

April 2019

Book Review: Economic Statecraft: Human Rights, Sanctions, and Conditionality by Cécile Fabre

Linda Quest

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.northgeorgia.edu/issr>

Part of the [Anthropology Commons](#), [Communication Commons](#), [Economics Commons](#), [Geography Commons](#), [International and Area Studies Commons](#), [Political Science Commons](#), and the [Public Affairs, Public Policy and Public Administration Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Quest, Linda (2019) "Book Review: Economic Statecraft: Human Rights, Sanctions, and Conditionality by Cécile Fabre," *International Social Science Review*: Vol. 95 : Iss. 1 , Article 8.
Available at: <https://digitalcommons.northgeorgia.edu/issr/vol95/iss1/8>

This Book Review is brought to you for free and open access by Nighthawks Open Institutional Repository. It has been accepted for inclusion in International Social Science Review by an authorized editor of Nighthawks Open Institutional Repository.

Fabre, Cécile. *Economic Statecraft: Human Rights, Sanctions, and Conditionality*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2018. vi + 214 pages. Hardcover, \$21.47; Kindle, \$20.40.

Economic Statecraft is well-crafted and highly informative. Dr. Cécile Fabre is Senior Research Fellow, All Souls College, University of Oxford. She focuses on *Human Rights, Sanctions, and Conditionality* and provides definitions, lists of key points, and outlines in each chapter. Such guides are needed in the tangled field of bilateral and multilateral agreements and treaties, involving many sovereign states, and represented by changing negotiators and policy makers functioning for them.

Vocabulary from the book helps compare statecraft across time. Frequently used together are proportionality, necessity, and effectiveness. Conditionality might include *ex ante* (tied to policy), *ex post* (tied to outcome), human rights awards, or no-responsibility grants (like a goodwill gift for doing something right). Justifiability and credibility are questions. Grasping these differentiates traditional pre-World War II power politics from post-1948 statecraft—economic and general. In 1948 the Universal Declaration of Human Rights became a norm in international relations. That same year the Sixth Committee (Legal) of the General Assembly defined aggression and genocide. Since then, *Machtstaat* and *realpolitik* have gradually lost status as “business as usual.” *Economic Statecraft* draws attention to the divergence of “as usual” and “justifiable” conduct of foreign affairs.

International relations in practice and in academia have changed accordingly, even though historical records and memory endure. So it follows that chapter six “*Tu Quoque*,” last in order, addresses hypocrisy and double standards. That chapter warrants special attention, as it engages inherited ancestral traditions, accumulated cultural preferences, direct and indirect

socialization, and transgenerational differences. Justifiable or not, hypocrisy and double standards have staying power and they persist. They pervade social life, public affairs, and international relations. One party can always call out another for long-ago or recent instances of hypocrisy or double standards. Countercharges are provoked, *tu quoque*! The post-truth era fosters hyperbole and exaggeration. All combined, these keep challenging the new world of universal human rights. Nonetheless, *tu quoque* can work for better as well as worse. What is being transmitted? Would that be human universals? Common denominators? Unity or division? What is fair, what is foul? Might justice and moral seriousness have a more inclusive future than their exclusive, separative pasts?

Arguably, so. The touchstone of this book and of other work by Cécile Fabre is *the right to a flourishing life*, otherwise called *a decent life*. This, as an ideal, is ancient, and sometimes equated with eudaemonia. Fabre describes it as the duty and responsibility of those who have abundance to share it with those who lack—through aid, trade, or loans—excepting only those whose own activities have disqualified them by their own deliberate doing. When John Locke theorized something similar in the *Second Treatise of Civil Government* circa 1689, it might have seemed impractical except for the privileged few. Today, students are familiar with “self-actualization” as a synonym for a flourishing life appropriate for almost all. It appears in marketing and economics courses, extracted from Abraham Maslow’s 1968 *Psychology of Being*. In it, needs are presented, ranging from physiologically basic, through belongingness and esteem, toward self-actualization. Disparate wealth distribution has been stalling this out of reach for many individuals, families, countries. However, the CIA *World Factbook* estimates world

PPP per capita per annum as of 2017 at \$17,500 and rising. That, let us speculate, makes the Universal Declaration of Human Rights not just normative but obligatory.

What is a path from here to there? Cécile Fabre herself has been showing the way. Her work is exemplary of “the teachings of the most highly qualified publicists...as subsidiary means for the determination of rules of law.” (Statute of the International Court of Justice, Art. 38, printed with UN Charter, 1945). *Economic Statecraft* supports Fabre’s belonging in that category. The subtitle of this book—*Human Rights, Sanctions, and Conditionality*—acknowledges an international covenant, the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* (1948), “establishing rules expressly recognized by the contesting states.” Some states selectively contest “general principles of law recognized by civilized nations” insofar as those rule out “race, sex, language, or religious” distinction. If sanctioning these practices involves conditions of uncertainty or protection of property rights or movement rights, proceed carefully. Bring Fabre’s proportionality, necessity, effectiveness into play, as well as justifiability, credibility, responsibility.

Norms are involved. Human rights are the linchpin, according to Fabre, of the normative international order, but they are norms. As to law, refer to Art. 38. Our students who aspire to pursue international law would do well to keep in mind Art. 38 and to examine resumés of Dr. Cécile Fabre as well as Dr. Edward Chiu-Yeng Tseng (1934-2018), a practitioner in the United Nations era. Students could also compare biographies of past Members of the PCIJ (1920-1946) with vitae of the changing roster of the ICJ, and look for evidence of progressive adaption and attunement to a flourishing planetary future *à venir*.

Economic Statecraft: Human Rights, Sanctions, and Conditionality contains much more to recommend it. It spans ethics, economics, history, international relations, political science, and sociology. The *Introduction* and *Notes* are first rate. The *Index* is adequate. Anticipate yet further thoughtful and well-wrought contributions from Dr. Cécile Fabre.

Linda Quest, Ph.D.
Professor, Political Science
Pace University, New York City