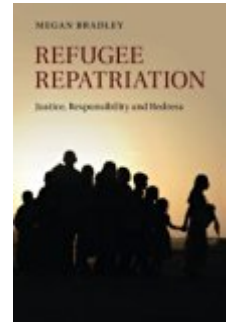


Megan Bradley. *Refugee Repatriation: Justice, Responsibility and Redress.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013. 304 pp. \$36.00, paper, ISBN 978-1-107-69955-7.



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Megan Bradley's book *Refugee Repatriation: Justice, Responsibility and Redress* is a timely contribution to the refugee studies literature. The establishment of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees' "decade of repatriation" in the 1990s and its subsequent pragmatic view toward repatriation has been widely criticized. It has been criticized for including few opportunities for alternative durable solutions and the "voluntary" nature of return has been called into question. Some have argued that long-term perspectives have been obscured, political agendas have taken priority over issues of human security, and there is a general lack of consideration for people's wishes.[1] Despite these criticisms, however, refugee return is still the preferred option of policymakers. By shifting the focus from states of asylum and resettlement to countries of origin in providing a solution to the problem of displaced populations, Bradley recognizes the need for a more rigorous examination of the conditions of just return. She thus makes a case for a revival of studies focusing on repatriation, in order to estab-

lish not only favorable but also just conditions of return. Just return goes beyond simple repatriation and land restitution measures; it promotes returnees' position in society by placing returnees on an equal footing with their non-displaced nationals, it contributes to peace and stability, and it ensures the sustainability of return.

The book consists of three parts. Part 1 engages with political theories of responsibility and international legislation concerning return—particularly international humanitarian law and human rights law—stressing the need for analyses of both casual and moral responsibility. Using political and historical analysis, and drawing on tools of moral theory and international law, Bradley calls for the recognition of a state's accountability for past wrongs, as well as its responsibility for building a constructive relationship between the returnees and the state. Bradley proposes redress as "an overarching theoretical concept through which to understand the return process" (p. 64). Part 2 turns to an analysis of three cases of return and redress: Guatemala,

Bosnia and Herzegovina (in continuation Bosnia), and Mozambique. In the case studies, Bradley explores the historical and socioeconomic contexts of the countries in question, the framework they use for redress, the mechanisms in place to address grievances, and the role of the main actors involved, from grassroots organizations to international agencies. In the final part of the book, Bradley discusses how the model of minimum account of just return could be used in “hard cases” where refugees who are stateless people and noncitizens cannot make their claims for redress as citizens. The case study of focus is Palestine.

Providing the critique of Hannah Arendt’s oft-quoted argument of the fundamentally stateless status of refugees, Bradley calls for a theoretical shift, which would change the discourse on the nature of refugeehood from one where refugees are perceived as stateless to one where they are seen as actors bearing legitimate claims for the reconstruction of their relationship with the state. Bradley thus rejects the idea of direct victimhood, joining a growing number of scholars who aim to stress refugees’ agency.[2] While her main focus is on the state’s recognition of its accountability for displacement and its responsibility to attend to its citizens in the repatriation process, Bradley advocates for responsible citizenship, where the formally displaced must take up the rights as well as the obligations that arise from citizenship. Responsible citizenship, she recognizes, is the building block of equality and long-term stability. This is a refreshing approach, since it demonstrates that Bradley conceives of refugees as not merely refugees but rather citizens who happen to be refugees.

Considering that the majority of affected states are emerging from conflict and that they are likely to hold different conceptualizations of justice, Bradley focuses on the minimum conditions for just return, rather than composing a wish list of refugees’ entitlements. Her aspiration is for a concept that is practically useful and not

only a theoretical exercise. For return to be just, “return must establish or re-establish returnees as equal citizens entitled to benefit from a legitimate relationship of rights and duties with the state and effective, equitable protection for their basic human rights and security” (p. 16). Bradley uses citizenship as a tool that enables refugees to make claims against the state. She makes an important point—albeit in a footnote—when she states that if countries do not aim to protect all of its citizens in the first place, the discussion on just return is futile. Indeed, citizenship does not necessarily result in automatic protection, and the displaced might have never enjoyed citizenship rights.[3] With the minimum account of conditions for just return, Bradley thus calls for a greater reflection on current policies not only concerning repatriation, but also, at least indirectly, broader development policies, particularly those assuring equitable treatment of citizens in peace, conflict, and the aftermath of conflict.

In putting her theoretical framework to practice, Bradley highlights some of the challenges (as well as good practices) that Guatemala, Mozambique, and Bosnia and their citizens (have) faced in the repatriation process. She shows the complexity of return and the need to analyze repatriation efforts on multiple levels, from the micro environment to international involvement. Bradley additionally applies her theoretical framework to Palestine and analyzes the hypothetical chances of just return under the scenario of a two-state solution. As a result of these case studies, she reaffirms the necessity to stress equity and to maximize the range of choices available for all refugees throughout the repatriation process in both paradigmatic and hard cases of return.

Considering the fact that just return has not been achieved in any of these cases, Bradley puts her own work to challenge by questioning whether the minimum account of just return she sets out represents an impossibly high bar. She thus addresses the potential critique, and argues

that lowering the bar would be counterproductive. As she notes, some states may lack sufficient will to reach these standards and, moreover, there is also lack of adequate international support. Furthermore, reparations and redress to returnees in these cases contributed to peace-building efforts, suggesting that reparations might improve returnees' relationship with the state, and, consequently, be a goal worth pursuing. As Bradley emphasizes in a number of places, just return is a long-term process, which, among others, unfolds alongside peace-building endeavors.

Bradley draws on literature from a range of disciplines. Her three-pronged approach, combining legal, political, and moral perspectives of just return, provides the basis for a complex analysis. It contextualizes legal provisions and helps determine who is responsible for redress in difficult cases, such as in state disintegration, where it would be difficult to assign responsibility to any state under the international law. A historical overview of the development of principles, norms, and international concerns to prioritize return helps show that the consideration of refugees in mainstream reparation politics does not necessarily take place for the "right" reasons, such as altruism or genuine concern, but rather, to lessen the burden on host states. This demonstrates that the right to return not only fits within the legal sphere and debates, but is also a highly politicized issue that has direct implications for just return. Bradley's inclusion of some anthropological work enables her to engage in an analysis of how the process of repatriation and return unraveled at different levels. This allows her to de-homogenize groups of refugees and to draw attention to the internal tensions that exist among these groups as a result of competing expectations and views. Additionally, by focusing on the micro environment, Bradley draws attention to another group of people who are often excluded from policy and academic research, namely, those who stayed as well as secondary occupants. These people are also important figures in successful recon-

ciliation and relationship-building efforts, and, so, contribute to sustainable and ultimately just return.[4]

Overall, the book is reflective, analytical, and critical and thus a great contribution to literature. While engaging in complex theoretical debates and arguments, it is written in a clear manner, making it accessible to nonacademics. It is an important read not only for scholars and students but also for policymakers and practitioners. A minor suggestion I have concerns the application of the theoretical framework to the empirical cases. The book possibly tries to cover too much ground in terms of the case studies. Undoubtedly, the comparative element of the book is useful for the theorization of just return. The geographical distribution of cases offers a valuable perspective and the brief mention of the lesser-known examples of the Biharis in Bangladesh and the Lhotshampa refugees from Buthan in the third part of the book is welcome. However, the discussion of the hard cases might be considered as a work in and of itself. This would have allowed for further in-depth development of the Biharis and Lhotshampa cases, and ensured that these cases received an analysis comparable to that of Palestine, Bosnia, Guatemala, and Mozambique. Nevertheless, this is a minor issue which does not undermine the main argument of the book and its contribution.

Notes

[1]. Michael Barnett, "UNHCR and the Ethics of Repatriation," *Forced Migration Review* 10 (2001): 31-34; Richard Black and Saskia Gent, "Sustainable Return in Post-conflict Contexts," *International Migration* 44 (2006): 15-38; Laura Hammond, *This Place Will Become Home: Refugee Repatriation to Ethiopia* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2004); Sarah Meyer, *FMO Research Guide on Local Integration* (Oxford: Forced Migration Online, 2008), <http://www.forcedmigration.org/research-resources/expert-guides/local-integration/fmo045.pdf>; and Susanne Schmeidl, "Repatriation

to Afghanistan: Durable Solution or Responsibility Shifting?" *Forced Migration Review* 33 (2009): 20-22.

[2]. See, for instance, Liisa Malkki, "Speechless Emissaries: Refugees, Humanitarianism, and Dehistoricization," *Cultural Anthropology* 11 (1996): 377-404; Doreen Indra, ed., *Engendering Forced Migration: Theory and Practice* (Oxford: Berghahn Books, 1999); and Stef Jansen and Staffan Lövving, eds., *Struggles for Home: Violence, Hope and the Movement of People* (Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2009).

[3]. Daniel Pécaut, "The Loss of Rights, the Meaning of Experience, and Social Connection: A Consideration of the Internally Displaced in Colombia," *International Journal of Politics, Culture and Society* 14 (2000): 89-105.

[4]. Anders H. Stefansson, "Sarajevo Suffering: Homecoming and the Hierarchy of Homeland Hardship," in *Homecomings: Unsettling Paths to Return*, ed. Fran Markowitz and Anders H. Stefansson (Oxford: Lexington Books, 2004), 54-75.

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