Critical Dialogue

The Unintended Consequences of Peace: Peaceful Borders and Illicit Transnational Flows. By Arie Marcelo Kacowicz, Exequiel Lacovsky, Keren Sasson, and Daniel F. Wajner. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2021. 320p. $99.99 cloth.
doi:10.1017/S1537592721004059

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This review is being written close to a once militarized international border. The reviewer is so close to the border that his phone is picking up the signal from the other side of the border. After the review is finished, the author might load the dogs into the car and pop over the border for a forest walk. There is free movement, the only sign of a border being a slight change in the road surface and slightly different traffic signage. This border, between the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland was once heavily militarized with checkpoints, cratered roads, and multiple securitized means of controlling movement. Frankly, the border was an unpleasant place to be. Since the 1998 Good Friday Agreement, the border has faded in political, economic, and cultural significance. This change is a story of how a peace accord leads to an opening of a border and multiple dividends. Crucially, it is a story of how the opportunities produced by macro-level political and security changes are then seized by people and communities who make the most of them.

This experience contrasts with many of the borders discussed in *The Unintended Consequences of Peace: Peaceful Borders and Illicit Transnational Flows.* In this work the case is made that peaceful borders can facilitate illicit flows of people and goods. This stands to reason. Securitized borders in which movement is tightly controlled make it difficult to move goods—licit or illicit. With the opening of borders and possibly the lessening of security checks, then cross-border traffic—licit or illicit—should be able to flow more easily. Arie Marcelo Kacowicz, Exequiel Lacovsky, Keren Sasson, and Daniel F. Wajner construct their argument clearly with case study chapters that look at selected borders in the regions of the Americas, Europe, the Middle East, Southern Africa, and ASEAN countries and Southeast Asia. These chapters are packed with details, from the essential context of bilateral trade deals and labor laws to accounts of the ungoverned borderlands seen in some regions.

The picture that emerges is often a dystopian version of the democratic peace in which interstate accord facilitates illegal flows that, in turn, destabilize or continue the destabilization of a region. The comparative integrity of the book is achieved in that each of the case study chapters works through three hypotheses, or possible explanations, for the combination of settled borders and illicit transnational flows: the degree of physical and institutional openness of the borders; the degree of governance, institutional strength, and political willingness; and the prevailing socioeconomic conditions of the neighboring states. The common hypotheses allow the chapters in a multiauthored and globally comparative book to speak to one another. The hypotheses provide a structuring and analytical device that allows a “mapping” between very varied cases. In very broad-brush terms, bad environments produce the factors that facilitate illicit cross-border flows.

Briefly, the book shows that international peace provides a permissive environment that enables illicit transnational flows across peaceful borders. An exception to this is the US-Canadian border, a well-policed border with good economic conditions prevailing on either side. The picture from the securitized borders examined in the book is more mixed. As the case of the US-Mexico border shows, there are limits to the effectiveness of fortified borders if the political commitment to dealing with the political economies that drive illicit transnational trade is also lacking.

The work is perceptive in its concentration on unintentional consequences of peace. Attempts to forge peace, like any social experiment, are likely to produce processes and outcomes that confound expectations. The gap between de jure and de facto uses of boundaries can be substantial, and individuals, communities, and businesses often need few invitations to be ingenious and entrepreneurial. The book provides a good reminder that political leaders who embark on major political or constitutional projects are unlikely to reap the harvest they expect. It is also a good example of the need to see borders, economies, and polities as interlocking systems without simple levers of control.

The book ends with policy recommendations based on the need for balance between the policing of borders and

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the rights of those living in the borderlands. The authors note, for example, the scale of criminal violence in a number of Latin and Central American countries and observe the “need to escape the trap of traditional interstate securitization, and to enhance the tenets of human security” (p. 245). A second policy recommendation emphasizes the importance of cooperation and effective governance, reminding us that “perhaps the most effective way of combatting illicit transnational flows might not take place at the border proper” (p. 246). It may involve innovations such as remote policing, pooling sovereignties, and a recognition that transnational problems very probably involve some transnational remedies. The third policy recommendation, “Promote and prefer peace rather than war, but be aware of its potential unintended consequences” (p. 248), raises the intriguing question of what constitutes peace.

Although the work concentrates—entirely legitimately—on the negative side of border openings, I am tempted to take a different perspective and indeed a different starting point. The authors of this work take peace as international peace, or elite-level peace agreed between governments. Thus the Americas are described as “a continent of peace” (p. x) or the Israel-Egyptian and Israeli-Jordanian borders are termed “the triangle of peace”’ (p. 156). They are “peaceful” in the sense that the states involved have formalized relations. But as the authors realize, this is a “cold” peace (p. 156). I would go further. It is a peace so cold that it is not peace at all; try crossing those borders for a stroll after work. The essential point is that these borders are a reflection of wider dysfunctions within and between these states. That there might be illicit flows across these borders is also a reflection of wider political economies and the failure of states to meet basic needs. The book is certainly alive to this and recognizes the many nuances and types of peace. It could, however, have benefited from a fuller discussion of what might be called peace and what might be rejected as residing far beyond the realms of peace. Many of the licit flows across these “peaceful” borders do much more harm to citizenry than the illicit flows. The Myanmar regime, for example, has legally imported most of the weapons and surveillance tools it has used to persecute those who ask for basic rights. Illicit flows probably pale in terms of social harm, and state agents have a large hand in many of those illicit flows anyway (for example, timber and narcotics).

The book illustrates well the oddity of international boundaries. Humans are, by nature and need, social, communicative, innovative, mobile, and interdependent. It is the conceit of states to believe that borders, even hard borders, will deter the social and entrepreneurial nature of humans. One of the gratifying elements of the recent literature on peace and conflict is that it reflects the multiscalar nature of humans and institutions. Thus, complementing the top-down perspective of this book under review, we have more sociological and anthropological studies that look at how people and societies interact with systems and structures. Indeed, not only do people and societies interact with systems and structures but they also co-constitute them through their everyday actions. They illustrate the need to see peace and conflict (and everything in between) as verbs as well as nouns. Over the coming years, it is to be hoped that we will see more work that combines the top-down and the bottom-up, the institutional and the sociological, so that we can better understand peace and conflict.

This multiscalar perspective reminds us of the many borders within and across societies and polities. One can think of micro-territorial borders within a divided city like Mostar or Belfast or the social boundaries that largely proscribe intergroup marriage in many societies such as Lebanon or India. The multiscalar perspective also encourages us to ask questions about why so many institutions, communities, individuals, and narratives place an emphasis on “bordering” or the desire to erect and maintain boundaries.

Overall, the book is to be recommended. It is a very good example of an attempt to place categorization order on a set of cases that defy neatness. Each border has its anomalous factors and tells us something about the nonstatic nature of the social world. As a result, the ambitions of this book are due much respect. The book also reminds us that borders are sites of knowledge generation; for example, official data on cross-border passenger traffic. Yet, they are also sites of unseen traffic. Thus, piecing together a cogent picture of borders—and their social and economic life—is no mean feat. Peace studies would benefit from much greater thinking of the unintentional consequences of pro-peace interventions, and this book will contribute to this.

But the review is now written, and perhaps the author will go for that walk across the border, mindful that many borders are reasonably functional and sit somewhere near the positive peace formulation, and that many others are dysfunctional, violent, and securitized.

Response to Roger Mac Ginty’s Review of *The Unintended Consequences of Peace: Peaceful Borders and Illicit Transnational Flows*

doi:10.1017/S1537592721004047

— Arie Marcelo Kacowicz

I want to thank Roger Mac Ginty for his thoughtful review of our book. Let me clarify several points that emerge from it. First, the experiences reflected in the open border between Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland do not necessary contrast or contradict, but rather complement, the realities of peaceful borders and illicit transnational flows analyzed in our book (we could think about possible similar examples of open borders such as the Canadian-US or Argentine-Uruguayan borders).

Second, we do not offer a "dystopian version of the democratic peace." Levels of governance, rather than types of political regimes, are relevant here. Unfortunately, there is nothing dystopic about the argument that globalization and peaceful borders enable (not cause) the proliferation of illicit transnational flows, in the form of arms, drug, and human smuggling and trafficking. Ultimately, the links between peaceful borders and illicit transnational flows are a function of the type of borders and border regimes, the level of governance and willingness of neighboring countries to control their borderlands, and the prevailing socio-economic conditions across the border.

Third, in the formal terms of international relations, the Americas (North America, Central America, and South America) are indeed a continental zone of international peace since the end of the civil and "intermestic" wars in Central America in the 1980s and 1990s. There is also a formal "triangle of peace" in the relations among Israel and Egypt (since 1979) and Israel and Jordan (since 1994). Whereas in the Americas that international peace has been "upgraded" in some cases in the direction of stable peace and a pluralistic security community (i.e., Argentina and Brazil or Argentina and Chile since the mid-1980s), in the Middle East it is just a "negative" peace characterized by the mere absence of war. In any case, because conflicts might persist (though managed and resolved peacefully), we are far away from Galtung's version of "positive peace," which brings us close to harmony, though it is less frequent in international and even domestic politics.

Fourth, I agree with Mac Ginty that licit flows (for instance, legal arms trade) across peaceful borders "can do much more harm to citizenry than the illicit flows." But that is a subject for further research; moreover, we argue in our book that occasionally the actions of the violent nonstate actors responsible for these illicit flows might fulfill positive governance functions when the state is absent.

Fifth and finally, I share with him the need, both in theoretical and in empirical terms, to adopt a pluralistic and multiscalar perspective about peace, rather than a Manichean and simplistic approach of either war or peace. Just as there are different types of war, so there are also different shades of peace. Where Mac Ginty emphasizes the "everyday peace" at the micro-level, adopting a bottom-up perspective, ours is a top-down, more traditional analysis of peace. It is precisely this critical and constructive dialogue and the joint contribution of our two books on peace that reveal the complexities and paradoxes of peace, which should be preferred, in normative terms, to its alternative, armed conflict. We all wish we could walk freely and happily across peaceful borders.

Everyday Peace: How So-Called Ordinary People Can Disrupt Violent Conflict. By Roger Mac Ginty. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2021. 272p. $74.00 cloth.
doi:10.1017/S1537592722000081

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Roger Mac Ginty's book is a fascinating and welcome attempt in the literature of peace studies to unveil a lacuna that many mainstream IR peace scholars (like myself) have usually ignored in the last three decades: the "micro-level" and "hyper-local" levels of analysis that focus on individuals, 'real' people, and small groups, in prompting practices of peace, toleration, conciliation, and co-existence in situations of violent conflicts, leading to some form of de-escalation, or what the author calls "disrupting conflict" (on de-escalation, see Louis Kriesberg, *Constructive Conflicts*, 1998). By combining an elaborated theoretical framework with a myriad of empirical illustrations and examples drawn from the Everyday Peace Indicators project (EPI) and other sources, the author emphasises a form of peace that has usually been ignored in the literature, "everyday peace."

"Everyday peace" is defined as "the capacity of so-called ordinary people to disrupt violent conflict and forge pro-social relationships in conflict-affected societies" (p. 2). It refers to 'small' and informal practices of peace that involve pragmatism, common sense, emotional intelligence, and actions of sheer or basic humanity, empathy, and compassion at the grassroots level, even below the level of organized forms within the civil society. It might happen in very mundane and innocuous places like the working place, the school, and the grocery store. In a sense, the concept of "everyday peace" mirrors the idea of reconciliation, though it appears at the other end of the scale between conflict and harmony. Unlike reconciliation, "everyday peace" generally appears in the midst of violent and unresolved conflicts, rather than after their formal resolution (on reconciliation, see Yaacov Bar-Siman Tov, *From Conflict Resolution to Reconciliation*, 2003). Thus, Mac Ginty operationalizes "everyday peace" by dissecting it into its three components along a continuum of increasing empathy with fellow human beings. The first, basic component is that of "sociality," as an initial affective condition (of empathy). The second, which is an integral part of the concept of cooperation, is that of "reciprocity," based on utilitarian calculations, not necessarily altruistic. The third and more advanced component of "everyday peace" is "solidarity," less common than the two others, due to the onerous cost for the individual who expresses it towards fellow human beings, at the risk of paying a political, economic, and social cost.

One of the main arguments elaborated in the book is that everyday peace is important and relevant, since its instances and practices can put in motion a virtue cycle, a ripple effect, and 'boomerang' diffusion mechanisms of "scaling out" (horizontally) and "scaling up" (vertically), to other, 'higher' levels of analysis (from the family to the local, from the local to the municipal, from the municipal to the regional, from the regional to the national, and from the national to the transnational). In an elaborated theoretical framework (in Chapters 1, 2, 3, and 7), Mac Ginty develops the concepts of "circuity and scalability" that follow the logic of multi-scalar levels of analysis by implying that these 'small' instances of peace can be reproduced into bottom-up processes, nurturing peace in larger contexts (Chapter 1). Furthermore, after clearly explaining the components of sociality, reciprocity, and solidarity in Chapter 2, Mac Ginty moves in Chapter 3 to develop an ambitious theoretical proposition that equates "everyday peace" with intangible and 'soft' forms of power, in juxtaposition to orthodox, 'harsh' instances of power (like the use of force). Finally, in Chapter 7, Mac Ginty expands on the meaning of the ambiguous concept of "conflict disruption" by referring to alternative narratives to the 'official story,' actions that contradict the logic of conflict, and the challenging of conflict mentality (pp. 203-204). This is illustrated through instances of "remarkable friendships" across potential enemies, though the friends are not always 'ordinary people' but belong to the political elite (like the case of Raymonda Taiwil and Ruth Dayan across the Israeli-Palestinian divide, pp. 197-199).

What makes the reading of this book particularly fascinating is the diverse, and sometimes contradictory sources and methodologies, as presented in Chapters 4-6. Throughout the book, the author relies upon the Everyday Peace Indicators Project (EPI) that collected data from local communities in Colombia, South Africa, South Sudan, Uganda, and Zimbabwe (although there is not enough specificity about these indicators, beyond the three components of everyday peace). The book also relies on interviews conducted in (former or current) conflict zones such as Lebanon, Northern Ireland, and Bosnia-Herzegovina. Furthermore, particularly interesting and 'outside of the box' are Chapters 4 and 5, which rely on personal diaries and memoirs of combatants from World War One and World War Two that showed, in these two extreme cases of violent conflict and hegemonic wars, acts of humanity, compassion, empathy, and reciprocity, partly based on self-interest (like the famous cases of cooperation of 'live and let live' policies of survival in the trench warfare of World War I), and occasional acts of altruism. Although the reading is moving and the argument is compelling, I would be reluctant to refer to these acts of humanity within the two world wars as instances of peace. In contrast, in Chapter 6, the best chapter in the book that combines theory and empirics in a brilliant way, Mac Ginty refers to "gender and everyday peace," by focusing on the family and the everyday actions and processes, including practical mechanisms of everyday peace such as "positive parenting and mentoring," "restraint," and "avoidance by proxy," in different contexts.

As this is a path-breaking and ambitious piece of scholarship, it has also some flaws, at least in the subjective eyes of this beholder. In the first place, and reflecting somehow critical and post-positivist contributions to peace, Roger Mac Ginty is not only critical, but I think overly critical of the discipline of international relations, sometimes engaging in digressions that present the mainstream literature in Manichean terms or stereotypical terms. Thus, in his view, the orthodox understandings of power ignore its relational dimension (they do not), and focus only on "domination" (p.83), whereas the key, even in the mainstream literature, remains the focus on influence and the distinction between power and force.

Second, although I agree with the author that "everyday peace" is indeed a crucial (and understudied) initial and 'hyper-local' form of peace, sometimes the concept is overstretched and confusing, like in the cases of World War I and World War II, when compared and juxtaposed to more formal categories of peace, such as 'negative peace' If we define negative peace, which is the minimalist conceptualization of peace, as the absence of war, then "parley, truce, and ceasefire" do not really qualify as negative peace (pp. 104-105), they are even less than that. That of course does not rule out the fact that acts of humanity, tolerance, and conciliation, can take place in the most extreme cases of total war. Still, I would not call these actions "everyday peace," restricting the concept to cases of violent and usually domestic conflicts, including civil wars.

Third, although the author argues for a necessary dialogue and complementarity between the top-down and bottom-up peace processes through his theoretical arguments about multi-scale levels of analysis and "circuitry," by the end of the day (and the book), there is no clear evidence, and perhaps it might be impossible to provide a clear causal link, leading from the essential and paramount manifestations of hyper-local, 'small' actions in the direction of peace, and their translation into higher, formal political levels of analysis. I am not convinced by his example that after a Sudanese soldier decided to protect civilian protesters, a few days later the Sudanese dictator Bashir was deposed (p. 50). It might be my own positivist bias, but there is not necessarily a direct or causal link here. I agree that everyday peace is often "context-dependent" (p. 221), but by indicating that important truism, we still do not know under which conditions it might scale up or scale out, flourishing in the direction of a more humane and tolerant world that we all need.

In sum, this book should be a required reading for everybody interested in peace studies, especially those among us who spend too many decades looking at theoretical categories and levels of analysis at the global, regional, and national, while ignoring the importance (and vitality) of individuals that have the courage, and the humanity, in de-escalating and disrupting conflicts, which unlike earthquakes, are human interactions that could be changed. Hence, I invite Roger Mac Ginty (and/or other optimist scholars in the field), to rise to the occasion and attempt to look more closely, both in theoretical and empirical terms, at the necessary interaction between bottom-up and top-down peace processes, both crucial ingredients to bring, sustain, and keep peace. This interaction is initially formulated and sketched in the book, but the intellectual journey has to be continued, and completed.

Response to Arie M. Kacowicz's Review of *Everyday Peace: How So-Called Ordinary People Can Disrupt Violent Conflict*

doi:10.1017/S1537592722000093

— Roger Mac Ginty

I am very grateful to Arie M. Kacowicz for his careful and generous review of my book, *Everyday Peace: How So-called Ordinary People Can Disrupt Violent Conflict.* He finishes his review by setting a fair challenge: how can we chart more precisely the interaction between top-down and bottom-up attempts to make peace. My book is concerned with the micro-sociology of peacemaking, co-existence, and tolerance that might be found in deeply-divided societies. Arie's excellent book, *The Unintended Consequences of Peace: Peaceful Borders and Illicit Transnational Flows*, co-authored with Exequiel Lacovsky, Keren Sasson and Daniel F. Wajner, is concerned with peace between states or a macro-level peace. The challenge then, is to establish how attempts to reach peace (or some form of conflict de-escalation) at one level can inform another level.

That is no mean feat, although the Critical Dialogue forum and the side-by-side treatment of our books, with their quite different levels of analysis, is a good start. It would be very easy to use the rest of this review rejoinder to set out the various methodological problems associated with such an endeavour. Given the multiple moving parts in a peace process, there is always going to be an attribution gap as analysts seek to link inputs with outcomes (many of them unanticipated as made clear in Arie's book). Yet a few theoretical leaps can help us with the challenge of seeing how bottom-up and top-down approaches to peace might be connected. The first of these is to see peace and conflict as constituting a single system. The system might be disjointed, extensive, partially obscured and contain contradictory elements, but it constitutes a single system. The second is to maintain plural understandings of time. Different conflict actors will abide by different timescapes, meaning that the world of negotiation deadlines and neat timelines does not apply to all.

A third theoretical leap is to promote variegated understandings of power. This means taking non-material forms of power (everything from kinship to spiritual belief) as seriously as we take men in suits who are backed-up by men with guns. Taken together, these theoretical leaps can help unburden us from dissections of peace processes that are overly beholden to legal-rational interpretations. It seems unlikely that we can develop a definitive process tracing of a peace process, given the multiple moving parts, timelines and subjectivities. Yet we can, as Arie encourages us, think of how the sociological and political interact.

We have seen, in a number of conflict-affected societies, how communities were often far ahead of political leaderships in terms of their willingness to engage in inter-group conciliation (and vice versa where political leaders went out on a limb). Trying to capture such a multi-scalar dynamic is difficult, but it is possible to think of integrated research projects that seek to track elite and popular level sentiment, and how each level operationalises peace (or conciliation, or tolerance). Social science has a lot of tools at its disposal, from life histories to perception surveys. The key seems to be an ability to see peace as a verb; a phenomenon that is made and re-made by the actions and stances of individuals and communities (at all levels), and not just a series of statements by political leaders.