p. 155). Others, departing from fieldwork in Liberia, have labelled the success of local actors as the enactment of 'everyday sovereignty' (Carvalho et al. 2019).

I am referring to the same as 'order through world society' with the use of ES terminology where empowered world society actors take the leading role in governance. From a MIRAB standpoint, this means replacing the 'B' with world society actors where necessary. As Pella (2015) demonstrated, world society had played a destructive role in the late 19th and early 20th centuries during the colonization of Africa. However, as Clark (2007) explains, world society actors have also been crucial in creating progressive principles of legitimacy at critical moments in history. A strong world society can again assume a progressive role in an aid-dependent development model that bypasses the 'B'.

Once we recognize persistently failing states as 'ministates', we can start working with world society actors within them to create, as in the Somalia example, functioning systems and address the rightful frustrations of the citizenry through these. Moreover, given that central government representatives are a major stumbling block to achieving development priorities, ministates can obtain representation in official international fora such as regional and multilateral organizations through world society actors. Indeed, that is the purpose of de-recognition without recognizing an alternative governmental authority: to empower world society. We can still, as Menkhaus stresses, try to build a coordinating central government. But strong states have become a catchment tool for foreign aid and harassment of society. Creating

nascent states, and nascent states only with a coordinative function, is a better alternative in Menkhaus' (2004) analysis.

In 1986, Vincent declared a 'basic rights' initiative that called for the minimum rights of life and nutrition for all to be met (Vincent, 1986). But as Gonzale-Palaez and Buzan (2003) explain, Vincent could not specify how this would be achieved in practice as ensuring these basic rights got entangled with the question of humanitarian intervention at every corner. How would we make sure of these rights without physically intervening? This is why derecognition is a useful approach which as Auron stresses is a 'non-violent, diplomatic intervention' (2013, p. 443). Order through world society can be seen as a more expansive basic rights initiative coupled with derecognition as a diplomatic intervention in cases of protracted state failure.

The aid-donor system is showing signs of evolving in this direction as frustrated donors are increasingly reluctant to work with central governments. One recent example is aid to Lebanon following the devastating explosion at the Beirut port in August 2020. A concert of donors including France, Britain, Canada and the USA have declared that their post-explosion aid will only be delivered to trustworthy organizations such as the Lebanese Red Cross or be channelled through UN agencies. John Barsa, an official with the United States Agency for International Development, declared unreservedly that American aid 'is absolutely not going to the government. Our aid is going to the people of Lebanon' (CBC, 2020). This is the first time when donors underlined that the €253 million relief aid raised by French president Emanuel Macron will be sent directly to the Lebanese people over the Lebanese government as Khatib (2020) underlines. It is, in other words, a crucial first in the empowerment of Lebanese world society actors over its government and thus a significant development in what I referred to as 'order through world society' or MIRAB without the 'B'.

## **6. Conclusion**

This article revisited some of our existing assumptions about equality through ministates as discussed by Watson (1992, 1997) and proposed synthesizing his work with Bentham and Watters' (1985) MIRAB model. The underlying concern was how to bridge the gap between the practice and theory of our international society: how we 'pretend' to be equals in a deeply entrenched aid-donor system of unequals. Recognizing the ministate, either through voluntary renunciation or derecognition, bridges this gap. It also leaves us with a two-tier international society made up of states and ministates. How can we make sense of this two-tier international society?

As Clapton (2017) and Keene (2014) already argued, we can, and should, consider international society in terms of stratification rather than equality. International society

thus becomes a ‘society of differently situated members enjoying different sets of rights and obligations’ (Clapton 2017, p. 367). Keene (2014) explains how we can re-imagine the international as constituting a ‘space’, operating on the basis of social power in a neo-Weberian sense, and study who stands where within this space (Keene, 2014) - as donors and recipients for instance.

The ministate is placed in a two-tier international society based on an aid/donor hierarchy. This need not mean, however, that we are ranking states. In a review of the literature on hierarchy, Mattern and Zarakol (2016) have identified several different forms and logics of hierarchy. From among these, the ministate fits a ‘logic of positionality’ where the members have position-dependent roles (Mattern and Zarakol, 2016, p. 637). The ministate brings a system where the member states are positioned as donors or recipients and inequality is a new intersubjectively agreed upon ‘first principle’ (Wight, 1973) or a ‘constitutional legitimacy’ principle (Watson, 2007) for international society.

Recall when Watson stresses how Singapore and the USA have different positions in international society and that acknowledging this is a requisite step (Watson, 1997, p. 75). This assertion incorporates a strong logic of positionality between wealthy Singapore/USA and aid dependent states. What follows is a re-arrangement of the rules and procedures of international organizations in a ‘pragmatic view’ of our contemporary international society (Watson, 1997, p. 76). These could include going back to the UK and USA proposals on voting and holding office in international organizations in a reformulated associated membership option.

Buzan and Schouenborg (2018) recently developed a model on how states can be placed in international society with separate mention for Watson’s (1992) ideas. They developed four ideal-type international societies starting with the egalitarian like-units model, regional/subglobal model, hierarchy/privilege model and functional differentiation model. Hierarchy/privilege is an international society where there are status differentiations such as great powers or a core/periphery structure. It is also this model that exposes a profound crisis of legitimacy in an international society supposedly based on equality. Functional differentiation questions the fundamental assumptions of state-centrism and territoriality with the potential inclusion of non-state members. Buzan and Schouenborg maintain that their hierarchy/privilege model can be suitably synthesized with Watson’s (1992) inquiry into hierarchy to not only revisit how status has underpinned international society historically but also to ‘help us understand the potential for change in our present global international society by pushing the boundaries of the imaginable’ (Buzan and Schouenborg, 2018, p. 233).

Status has underpinned international society from the inception indeed. Groups within international society have privileged themselves on the basis of self-proclaimed racial, religious, cultural or civilizational superiority. As Bull explains, we have not even aspired to equality in international society until *The Revolt Against the West* (Bull, 1984). Yet as Bain emphasizes, failed states have now so profoundly upset this ideal that talk of trusteeships has resurfaced (2003). Certainly, such an extreme gap between the theory and practice of international society is unprecedented. Change follows such dramatic moments as Watson's legitimacy/practice nexus identifies, and we may recognize an aid/donor hierarchy in international society and possibly functional ministates as in Buzan and Schouenborg's (2018) model dedicated to protecting (eco) refugees or for other functional tasks.

The recognition of the (functional) ministate would also be an unprecedented development as it divides international society not on the basis self-proclaimed superiorities as has been historically the case but due to practical necessity. Recently, Watson noted that 'the practice of the system has moved, and is still moving, so far from the Westphalian concept that the rules are likely to alter also, in order to correspond to changing practice' (2007, p. 78). Recognizing the ministate will be that moment when we match the theory and practice of our post-Westphalian aid-donor order, following the abject failure of the ideal of building an international society of equals during the *Revolt Against the West*.

Historically, the most successful international states systems have simultaneously delivered peace, liberties and material advantage in an optimum combination (Watson, 1992). The MIRAB model demonstrates that an international society of donors and dependent recipients is possible from an economics standpoint and does deliver on the material advantage side of this optimum mix - even if this is not the preferred model under the World Bank development orthodoxy. Poirine explains why we should drop that orthodoxy, come to terms with MIRAB and even start 'loving' it (1998). But there is one caveat before we can start loving MIRAB and that is the 'B'. In many places, the bureaucratic machinery of the state has become a major problem and this contribution suggests that we take the 'B' out or empower world society actors over central government representatives where necessary. By continuing to deploy MIRAB and Watson's work, among other unorthodox ones, we can initiate a new interdisciplinary conversation on alternatives for our evolving international society. We can even comfortably arrive at a point where Saad Ali Shire, instead of a make-believe foreign minister, becomes a true foreign minister - of the 'ministate' of Somaliland that is.

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