

use GPIs as a policy tool? To answer these questions, we need research that compares various rankings and their relationship to third parties.

*The Power of Global Performance Indicators* can be recommended as essential reading for a wide range of political science audiences—particularly scholars and students interested in mainly noncoercive mechanisms to induce policy change and compliance, in the diversification of actors and more recent forms of global governance, in global knowledge production and the power of information, in the shift of authority and power in international relations—and, of course, for everyone interested in GPIs.

### Thin Sympathy: A Strategy to Thicken Transitional

**Justice.** By Joanna R. Quinn. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2021. 272p. \$65.00 cloth.  
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The interdisciplinary field of transitional justice has long grappled with the challenges of how to optimize outcomes when tackling difficult legacies of violence in settings that have experienced conflict. Ideally, steps are taken to achieve gains that effectively address the needs of affected individuals and communities while promoting meaningful, sustained sociopolitical development that facilitates a durable peace and improved quality of life. An increasingly large share of the attention of practitioners and scholars alike has been devoted to assessing the impact of formal measures, such as criminal trials, lustration, truth commissions, and amnesty, implemented by governments and international institutions.

This book instead focuses on enabling conditions of transitional justice. Joanna Quinn's approach is equal parts theory-building—in the tradition of early contributors to the field, involving an intersection of moral philosophy, political psychology and sociology, and peace and conflict studies—and original empirical research grounded primarily in her substantial fieldwork in Uganda. She seeks to establish why transitional justice often runs into trouble and to identify the necessary foundations conducive to possibilities of positive results. In essence, she is trying to cut a Gordian knot by proposing a succinct, bold solution to increase the effectiveness of transitional justice (p. 6).

Quinn highlights the context in which transitional justice transpires, particularly before any formal measures are implemented. She rightfully argues that this environment is integral to whether those measures will be truly viable, fully authentic, suitably purposeful, and realistically capable of success (p. 9). As she emphasizes, transitional justice does not happen in a vacuum. Even long after undergoing transitions, conflict-affected societies are often wracked by trauma, disarray, divisions, mistrust, and

uncertainty among diverse segments of the population. Some societies proceed with transitional justice-like measures despite not ending conflicts or undertaking real transitions. Against these backdrops, Quinn contends, accomplishing progress via such measures is hard and perhaps impossible (chapters 3 and 4). The dilemma she pinpoints is that transitional justice will be prone to disappoint if not fail, with the risk of harmful consequences, when conditions are inhospitable (p. 23).

A core feature of Quinn's argument concerns timing and sequencing of implementation (p. 3). She asserts that minimum requirements ought to be in place and cultivated intentionally before formal transitional measures are implemented. Her argument invokes a concept of ripeness (p. 40) akin to the notable theory of conflict negotiation popularized by I. William Zartman. She is advocating for readiness (p. 110) rather than urgency, which is justified as promptness (p. 29).

Quinn argues that an essential element of effective transitional justice is what she labels as “thin sympathy”—roughly amounting to a minimum sufficient extent of cognitive awareness and appreciation throughout the broader population of what those directly affected by conflict experienced; she acknowledges that this knowledge and recognition are short of empathy, unity of identity, and common cause (chapter 4). She identifies a prevalent shortcoming within affected societies in terms of a basic understanding of the circumstances of conflict, which she deems a necessary foundation for an adequate, honest reckoning with the past and a commensurate ability to make gains in rebuilding (p. 44).

The notion that a robust realization of thin sympathy will be worthwhile in conflict-affected settings is compelling. Quinn makes a convincing claim of the importance of this foundation if and when transitional justice is implemented. She presents persuasive evidence about Uganda and other cases that the existence of thin sympathy also matters in the absence of formal transitional justice (p. 24) or amid deficient transitional justice-like measures (p. 30). In effect, the pursuit of thin sympathy is important if the political will to undertake transitional justice is lacking or its measures are implemented with dubious intentions, inadequate zeal and support, or constrained capabilities. Quinn optimistically suggests that this pursuit may move things along toward a more favorable trajectory (p. 99).

Yet the set of unaccommodating cases is seemingly not where the benefits of thin sympathy would be greatest. In principle, those payoffs are maximized in contexts where the aspirations are truly progressive, not where transition justice efforts' objectives are merely to offset the risk of sclerosis and set the stage for a future time when doing more will be conceivable.

These observations lead to a fundamental question of research design: What can the case of Uganda feasibly demonstrate in terms of testing Quinn's theory? Should

this case be selected prospectively as a best test of the theory? As Quinn describes at length, Uganda did not experience a real transition of the sort required for transitional justice to genuinely be in order. The transitional justice measures on which she concentrates were implemented after President Yoweri Museveni came into power in 1986 (she writes in passing about analogous measures previously implemented while Idi Amin was in power). Although his takeover was a change of leadership accompanying the resolution of a civil war, Quinn dismisses this transition as a superficial illusion (chapter 2) and the transitional justice-like measures as ploys designed to deflect scrutiny; the sinister underlying objectives of reinforcing authority and undermining opposition (p. 25) inflamed the ongoing conflict (p. 30).

It would be very useful to test the theory in settings where official transitional justice measures were (or are being) implemented with full sincerity, following a transition of the sort that Quinn views as legitimate and as creating a true policy window (p. 111). These settings are not only the best-case scenario, in terms of potential returns, but also suit her premise that preparation accomplished through the advance work of fact-finding, sensitization, and big-picture consolidation will make a pivotal difference to transitional justice. What does thin sympathy supply in these settings that would otherwise be beyond the realm of feasibility? Quinn surmises that the broader population will be far more interested, involved, and absorbed, which will matter with respect to the depth and influence of formal measures. This book does not supply much in the way of such empirical analysis, however, because her consideration of relevant cases is relatively limited (pp. 131–33).

Another question arises with respect to the delineation of tasks and responsibilities: Why are processes of building thin sympathy outside of and prior to transitional justice measures? Quinn typically treats these processes as mutually exclusive from and a precursor to transitional justice (p. 28 offers an exception). Her rationale, which may emerge out of the Uganda case and those like it, is that laying the groundwork is vital and unlikely to be imaginable within formal measures, especially when led by the corrupt state and incumbent authorities.

At times, Quinn hints at making allowances for processes of building thin sympathy to be coordinated with formal transitional justice measures in a strategically complementary manner (p. 27) or to be integrated as part of a holistic, multifaceted, methodical approach aimed at thickening transitional justice (p. 97). But one wonders whether she establishes too much of a divide between the processes and measures and a corresponding division of labor between nongovernmental actors and the state. Given that some of the measures could be positioned in terms of mandate and structured in terms of functions and operations to carry out the

type of processes she prioritizes, the need for the divide is not obvious. Quinn acknowledges that truth commissions (p. 43), the International Criminal Court (p. 61), and other measures have contributed on these fronts. She also describes a breadth of activity that occurs within civil society. An outgrowth of this activity is advocacy of and inputs into transitional justice measures, the implementation of which can galvanize activity as well. Some of this may ultimately come down to semantics about what counts as a transitional justice measure. Quinn carves out a narrow range of official bodies and policies, following a definition employed by the UN. Others adopt a more expansive view, which may facilitate an integration of duties.

These reflections return us to where this review started, namely the goal of optimization. If thin sympathy is stipulated as crucial, how is it best attained? Quinn is strongest in articulating what is needed. She is less convincing when envisioning how what is needed can materialize and who ought to be responsible for its emergence. She itemizes a playbook, with options of players, which she notes have pros and cons (chapter 4). Although the list of options involves official bodies, Quinn largely places the burden of generating thin sympathy on actors outside the state: civil society organizations (p. 108) and empathic champions, many of whom are survivors of the conflicts themselves (pp. 49–51). Some of this burden may fall on them inevitably—and be embraced by them as fulfilling a mission. Nonetheless, the burden can be heavy. At times, Quinn falls prey to assuming away the hurdles for processes building thin sympathy to be effective. In addition, she never addresses who would decide—and how—that the situation surpasses a threshold and is poised to proceed to the next stage when transitional justice measures are implemented atop the base of thin sympathy that has been nurtured. Introducing informal processes as a prerequisite before formal measures may produce a recursive dilemma, adding another layer subject to analogous problems. These sorts of matters are not easy to navigate. The book is a valuable stepping-stone for Quinn and peers in the field to continue thinking incisively about the paths that conflict-affected societies can take to their greatest advantage.

**The Governor's Dilemma: Indirect Governance Beyond Principals and Agents.** Edited by Kenneth W. Abbott,

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*The Governor's Dilemma* is a bold and original book on the pervasive practice of indirect governance. All political arrangements entail elements of indirect governance: