Cultivating and Securing the Peace in the Midst and Aftermath of Violent Conflict

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Ending Africa's Wars: Progressing to Peace by Oliver Furley and Roy May (eds). Aldershot: Ashgate, 2006. Pp.247+ix+bibliography+index. £60 (hbk). ISBN 978-0-7546-3932-0.

Securing the Peace: The Durable Settlement of Civil Wars by Monica Duffy Toft. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010. Pp.162+Appendix+Notes+Bibliography+Index. £16.95(pbk). ISBN 978-0-691-14146-46.

International Conflict Mediation: New Approaches and Findings by Jacob Bercovitch and Scott Sigmund Gartner (eds). Padstow, Cornwall: Routledge, 2009. Pp304 + index. £75 (hbk). ISBN 978-0-415-45309-7.

Fostering peace from the clutches of conflict is one of the most critical challenges constantly facing the global community. Given the destructive and deadly potential of modern warfare, the stakes have never been higher for the vast multitude of conflict managers focused upon this objective. Against this backdrop the academic study of conflict and its resolution has seen significant advances in recent times. Coming from a variety of disciplines and using a diverse array of methods, conflict scholars have continued to develop an increased comprehension of the causal mechanisms underlying deadly violence. Yet despite this growth the theoretical underpinnings and academic comprehension of the conflict resolution process still contains notable gaps or areas where understanding is weak or deficient. The three books under review each seek in some small way to address this inadequacy, and are testament to the methodological and theoretical diversity that conflict studies as a discipline now enjoys. This review will assess the main contributions of these texts in two important areas; initially the findings regarding ending violent conflict will be discussed, before progressing to a discussion on the best approaches available to secure a post settlement peace.

Strategies for Cultivating Peace

One method of bringing about conflict settlement that has in recent times seen particular advancement is the study of international mediation. Such focus is not surprising, given the central status that this method has recently assumed in the toolbox of international interveners. Such developments have firmly eroded the historical notion of mediation as a mythical and individualistic art, and lead to a more systematic, theory driven body of empirical work. Leading this evolution Jacob Bercovitch and his associates have championed the use of quantitative models to better understand the variance between and within conflict mediations. In this new edited volume Bercovitch and Gartner continue this trend, with a collection of state of the art analytical tools that provide greater specification regarding the impact of and factors effecting conflict management outcomes.

Initiating at the micro level the editors open the analysis with an insightful investigation into the impact of different mediating actors and actions on conflict management outcomes (Chapter 2). Yet rather than model this process in the customary manner, the authors split their population into two groups, high and low intensity conflict. This simple but innovative action produces notably different results from more conventional methods of control and leads to a more intuitive findings than previously produced. Essentially active / manipulative methods undertaken by a large state in possession of sufficient leverage is shown to perform

best in high intensity intractable conflicts. Where as less active formulative means were shown to be best suited to lower profile mediators acting in small-scale conflict.

Interestingly Bercovitch and Gartner find little support for the impact of the least active facilitation mediation. While this is likely a response of the short-term outcomes this study chooses to assess, its relatively poor performance remains surprising. In a later chapter Savun produces an insightful response to this puzzle (Chapter 5). Grounding his argument in a theory of bargaining the author demonstrates that while information facilitation remains a powerful tool for a would-be mediator, this power is conditional upon the mediator having access to the relevant information about the belligerents. While a seemingly self-evident finding, this empirical support enhances existent bargaining literature on the outcomes of different mediator actions.

Given the emerging literature stressing the importance and increase in multi-party mediation (see for example, Crocker, Hampson et al. 1999), it is perhaps regrettable that the authors failed to incorporate multiple or sequential actors into their model. Further as the work of Wall *et al* in this same volume suggests (Chapter 12), the cultural conditioning of similarly empowered mediators can in turn prove significant. Thus perhaps a regional control would have proved advisable.

Positioned with Bercovitch at the forefront of the study of international mediation is the literature emerging from the University of Maryland. As part of the ICONS project Wikenfeld and his colleagues have largely led the way in the theoretical comprehension of mediator actions. In this volume Quinn, Wilkenfeld, Smarick and Asal continue this work by seeking to better incorporate the notion of relative power and mediator strategy (Chapter 9). Disappointingly the authors adopt a dichotomous measure of power balance, simply defining a conflict as asymmetric or symmetric. Given the vast differences in capabilities between actors this rather simplistic means of operationalisation detracts from the strength of the model. Perhaps as a result the authors find little support for the effects of power on crisis outcomes, yet quite interestingly do instead find this force acts indirectly through mediator identity and strategy.

Also focused upon crisis outcomes Carment, Samy and El Achkar mirror existing studies of mediator strategy, but apply this framework to a more specific context, protracted conflict (Chapter 9). Counter-intuitively the authors find that perhaps such conflict are not as 'intractable' as generally thought, as mediation within such settings perform in a similar manner to the sample as a whole. Yet the most captivating of observations relates to the perception of mediator effectiveness in general. Like other studies utilizing the ICB data the actors incorporate long-term tension reduction as one of the dependent variables. This increased specification improves on the short term outcomes generally utilized by Bercovitch and his associates and leads to more robust evaluations of mediation. Rather than considering an agreement as a resolution *per se*, this leads the authors to consider an agreement more as a cessation of violence and the initiation of the process where by the parties begin to address the grievances that first triggered conflict. Such a conclusion certainly resonates with the work of Toft that shall be discussed below.

Contextual Determinants of Conflict Settlement

Progressing from the study of contextual factors on certain forms of mediation, Grieg and Diehl (Chapter 8), and Mitchell, Kadera and Crescenzi (Chapter 11) explore such factors in a more general sense. Specifically centred on the pre-conditions that favour international mediation, Greig and Diehl provide a much-needed Large-N test of the prescriptive notions

of 'stalemate' and 'ripeness'. Continuing the advancement of the traditionally tautological application of such concepts, the authors demonstrate how rivals respond differently to both the costs of conflict and the promise that diplomacy holds to resolve their dispute. This refreshing account supports the understanding that immediate military costs and past experiences with diplomacy weigh heavily on the disputants actions within a mediation, but surprisingly find little support that the impasse element of the hurting stalemate model impacts upon outcomes. The expansion and development of such thinking and methods would go far to advancing our understanding of the most applicable entry points for international intervention.

Also focused on the contextual elements, Mitchell *et al* raise the analysis to the macro level of the global environment. Building on the foundations of the much-tested democratic peace literature, the authors test the impact of global 'democraticness' on third party conflict management. Using innovative ICOW data that allows for comparison across distinct areas of contention, and a sophisticated multi-level form of data analysis, the authors determine that a significant part of the democratic community operates through its propagation of democratic societal norms of dispute resolution. Given the problems that have been raised with Polity data (see for example, Gleditsch, Ward 1997) it would perhaps have been nice to see additional models with alternative data, yet the innovative application of the data can only be applauded.

Continuing with the innovative body of data showcased within this text is the work of Benson and Satana (Chapter 7). Challenging the widespread assumption of UN neutrality, the paper joins recent literature that has in more detail begun to highlight the often partial and partisan nature of United Nations conflict management (see for example, Ziring 2004). Through an analysis of UN resolutions, the authors provide a first step towards assessing the determinants of non-neutral Security Council resolutions. Given the large body of work that deals with the issue of bias in mediation, the creation of a data set that tracks the partial nature of the lower-level UN actions, could potentially prove highly significant in future work charting the scope of bias in the aggregate UN actions towards a dispute.

Also focused upon the UN as a mediating actor Svensson investigates the role of the UN as a guarantor of peace agreements (Chapter 6). Using his new data focused solely on civil conflict, Svensson determines that the greater credibility of UN commitments to enforce peace afford the organisations offers a higher value in the eyes of the disputants. In what is further support of the importance of the UN in global conflict resolution, this chapter demonstrates that in terms of third party commitments the type of actor involved holds real importance to the likelihood of a successful outcome. It would have certainly been interesting to see the extent to which UN commitments were met in terms of troop numbers and resources, given that this is also likely to impact upon the notion of credibility that Svensson formulates. Yet as a preliminary study it is certainly informative.

Like all Large N quantitative studies all works in this volume exhibit a strong level of external validity. The methods, data and theoretical innovations are all notable, and presented in a manner that is accessible for anyone familiar with the basic conflict literature. In a general sense the most pertinent criticism that can be levelled at the text is the lack of alterations to previously published articles. Given the high price tag even modest additions would certainly have produced a greater incentive to purchase for those in constant touch with the latest literature.

Yet more problematic, as is common within all contemporary quantitative studies of mediation, are the assumptions that underpin the analysis. Firstly a lack of specification regarding the type of conflict detracts from the validity of most of the findings (Svenssson's chapter being the exception). . Both the Bercovitch and ICONS datasets fail to separate conflict between and within states. Given the different responses to conflict management regularly demonstrated within the literature such an omission is always surprising. One can only hope the release of Berocvitch's new Civil War mediation data set such an oversight will begin to be addressed. Secondly given the constraints imposed by such methods, the dependent variable of war termination is most commonly operationalized as the signing of some form of agreement. Yet while on occasions an agreement may symbolise a successful mediation, without additional measures of agreement stability such a method fails to truly encapsulate what most what understand as success. For an agreement that lasts only two days or a ceasefire that never comes into effect, can hardly be considered as successful as a fully implemented ceasefire / peace plan. It is this link between settlement and stability that will form the focus of the second text under review.

Sustainable Peace

As the previous section closed by noting conflict does not end with an agreement. While such outcomes may bring about a cessation of violence, even the most comprehensive of settlements are incapable of addressing the entirety of issues surrounding a dispute. In particular civil conflicts prove most difficult in terms of progressing from a settlement to full resolution. Toft's text attempts to address this imbalance, and is thus critical of the majority of conflict-ending literature focused only upon mediated / negotiated outcomes. For while such methods undoubtedly offer one important avenue from which violent conflict can be escaped, there are other forms of termination most often excluded by such an approach. Specifically Toft calculates that 90% of war termination literature focuses upon negotiated settlements, where in actuality they form less that half of the civil war outcomes.

Focusing purely on conflict of the civil variety, Toft explores the impact of the complete range of war terminations. In what is the first systematic evaluation of the full spectrum of civil war terminations, Toft thus assesses the impact of stalemates, negotiated and mediated settlements, along with military victories by both the government and rebel groups.

As is often the case within recent literature, Toft chooses to adopt the higher threshold for civil conflict, requiring 1000 battlefield deaths for a conflict to gain inclusion in her data. While such an approach is certainly valid, given that it is unlikely a military victory would occur in lieu of such numbers, it would certainly be interesting to observe the results at a lower more inclusive threshold.

In any case using the increased range of outcomes Toft determines that wars ending by military victory 'tend to stay ended longer than wars ended by negotiated settlement and, in many cases, stay ended in what most would consider a constructive way' (p.150). This provocative conclusion challenges the general assumption in policy circles that international guarantees provide the best escape of commitment problems in civil conflict. Yet this finding in itself is not revolutionary. A number of studies have found similar conclusions, which have generally been grounded in the assumption that a defeated force lacks the strength required to reinitiate large-scale violence (see for example, Licklider 1995). Yet such arguments have in the most part lacked both theoretical strength, and remained prefixed by a belief that while less stable such settlements prevent suffering and lead to a more democratic post-war solution.

Yet in countenance to such a position Toft argues instead that the fragile nature of negotiated outcomes lead often to their break down. In such a context the additional and often more intense violence and destruction mean that in reality military victories may in fact preserve life. Yet while challenging and counter-intuitive argument is well developed, unfortunately Toft chooses not to test this assumption empirically. Yet in response to the democratic argument Toft does find support in opposition to the general understanding. Using her new data the author demonstrates that while democratic characteristics may see a slight rise in the aftermath of an agreement, in the long term military victories (in particular by rebels) perform more strongly. This finding is further enhanced by her results concerning economic development, which find no relationship between the form of termination and increased GDP. Taken in there entirety such findings suggest that the notion of military victory requires further consideration as a policy option, and that academic and political reliance upon promoting settlement at least rather problematic.

In attempt to explain this rather unpalatable empirical finding, Toft progresses to generate a more general theory of post-war stability. Concluding that the strongest benefits of negotiated settlement lie in the ability of belligerents to promise benefits for future compliance, but that the most serious flaws of such a method lie in the lack of any credible threat to harm potential defectors. Toft compares this to military victories, in which the victors often have great difficulty providing the losers a stake in their future (in return for future compliance), but retains the ability to physically harm defectors. This thus leads to conclusion that for lasting peace we require the threat of harm, and that violent means may in fact be the best approach for non-violent ends.

Thus akin to the need for more robust forms in peacekeeping in the absence of a peace to keep, Toft argues that this threat-promise nexus is the key to post-termination peace. This notion is operationalized in terms of Security Sector Reform (SSR). For robust reconfiguration of a nations security services for Toft provide a post conflict government with the tools to threaten potential rebels and criminals with direct physical harm should they threaten or undertake violence. This theory can thus help to explain the variance in the stability of war terminations, as while negotiated solutions on occasions include robust measures to rework a state's security forces, the overriding issues of credible commitment often prevent the effective incorporation of this element. Alternatively military victory, in particular on the part of the insurgents, is far more likely to involve a restructuring and rebuilding of a state's security apparatus.

Given the abundance of work centred upon the role of international guarantees and their impact upon the stability of peace agreements, it would have been interesting to see how a more thorough inclusion of this variable within Toft's models impacted upon the results. For example does SSR reform in addition to an international presence strengthen the stability of a peace agreement, or become redundant in lieu of this factor.

Adding additional internal validity to the quantitative results Toft includes a number of short case studies that better illustrate the mechanisms she is seeking to support. These cases cover the key movement in both the independent and dependent variable, discussing SSR in a negotiated settlement which lead to a stable if problematic peace (El Salvador), inadequate SSR in a negotiated settlement that lead to war reoccurrence (Sudan), and a military victory that lead to full SSR and a stable post conflict peace (Uganda).

This text is thus an innovative and challenging addition to the literature on civil war termination. Its inclusion on the reading list for any course based around conflict should be

assured, if not for it's unique take on civil war terminations, then for the methodological strength that the study enjoys.

The African Context

The final text under review is a more traditional text in the field of conflict studies. *Ending Africa's Wars* seeks to trace those conditions that have impacted upon the peacemaking in Africa. The text provides further support for the academically discredited but media induced perception of an Africa fuelled by ancient hatreds. With this in mind Richard Jackson provides a poignant opening overview of the causes of African conflict, nicely summarizing the large body of quantitative literature that has engaged in this task. In particular Jackson centres on the notions of state weakness, economic opportunity and exploitations of identity as the dominant causes of civil strife on the continent.

Coupled with Jackson's overviews the first section of the text provides a compilation of contextual chapters that chart the importance of post-settlement governance programs, civil society and disarmament, demobilization, reinsertion and reintegration (DDRR) programs in ending African wars. The most common theme is that the absence of violence does not imply peace. In this sense the text well highlights the important distinction between positive and negative peace. For while the signing of a peace accord certainly represents an outcome that can signify a positive conclusion, as Toft has illustrated such agreements may not lead to a long lasting period of period. In fact in the African context, the book describes how over half of Africa's conflicts fall back into violence within a decade of signing an agreement. In this sense as Baker (chapter 3) observes, the likelihood of continued violence witnessed in the aftermath of an agreement makes it safer to talk about states 'emerging from conflict' or 'post settlement' rather than post conflict *per se*.

The parallels with Toft's analysis are thus plentiful, as in both the contextual and case based analysis the inadequacy of many peace agreements, and importance in post conflict security are well highlighted. More clearly in this area are the numerous references to DDRR. For as the authors highlight the security challenge posed by former combatants in the post-termination phase are immense. Given the free market for small and light arms within a post-violent conflict setting, only with effective DDRR and SSR can the macro (Units or Groups trying to restart the conflict) and micro (former combatants turning to criminal pursuits) be effectively overcome.

Yet both DDRR and SSR are immensely challenging tasks for a post-conflict government. Appreciating these difficulties this text delves far deeper into these problems, highlighting the issues such as training, rank and discipline that often makes rebel soldiers unsuited for the kind of SSR Toft suggests. Further problems such as discriminating between combatants and non-combatants, financial limitations and nasty neighbourhood influences are also well elaborated within the volume.

In terms of coverage the text is well placed, including chapters on each of the most conflict prone areas on the continent (Guinea-Bissau, the DRC, Uganda, Angola, Mozambique, Sudan, Liberia, Burundi and Sierra Leone). The studies are rich in each case opening with a through background of the conflict before detailing the challenges that the conflict management process encountered. The importance of international mediators in also well addressed within the text, which particularly well highlights the divergent and devious motives often underpinning the entrance of a mediator.

Yet despite the excellent opening chapters and the depth of the case based work the text is in the most part descriptive. This is not necessarily a major criticism as for a well rounded and balanced account of the challenges surrounding the resolution of Africa's conflicts it is hard to find a more comprehensive account. Yet a stronger theoretical thread would have certainly have improved the account. Further some simple stylistic issues such as inconsistent referencing seemed to be very avoidable problems that could easily have been removed.

Conclusion

As was suggested at the opening of this review, the three texts under discussion are a testament to the diversity of methods and theoretical thinking that now characterises the study of conflict. The strong theory and diverse collection of innovative methods adopted within Bercovitch and Gartner's edited volume demonstrate the importance of quantitative methods for determining relationships and uncovering patterns within variance of conflict resolution attempts. Yet the richness and depth of Furley and May's volume is equally demonstrative of the importance of case based work to a fuller and more rounded appreciation of the challenges facing conflict managers. Finally Toft's mixed methods account shows the strength that can be obtained by combining the approaches. And presents a challenge to both academics and policy makers alike in terms of how best to respond to civil conflict in a manner that can truly secure the peace.

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