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## Book Review

**Newman, Edward & Oliver Richmond, eds. 2006. *Challenges to Peacebuilding: Managing Spoilers During Conflict Resolution*. Tokyo: United Nations University Press. 342 pp. ISBN 92-808-1126-6. Price \$37.00.**

by Victor Sensenig (31 March 2008)

Although peace as an ideal seems an unambiguous good, the formulation of a particular peace, or settled situation, and the process to achieve that objective are always mired in the complicated realities of ideology, greed, and human error. This book attempts to broaden the boundaries of Stephen Stedman's definition of a "spoiler" as "leaders and factions who view a particular peace as opposed to their interests and who are willing to use violence to undermine it" (p. 219). In their introduction, the editors of this dense but well-organized volume advocate appreciation of the alternative rationalities of the multiple parties of any peace process and the inherently political nature of the objective of a liberal peace and the definition of spoiling. Spoiling, in this understanding, can include both violent and nonviolent action by insiders or outsiders to shape or end negotiation. Essentially, this book frames spoiling as "a normal part of a peace process" (p. 18).

The volume is divided into two parts, the first devoted to theories about spoiling in peace processes, the second offering case studies of conflict situations by regional analysts. The chapters on theory all work to expand the definition of spoiling as outlined in the introduction. Oliver Richmond's foundational concept of "devious objectives" counters the traditional analysis that parties to a peace process have a common interest in compromise. Rather, disputants may "value a peace process for certain resources it may provide," including recognition, resources, and time to rearm (p. 59). Karin Aggestam argues that peace processes defy the neat division of war and peace, as "the most likely negotiation the adversaries tend to adopt is a competitive one" (p. 29). Although good faith — the intention and expectation of mutually advantageous behavior — is necessary for a peace agreement, negotiations are complicated by the asymmetrical nature of all conflicts and the thorny question of who is included in the process.

The second half of the book includes a diverse range of case studies, including recent conflicts in Northern Ireland, the Basque country, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Columbia, Israel and Palestine, Cyprus, Abkhazia and South Ossetia, and Kashmir. Several striking connections emerge. First, the cases cast a critical light on the role of third parties entrusted with the role of mediator or custodian. In the case of the South Caucasus conflicts, Russia assumed the role of main broker but it has maintained a double standard, claiming neutrality but actually supporting secessionists. In the conflict between Greek and Turkish Cypriots since the 1974 partition, the European Union dangled the carrot of EU membership, but Nathalie Tocci argues that "many EU policies and decisions paradoxically heightened the perceived importance of recognized statehood and sovereignty, thereby bolstering spoiling tactics and arguments" (p. 278). Several chapters also depict the U.S.-led "war on terror" as a major third party spoiler. Carlo Nasi links the counter-drug policy Plan Columbia with the escalating conflict between FARC and the

Colombian government. Post-11 September, the United States and its allies expanded their listing of terrorist organizations, which served to radicalize several conflicts. In Spain, for example, this meant the criminalization of the Basque movement, not just the ETA fringe.

A second common factor is the attention that several of the studies pay to the role of cultural factors. Magnus Ranstorp highlights the competing cultural narratives that serve as the “baseline positions” of Israelis and Palestinians. Each side maintains a narrative of dispossession and demonization, “myths” that “drive the underlying conflict dynamics between the parties” (p. 258). These narratives can be particularly strong among diasporas, which can harbor grievances and maintain hard-line nationalistic positions. As Yossi Shain and Ravinatha P. Aryasinha observe, “traumatic memories are particularly critical for diasporic identity, enabling diaspora organizations and leaders to build institutions, raise funds, and promote activism” (p. 112). Finally, cultural narratives, particularly radical nationalism tied to religious fundamentalism, can nurture extremist ideologies that enable groups to influence peace processes by employing terrorist means.

This book makes a successful case for a broader understanding of the motivations and tactics of parties who disrupt peace processes. But despite the title’s confident intention to advise on the management of spoilers, this is not an unwarrantedly optimistic book. Newman lays out the characteristics of “new wars,” given the erosion of state authority and the explosion of transborder trade. Modern conflict, he suggests, is driven by a political economy of war, which is especially profitable when resources like diamonds and oil are present. In these scenarios, victory, let alone compromise, is not the aim, and peace is only possible when it pays off. He writes, “it is wrong to assume that all — or even most — conflict situations can be resolved by an accommodation of conflicting interests or that a peace process is a process of finding consensus amongst parties that basically all seek peace” (p. 147). Jaideep Saikia is particularly blunt in the introduction to his chapter on Kashmir: “If there were to be a single pronouncement about peace in Kashmir, the simplest response could be that there might never be peace” (p. 301). Given these perspectives, it is useful to consider a level of peacebuilding not considered in this volume. Although lengthy and difficult to measure, peacebuilding at the grassroots level and the development of what Marie-Joëlle Zahar calls “value-based loyalty” are nevertheless integral to any sustainable peace in conjunction with the top-down management strategies advocated by this book.

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