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REVIEW ARTICLE

Nested security lessons in conflict management from the League of Nations and the European Union, by Erin Jenne, Ithaca, NY, Cornell University Press, 2017, 264 pp., $45.00 (hardcover), ISBN 978-0-8014-5390-8

Among the virtues of Erin Jenne's *Nested Security* is that it shows us that many of our standard concepts and approaches miss a great deal of what is going on in the world. It does so by spanning the sub-fields of comparative and international politics. Any complex enterprise requires a division of labor; so it would be foolish to deny the benefits of academic specialization. For some purposes, we are well served by erecting sub-field boundaries in order to allow us to do scholarship in manageable bites. But what goes on within a nation's borders often has important implications for external behavior, and the reverse is true as well. It is no accident (as an old-time Marxist might put it) that the founding journal of our field was called *World Politics* and promiscuously mixed international and comparative politics. The need to do so is nowhere greater than in studying nationalism and the formation of nations. Indeed, to try to separate what goes on within a nation from the interaction among them is often impossible by definition, because a great deal of what is at stake is who is to be inside a nation and who is to be outside.

With perceptive theory and thorough historical analysis, Jenne shows that the international environment, both regional and global, plays a major role in the course of internal conflict, especially dealing with minority rights. What I would like to do here is to extend this way of thinking to civil wars. With the end of the Cold War and the outbreak of a great deal of internal violence, this phenomenon, or rather these phenomena, have received a great deal of study. Without disputing the value of this work, I think Jenne's approach shows that we need to broaden our focus to include greater attention to external actors and the international environment. Indeed, the term "civil war" misleads us on most occasions. Very rarely are all or even the bulk of the sources of the conflict or the determinants of its course to be found entirely within the boundaries of a single state. This is not to say that for either explanatory or even prescriptive purposes we should ignore local actors – and indeed in many cases the disputes are not between ethnic or ideological groups but are much more local and fragmented (Kalyvas 2006; Autesserre 2010). But they are rarely sufficient.

In some cases, the external actors can be so powerful that the very name "civil war" is misleading. I believe this is true for the current horrors in Syria. Although the original source of the disturbance was local (influenced, of course, by the Arab Spring in Tunisia and Egypt), it did not take long for others to become involved. Indeed, for the past several years, it probably would have been more useful to think of this conflict as a war among Saudi Arabia, Iran, Turkey, the US, Russia, and Hezbollah fought in Syria territory, rather than as the Syrian Civil War. This is not to say that the conflict resembles a normal international war with large field armies and clear battle lines. Rather it shows the inadequacy of any of our standard theories and indeed of our standard concepts and terms.

This would not be surprising to American scholars if our history books had portrayed the course of the American Revolution more accurately. Most obviously, this conflict was a secessionist civil war rather than a revolution. More importantly, it could not have been won

by the insurgents without the help of outsiders, not only in the form of European volunteers, but in terms of the loans secured from the Dutch and French, and then the decisive entry of the French fleet that sealed the British army's fate at Yorktown.

Even when "outsiders" do not intervene, they are likely to exert significant influence. Local participants are usually aware of the potential for intervention and will craft their actions with at least one eye out for the international effects. In some cases, they will court a potential patron; in others they may seek general international legitimacy; in still other cases they will try to keep outsiders out (e.g. Connelly 2002). The latter motive was important in the American Civil War. So much of the action was located within the US that this term is appropriate, but Abraham Lincoln and William Seward, his Secretary of State, were very conscious of the need to keep Great Britain from recognizing the South. Although the Emancipation Proclamation was inevitable given the increasing ferocity of the struggle, its timing was influenced by the desire to affect British opinion.

Anticipations of intervention, both desired and undesired, almost always play a role. Of course, outsiders are both aware of the danger of being manipulated and seek influence by threats and promises as well as by overt intervention. We then have what international politics has stressed, which is the power of thinking in terms of strategic interactions in which each side anticipates what others will do, knowing that others are doing likewise (Schelling 1960). The resulting patterns are not easy to predict – indeed if we could predict them the actors probably could do so as well, and then they would change their behavior, leading the theories to be self-denying prophecies (Gartzke 1999). But we should expect calculation of this kind to be important.

Public relations and non-state actors can play a large role here. Before he came to power, Fidel Castro went to great lengths to court the American public, especially in presenting a benevolent picture to Herbert Matthews of the *New York Times*. The rise of NGOs has made them a major force here, and so an object of the attention of insurgent movements (Bob 2005). To talk in terms of manipulation, courting, and strategic interaction may seem excessively cynical. But I think the use of these concepts is compatible with the judgment that some of the causes are worthy and indeed noble. It is not to denigrate the leaders of the American Revolution to note that they could not have succeeded on the basis of the commitment of their fellow colonialists alone, and that we can both admire their victory and realize that it would not have been possible had Great Britain not had numerous and powerful enemies.

If the US owes its existence to French intervention in the American Revolution and British restraint during the Civil War, today we can at least hope for outsiders to play benign roles in current conflicts. In a world with so many states with the ability to send money and arms abroad, multiple interferences are likely. This is clearly true in both Congo and Syria. It is the latter that has attracted most attention, and here the nested characteristics of the conflict are clearly evident. Whether the outside parties can bring themselves to find sufficient common interest to try to broker a settlement remains unclear, but I fear that the converse is undoubtedly true: the war will not be ended as long as the outsiders continue to fuel it.

By breaking down some of the barriers between comparative politics and international politics and stressing that internal strife is rarely entirely internal, Jenne has done a great service to both scholars and policy-analysts.

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