

the explicit goal of improving peace operations through evidence-based policy making. On the other hand, she shares the ontological position of critical theorists of peace building in emphasizing the need to understand peace from the perspective of the “peacekept,” the recipients of interventions, rather than the purveyors of peacekeeping. This hybrid approach delivers an innovative process for generating community-defined peace indicators that measure in high fidelity how local communities experience peace or the lack thereof.

Yet the book falls short in making the case that this approach is truly replicable and scalable in terms of linking up experience-near community indicators to experience-distant universal measuring efforts, in systematic and cumulative ways. Without that concrete connection between bottom-up and top-down, Firchow cannot really make the case for the ultimate value of the EPI approach to the stated goal of improving measurement that, in turn, will improve policy making—or to returning some measure of agency and power to the peacekept from the peacekeepers. The reader is left with the tantalizing possibility, but not the directions, for how *big-P* and *small-p*—or exogenous and indigenous approaches to—peace building can really be harmonized in the way that Firchow desires. Fortunately, she has crystallized beautifully what it could actually mean to develop bottom-up, community-defined measures of peace. This makes her book an important contribution to peace studies and charts an expanded research agenda for those interested in further conceptualizing how indigenous and exogenous indicators could be reconciled to improve project design and to better measure peace-building effectiveness at different scales.

Rebel Politics: A Political Sociology of Armed Struggle in Myanmar’s Borderlands. By David Brenner. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2019. 162p. \$115.00 cloth, \$24.95 paper. doi:10.1017/S1537592720001966

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David Brenner’s first book, *Rebel Politics: A Political Sociology of Armed Struggle in Myanmar’s Borderlands*, makes a timely and distinctive contribution to scholarly debates on rebel governance and armed conflict, as well as to the growing field of Myanmar studies. His argument—that rebellion is more than anything else a *social process*—posits that the internal politics of rebel movements is key for understanding conflict in Myanmar’s borderlands and beyond. Honing in on the experiences of “two of the oldest and most important rebel movements” in Myanmar (p. 3), the Karen National Union (KNU) and the Kachin Independence Organization (KIO), Brenner challenges traditional analysis that centers elites and disregards the everyday, sometimes mundane, social environment in

which rebellion takes shape. Brenner’s focus on the social practices of rebellion provides a fresh and much-needed analysis of why conflict has persisted in Myanmar, despite the rise to power of the former democracy icon Aung San Suu Kyi and the commencement of political reforms, including a national-level ceasefire process.

Brenner’s book emerged from several months spent within Myanmar’s “rebel borderworlds” (p. 37), the liberated areas of Kawthoole and Kachinland. This rich ethnographic background enables Brenner to craft detailed insights into the inner workings of rebellions and, in particular, the relationship between elites and the communities through which these rebellions gain legitimacy. His “ethnographic bent” (p. 24) provides a much-needed antidote to the many past studies on conflict in Myanmar lacking in primary and firsthand content; as a result, Brenner is able to provide a novel perspective on rebel politics in the country. Rather than treating rebel groups as homogeneous, fixed entities, Brenner’s work instead draws attention to how struggles over authority within these groups both shape and are shaped by relationships with the grassroots. These relationships are embedded in a social contract through which the leaders vie for legitimacy and, thus, authority. This in turn affects the willingness and ability of rebel groups to wage war. Building on sociologists such as Pierre Bourdieu and Norbert Elias, and connecting this work with the study of rebellions and resistance politics as advanced by theorists including James Scott, Charles Tilly, and Zacharia Mampilly, among others, Brenner proposes a relational approach for studying rebellions. Connecting these schools of thought allows Brenner to situate the KNU and the KIO as “ontologically embedded within a social environment” (p. 16).

Both of these rebel movements are exemplars of parastates controlling areas of territory in which they provide public goods, including limited social welfare and security, for the communities living under their control. Brenner maintains that these critical relations of care and power, enmeshed within everyday kinship relations and community practices, are the means through which rebel leaders attempt to create legitimacy and consolidate power. In other words, rebel leaders must build cohesion and support through the reciprocal provisioning of services and power relations with the grassroots. These relations are key, indeed foundational, to a movement’s success or otherwise: they can lead to a stronger rebel force able to resist the incumbent state or the reverse, a fractured rebellion incapable of waging a successful war. His primary argument, then, is that rebel leaders, unable to foster compliance through sheer force alone, attempt to build relations of legitimacy among and with the grassroots in order to “develop momentum of their own in driving collective conduct” (p. 27). Engagement with Alicia De La Cour-Venning’s study on Kachin rebel interaction with international humanitarian norms as a means to affect

perceptions of legitimacy could add an interesting perspective to Brenner's future research in this field (see Alicia De La Cour-Venning, "Revolutionary Law Abidance: Kachin Rebel Governance and the Adoption of IHL in Resistance to Myanmar State Violence," *International Criminal Law Review* 19 [5], 2019). Similarly, Andrew Ong's study on the internal dynamics of the political culture of the Wa rebellion could offer Brenner opportunities for thinking about whether, and under what circumstances, his focus on grassroots relations can be applied to other, perhaps more top-down, rebellions such as the Wa (see Andrew Ong, "Producing Intransigence: [Mis]Understanding the United Wa State Army in Myanmar," *Contemporary Southeast Asia* 40 [3], 2018).

Seeing as much of Brenner's argument developed from his "manifold everyday interactions" (p. 24), I wish we would have seen and heard more, both from the grassroots themselves and from his ethnographic journey. For example, the pronouncements on the opinions of the grassroots are often not underpinned with direct quotes, unwittingly tilting the favor and the focus on elites, whose voices seem to be included to a greater degree. This does not detract from Brenner's argument but simply means that I would have liked to hear more from the grassroots, in their own words. In a similar vein, more detail from his ethnographic journey would have been welcome. How did his choice of methods and his own positionality as a male researcher affect the type of data he was able to collect? How did it shape where he went and to whom he spoke? Did he mostly speak to men? What did this mean for the type of knowledge produced in this book? Brenner suggests that his methods forced him to "unlearn and relearn as much as learn" (p. 25), but he leaves us curious as to what this learning process entailed. I would have loved to see a more reflexive discussion on learning processes such as these to illuminate how his choice of methods, and his very being, ultimately informed the type of knowledge produced.

I also think that Brenner misses a productive opportunity to engage with feminist and gender studies. In making the case that we need to analyze conflict in the borderlands with a relational ontology, we need to take seriously the workings of gender. Recent studies on rebel behavior complicate the dynamics of social order in South and Southeast Asia. My own work (Jenny Hedström, "The Political Economy of the Kachin Revolutionary Household," *Pacific Review* 30 [4], 2016) has, for example, shown that the "rebel social contract" in Myanmar relies on a gendered division of labor in which women are pushed to provide the public goods that Brenner identifies as a critical element for maintaining grassroots support (p. 21). Moreover, Srila Roy's important study into the Maoist revolution in India troubles the suggestion that legitimacy among the Maoist comrades was crafted through everyday social interactions between the leaders

and the movement (Srila Roy, *Remembering Revolution: Gender, Violence and Subjectivity in India's Naxalbari Movement*, 2012); instead, Roy shows how the struggle was legitimated through everyday gendered violence that cemented social relations and provided a *raison d'être* for the conflict. In other words, it is not that Brenner is wrong to emphasize the relationship between the grassroots and the elites, but rather that the rebel social contract is infused with gendered relations of power and violence. Engagement with this body of literature would have strengthened Brenner's overall argument and allowed him to uncover more of the internal politics of rebellion and conflict in Myanmar's borderworlds.

These (small) critiques notwithstanding, Brenner has meticulously crafted an argument about rebel politics that is rich with ethnographic details and theoretical insights. In providing a view from *within* rebel politics, Brenner identifies the dynamic relations of social life as giving form and shape to political violence. Rather than seeing the sometimes "uneasy relations" (p. 15) between competing leadership factions and the grassroots as necessarily troubling rebel behavior, Brenner suggests that they lead to productive tensions, which are able either to hamper or propel rebellion forward. This insight adds critical knowledge to our understanding of how broader questions of peace and conflict in a country can be affected by the messy, everyday relations that communities and elites engaged in rebellions have, making Brenner's book essential reading for any student or scholar interested in learning more about rebel politics in general or the Kachin or Karen rebellions in particular.

Contentious Compliance: Dissent and Repression under International Human Rights Law By

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The field of state repression/human rights violation has developed into what could positively be described as a vibrant, ever-expanding, and creative body of research with scholars constantly pushing in new directions, or negatively as a somewhat sprawling, fragmented, and unwieldy body of research. Whichever characterization you prefer, the outcome is clear. Some scholars focus on specific explanatory factors (e.g., an aspect of democracy and military intervention) while giving limited attention to the other variables within the model (e.g., economic development or inequality and naming/shaming). Some focus on specific forms of state repression (e.g., personal integrity violations) while giving limited attention to other forms (e.g., civil liberties). Some focus on specific sides of the contentious interaction, favoring either governments