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## Book Note

**Yanacopulos, Helen and Joseph Hanlon, eds. 2006. *Civil War, Civil Peace*. Oxford: James Currey Publishers. 332 pp. ISBN 0-85255-895-3 (pb). Price £22.00.**

Reviewed by Louise Andersen [14 May 2007]

*Civil War, Civil Peace* is a book with a purpose. It aims at making “civil-war-linked interventions more effective in their peacebuilding role.” This is a laudable ambition, especially because the volume declares from the outset that “there are no right answers, only hard choices.” The aim is not to come up with a set of technical solutions and best practices on what to do and how to do it. Rather it is to provide “the understanding and analytical tools to increase the chances that outside intervention will have a positive impact.” By explicitly confronting the dilemmas of external intervention in civil wars, the volume tries to be both critical and problem-solving at the same time. Does it succeed? And does it provide interveners with useful suggestions for (not “best practice” but) “better practice”? Yes and no.

The volume does provide a down-to-earth introduction to different ways of understanding war, peacebuilding, and development. It takes us through the debate on the root causes of violent conflict. The chapter by Christopher Cramer on “greed versus grievance” is excellent in this regard. It discusses how development and change may spur conflict, how conflict is a normal and natural element in all societies, and how violent conflict may be transformed into peaceful conflict. It also provides a useful framework for interveners to be reflective of both the context he operates in and his own role in it. “Don’t just do something – stand there!” as Alan Thomas reminds us in his chapter on development in a context of war. In this regard, the two chapters by Jonathan Goodhand are probably the ones that speak most directly to practitioners as it is here that concrete tools for reflection, analysis, and action are presented. But throughout the book one finds small boxes that outline the “intervention implication” of a particular perspective. These boxes are probably intended to make the volume attractive and relevant to practitioners who are hard pressed for time and prefer to skip straight to the conclusion, a reasonable strategy considering that the volume extends beyond 300 pages. A danger is that the practitioner only reads these scattered recommendations and misses the bigger picture.

But does the book actually provide the bigger picture, even if one reads it cover-to-cover? Not quite. Some of the most topical questions and toughest dilemmas are only touched upon in passing although they could well have deserved separate chapters. The book is concerned with the security-development nexus, yet it is strongly biased toward the development side of that nexus. For instance, the need to consolidate state power is mentioned. But emphasis is overwhelming placed on the need for nurturing fragile civil society and marginalized voices without reflecting much on how this (or other development interventions including service delivery) relate to the state-building agenda. In keeping with this, the book also remains silent on questions related to the provision of security and the relation between civilian and military interveners. This is a shame since such issues are pivotal to any post-conflict situation yet very difficult to deal with for development practitioners who are the audience of the book. The editors would have come closer to fulfilling their own ambitions had the volume taken on these very tricky questions as well.

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