



## REVIEWS

### **Meanings of Violence: A Cross-cultural Perspective**

Göran Aijmer & Jon Abbink (eds.)

Berg, 2000

HBK: ISBN: 1859734359 £42.99

PBK: ISBN: 1859734405 £14.99

pp. 256 (including: index, bibliography)

This volume of nine articles is one of the most innovative collection of contributions to the discussion of violence in recent times. Although covering a wide range of topics, thematically and geographically, it presents itself as a coherent discussion of the subject at hand as if written as one book and not as nine different chapters by different authors. Running through the book are a few constant threads which all authors seem to be analysing only from different perspectives and with individual focal points. The cohesion of the various chapters is achieved through a common 'symbolistic' theoretical framework. Göran Aijmer suggests that this theoretical framework is able to take advantage of a variety of approaches to explain and examine violence, 'as holism and comparison are essential features of the symbolistic project' (p. 2). Aijmer points out clearly what he thinks the purpose of this book should be, when he states that 'this introduction does not offer a theory of violence stipulating the conditions for violent acts. Rather, it suggests ways of reading violence as it occurs in the world' (p. 19). In this sense all of the contributions can be read as parts of this overarching project.

In the first essay Anton Blok takes a look at 'the enigma of senseless violence' arguing that rather than condemning violence as simply brutal and irrational, we should look at it as a cultural form of meaningful human action and communication (p. 24). Blok emphasises the context of violence and its cultural embeddedness and enables us to understand violent action as a social element not as asocial. In a similar vein Nigel Rapport presents an understanding of violence as a meaningful 'experienced reality' and discusses the relationship between individual creativity and violence (p. 39). For him violence originates in individual creativity and it exists within, beneath and through social structure. In his theoretical account he differentiates between two forms of violence: democratic and nihilistic. While the former builds on the shared expectations of the individuals, the latter denies meaning. Rapport makes this distinction in order to indicate that social structures attempt to accommodate individual creativity while at the same time not advocating criminality. Individual criminality does not generate meaning, and thus is negative rather than creative.

While Blok and Rapport present theoretical discussions, the remainder of the volume consists of case studies resulting mostly from fieldwork. They provide the comparative examples of the symbolistic project Aijmer was speaking of in his introduction. Jon Abbink and Suzette Heald's contributions are most valuable for their examination and discussion of changes that occur in traditional societies and their constructions of meaning of violent action under the impact of modernity and global markets. Both have researched among African societies in Southern Ethiopia (Abbink) and the Kenya/Tanzania border Region (Heald). Abbink is interested in the ritual exchanges between one particular group (the Suri) and its neighbours. Violence seems to be part of these exchanges, which are also important for the maintenance of balance between the groups and inside the group itself. This balance has been threatened with the introduction of automatic weapons, with which violent action - attacking and killing - became an aim in itself, a medium of self glorification and of personal status' among

some of the Suri people (p. 91). Heald was researching the practice of cattle raiding among the Kuria in Kenya. Here, too, a traditional practice used for social control and economical and political exchanges between groups has developed into a problem for the people. She shows how the ritual practice has developed into a criminal economy, with former heroes (the raiders) turned into thieves who the state wants to be punished, hence producing an internal conflict in the group. In addition, the introduction of modern weaponry among the Kuria has had negative effects, as with their help new power relations could be established and traditional practices such as cattle raiding turned into a profitable business. Both articles connect individual cases with a larger context of global issues and thus show that even small scale societies and their interpretations of violent action have ultimately to be seen in a much larger context.

The remaining chapters consist of Alberto Bouroncle's examination of the meaning of violence apparent in the Spanish bullfighting ritual, for the social order in Spain today and in the past. He traces the origins of the bullfighting ritual and shows how the event (re-)interpreted over time to serve ideological purposes, such as the establishment of a new social order, state or ideology. The role of the state in the construction of discourses of violence is the subject of the two articles on China. Barend ter Haar shows how discourses were constructed in which all expressions of violence have been shunned which accompanied the development of a complex bureaucracy in favour of the military complex. Virgil Ho, in his account on China, focuses on violent punishments and their social role and function. Lastly Gerard Martin undertakes an investigation into one of the most violent societies of today: Columbia. Like Aijmer he does not believe in a total and all encompassing theory of violence, but sees the need to define the term for each discussion anew. Only a non-maximalist definition can account for a given subject and the research perspective given. In examining Colombian society and its violence, he takes a historic perspective to show the connections between the past and present in the interpretations of violence and to show how and why violence in different forms is so virulent in present day Columbia.

The structure of the book and its theoretical approach of taking in the variety of perspectives and discussing the subject holistically works well and makes the book an invaluable source of theory in the field. It raises many questions and most important does not stop in putting its object of research into a wider, even or necessarily global perspective. As a starting point to further theorise on violence or to compare other research, this book is certainly an important resource. While it does not discuss any theory as such, it makes excellent use of them and enriches the debate on the subject of violence.

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### **Journeys Through Conflict: Narratives and Lessons**

Hayward R. Alker, Ted Robert Gurr and Kumar Rupesinghe, (eds)

Rowman and Littlefield, 2001

HBK: ISBN: 0742510271 £57.00 \$75.00

PBK: ISBN: 074251028X £22.95 \$29.95

pp. xviii + 459 (including: index & references)

At the start of the 1990s, as the cold war faded and internal conflicts increased, two areas in the conflict cycle began to attract much more attention from scholars. Until then most of the conflict literature was concerned with the mediation and resolution of violent conflict. However, in 1992, the United Nations document *An Agenda for Peace* identified conflict prevention and 'post-conflict peacebuilding' as important areas of international action and this acted as a catalyst for major research initiatives in both areas. The whole area of prevention is particularly difficult. There is no consensus about the causes of violent conflict, either in terms of underlying or immediate causes. The statement in one of the chapters that the 'actual triggers of violence and hostility may be difficult to determine' (p. 197) is an understatement. So how can we prevent something we do not fully understand? The prevention literature also enters the dubious area of counterfactuals and 'what ifs', making it suspect in the eyes of many researchers. As the editors point out, 'conflict preventers deal with maybes, need nots and might have beens' (p. 19). There is also the problem of judging the success of a preventive intervention. What time frame do we use? For example, at the time, some commentators regarded the Arusha Accords of 1993 as an example of successful prevention work, though we now know it could not stop, and may even have contributed to, the genocide in Rwanda the following year.

One important aspect of conflict prevention is, of course, early warning; and it is this subject that is the theme of this collection of essays. They form the most significant output from a Carnegie funded project called Conflict Early Warning Systems (CEWS) that ran from 1995 to 1999. It aimed to raise awareness of 'hidden' examples of prevention work, facilitate the development of early warning indicators, encourage the development of institutional memories, and help with the development of support and training networks. Several of the participants, including the three editors, played a crucial role in the development of the growth of interest in prevention work in both the academic and policy communities and so can speak with considerable authority on this topic.

The book is divided into three main sections. The first describes the background to the project, setting out pre-history, premises, goals and methods. It also includes a chapter on the conflict in Guatemala that might have been better placed in the case studies section. This comes in part two. The research design called for focused, qualitative comparisons. So there are chapters on Africa (Burundi, Rwanda and Zaire), the former Soviet Union (Moldova-Dniestr and Chechnya), the Balkans (Slovakia, Macedonia and Kosovo), Africa (South Africa and Angola) and Asia (the Moros, the Mizos, Kashmir and Tibet). There is also an analysis of the experiences of the participation of NGOs and people in the conflicts in Mozambique, Sierra Leone and the Philippines. This is a fascinating, but rather uncritical chapter. However, it deals with peace-making rather than early warning. Part three turns to more general theoretical issues related to early warning with three chapters that present a comparative analysis of early warning indicators, a synthetic framework for early warning systems, and a discussion of alternative conflict trajectories which addresses the counterfactual issue. A fourth part

consists of a single chapter on lessons learned and policy issues arising from a review of early warning and early response work.

There is no doubt that there is important material contained in the work of all the contributors, especially in the chapters by Harff, Lund, and Gurr and Khosla, the best in the collection. However, the whole is certainly not more than the sum of the parts because there is a lack of overall cohesion. The volume reads like a set of conference papers assembled into an edited volume *ex post facto* rather than as a carefully designed and integrated project. There are, for example, considerable differences in the size of the chapters. Lund's analysis of Slovakia, Macedonia and Kosovo is fifty pages long. The chapter on South Africa and Angola, by Gouden and Solomon, runs to only sixteen. There seems to be no basic consensus about methods and ideas. Harff's analysis is organised around the concepts of accelerators and de-accelerators. Vorkunova 's examines signals as symptoms of violence. Lund relates incidents of violence to seven key variables. Gouden and Solomon use Rupesinghe's framework for conflict transformation, whilst Gurr and Khosla employ the themes of motives and management techniques. This bears out a claim in the final chapter that 'methodologically, there is little agreement on what indicators to use, information sources, and analytical approaches' (p. 400). Quite so, but this reader would have appreciated more guidance on how to deal with this lack of convergence. The title, after all, did promise to offer some lessons.

What was needed was for the third or fourth part to synthesise all the material into a cohesive final product. There is an attempt to do this in the two chapters by Schmalberger and Alker, but they drew too heavily on one or two of the case studies, most notably Padilla's analysis of Guatemala. The final chapter might have been better located earlier in the volume, as it is a useful overview of the state of play in the field of early warning research and action but does not mention the case studies analysed in part two. It is a shame that such a worthy project concludes in such an unsatisfactory and equivocal manner.

**Stephen Ryan**, University of Ulster, UK

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**The Politics of Memory: Transitional Justice in Democratising Societies**

Alexandra Barahona de Brito, Carmen González, Enríquez Aguilar and Paloma Aguilar (eds)

Oxford University Press, 2001

HBK: ISBN 0199240809 £ 52.50

PBK: ISBN 0199240906 £ 18.99

pp. 413 (including: bibliographical survey, footnotes, index and references)

This is one of a range of recent books, such as Hayner (2001) and Biggar (2001), addressing various aspects of managing the past in conflicted or war-torn societies. Indeed, one of the editors and one contributor to this volume also contribute to Biggar's book.

In a lengthy introduction the editors state that the aim of the book is:



to shed light on aspects of transitional politics. Two kinds of transition are covered: those that occur as a result of the collapse of old regime forces, as in Portugal, Argentina, Central and Eastern Europe, Russia and Germany after reunification, where collapse was followed by absorption into another state; and those that are negotiated between an incoming democratic elite and an old regime, as in Spain, the Southern Cone of Latin America Central America, and South Africa (p. 1).

The book examines official methods of managing the past: truth commissions, trials and amnesties, purges and, *inter alia*, compensation, reparation and restitution. Unofficial methods of managing the past are also examined, such as church-based or NGO initiatives as a way of addressing the wide politics of memory. However, the book devotes its main attention to exploring the implications of the various methods for the process of democratisation, and how, if at all, retroactive justice affects democratic functioning and accountability. The book, unlike some of the recent South African contributions (see Boraine, 2000) adopts an agnostic (both in the religious sense and in evaluative stand) on the value of truth processes.

The book's overall conclusions on truth processes and commissions are particularly of interest to a Northern Ireland audience, where the debate continues about the viability or desirability of some formal truth process. This debate is conducted in the context of an ongoing Public Inquiry into Bloody Sunday, and calls for more inquiries into other killings such as those of lawyers Rosemary Nelson and Pat Finucane. The editors draw several conclusions on truth recovery, based on a synthesis of the chapters dealing with truth processes in Portugal, Spain, the Southern Cone and Central America, South Africa, Eastern Europe, East Germany and Russia: in their joint conclusion, they argue that the contribution of truth processes is primarily to the establishment of democratic governance rather than to 'reconciliation'. They point out in the conclusion the need for caution about raising unrealistic expectations about truth discovery, since; they conclude truth processes inevitably fail to satisfy absolutist standards of truth. In chapter 4, Barhona de Brita points out that both justice and truth are more easily achieved in societies where it is clear what side has the upper hand. Societies attempting to achieve pluralism, she concludes, are destined to struggle with issues of truth and justice.

She cites the examples of post war Belgium, Denmark, France, Netherlands where severity and speed were priorities hence the use of mass trials and mass jailings. She offers a useful distinction between what is just and what is fair. Measures can be seen to be just in political terms yet may be unfair in terms of the legal process. Issues of fairness also periodically arise since mechanisms often 'punish the small fish, whilst letting the big fish go' (p. 28). Such difficulties, contradictions and dilemmas in reinstating truth and justice leads some to favour 'forgetting' the past and abandoning the pursuit of truth and justice. Indeed Barhona de Brita argues that truth processes alone have little impact on democratisation and that other constitutional, social and political reforms are much more important, although she concedes that truth processes can rehabilitate the judiciary and other parts of the legal system tainted by association with the *ancien regime*.

Various contributors also usefully address the role of international actors and agencies in a chapter which examines the role of the United Nations, the Organisation of American States, the International Criminal Tribunals for the former Yugoslavia and Rwanda, and the International Criminal Court. Case studies on Portugal, Spain, the Southern Cone,

Central America, South Africa Central and Eastern Europe, East Germany and the Soviet Union/Russia make up the core of the book.

Several points strike home. Roht-Arriaza's chapter addressing the role of international human rights law in challenging the behaviour of nations points to the role of the courts in United States and the United Kingdom in the case of General Pinochet. With the advent of the 'war against terrorism' and the situation of the Muslim prisoners in Cuba, the contradictions in the world politics of human rights are clearer than ever. The inequality between the powerful and less powerful nations and the difficulty in ensuring the accountability of all nations is addressed.

The chapters on countries/regions provide valuable insights into the specifics of the case studies they examine, and also contribute insights that have broader applicability. Many of these broader insights are brought together in the impressive encyclopedic analysis contained in the conclusion. For me, however, the outstanding merit of this book lies in its value as a reference text. The excellent bibliographical survey of the literature includes web-based material and surveys the main debates about transitional truth and justice, compensation and restitution, the politics of memory including issues of commemoration. Country studies are reviewed in sections on Africa, Asia (the shortest), Europe (by far the longest) and Latin America. The icing on the rich cake of this book is provided by the 54 pages of references cited by the various authors, and including references for the works included in the bibliographical essay. The scholarship is apparent, and the value of this work - as a reference, and a detached, legal and scientific analysis in a field that is often heavy with emotion - is clear.

Human history, however, often moves in directions that are not reasonable, sensible or scientifically grounded. Were we to learn the lessons of international experience, this book would provide an excellent primer. One suspects, perhaps sadly, that the way forward in Northern Ireland, and in other societies in transition, will owe more to pragmatism and the art of the possible than to the application of lessons learned elsewhere and set out clearly in the pages of books such as this one.

### **References**

Biggar, N. (ed), 2001, *Burying the Past: Making Peace and Doing Justice After Civil Conflict*, Georgetown University Press. Washington.

Boraine, A., 2000, *A Country Unmasked: Inside South Africa's Truth and Reconciliation Commission*, Oxford University Press, Oxford.

Hayner, P.B., 2001, *Unspeakable Truths: Confronting State Terror and Atrocity*, Routledge, New York and London.

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### **International Migration: Trends, Policies, and Economic Impact**

S. Djacić (ed)

Routledge, 2001

HBK: ISBN: 0415237823 £65.00

pp. 273 (including: index, references and illustrations)

The challenge – and the opportunities – of international migration are currently moving quickly up a variety of academic and policy agendas in many countries in Europe and beyond. A book dealing with the nature and impacts of international migration could therefore make a timely contribution to these debates. Two possible ingredients for the success of such a publication in terms of maximum impact might be that it should engage with migration from a variety of perspectives and that it ought to speak to a wide readership.

The twelve chapters in this edited volume cover an extensive geographical range from Canada, the United States, and Mexico to Israel and New Zealand and Australia. Likewise, the topics considered in the chapters run from national studies such as consideration of Bulgarian illegal immigrants in Greece to abstract analyses of international migration in the context of a Ricardo-Viner model. So, to some extent, in the diversity of subject matter, the book meets one of my criteria for success. Despite this, however, I am not convinced that the book does make a consistent contribution to the wider literature.

One reason for this is that there are, in my reading, significant shortfalls in the way in which the diversity of international migration experiences – and conceptual approaches to migration – have been handled within the volume as a whole (although not perhaps by individual contributors). On the one hand there is almost too much diversity, as each chapter appears to take an isolated topic-by-topic approach. There is little clear sense of how the various chapters link with each other and it is noteworthy that although there is an introduction there is no conclusion to draw the various contributions together and no overall thematic discussion of trends and concepts. I imagine that if it had been provided that this 'big picture' could have been useful for many readers particularly those who are unfamiliar with the work of economists on migration. On the other hand, however, the book is only diverse in its own terms; wider perspectives and analytical approaches drawn from outside the economic paradigm, in which most of the contributors work, have been generally ignored. There is, for example, a large literature on globalisation and migration which hardly, if at all, gets a look in.

My second reason for scepticism concerns the style of the book and its potential to reach out to a wider readership. Many of the chapters contain demanding abstract material which requires readers to have a considerable grasp of economic theory and mathematical reasoning so as to understand the arguments. Written by economists – perhaps for other economists – many chapters will probably be extremely difficult for most academics in disciplines such as geography and sociology which also engage in migration studies, and impenetrable for non-academic lay readers who might want to learn more about recent international migration.

My overall impression of the volume is thus one of an opportunity missed. The omission of a wider discussion of themes and trends, plus the lack of a conclusion, mean that it is difficult to see the general thrust of the book. This weakens the volume. The concentration on economic approaches, and particularly the extended algebraic presentation of reasoning, also means that the book probably will remain restricted to an

economic readership. This is a shame as it could be worthwhile presenting this material in an accessible way for a more general audience.

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### **NGOs and Civil Society: Democracy by Proxy?**

Ann C. Hudock

Polity Press, 2001 (originally published 1999)

HBK: ISBN: 0745616488 £45.00 \$66.95

PBK: ISBN: 0745616496 £12.99 \$28.95

pp. 120 (including: glossary, references and index)

This short book makes one very good point and raises a number of important questions about international aid for democratisation and civil society-building. The one point that it makes is the empirical one that international support for Southern NGOs – generally described as ‘capacity-building’ – tends to build the ‘capacity’ of donors and international agencies rather than empowering Southern NGOs. The important questions raised concern the theoretical understanding of why capacity-building meets with such limited success and the policy responses to this.

Where the book is strong is at the level of description. Drawing on a large number of examples and four case studies, from Sierra Leone and Gambia, Hudock illustrates that international funding for Southern NGOs tends to have negative consequences for their capacity to work with the poorest and most marginal groups. There are two central difficulties. Firstly, the funding of projects tends to involve these NGOs in a lot of bureaucratic and administrative tasks, in both applying for funding and in the monitoring and accounting for expenditures, drawing resources away from ‘front-line’ work. Secondly, in order to meet donor targets, Southern NGOs will seek to work with groups and individuals where positive results are easiest to achieve, for example, those with easy access, organisation skills and easily attainable goals. She argues that while international resources being ploughed into capacity-building of Southern NGOs may increase their numbers and influence, the building up of the NGO sector does not necessarily give voice to the poor and marginalized in these societies – thereby creating the ‘democracy by proxy’ of the sub-title.

This basic point is a refreshing change and a challenge to much of the literature which assumes that NGO-building in some way equates to democratisation or civil society-building. Her work, which mainly uses examples from Africa, is supported by recent studies in other regions where NGO-building has been a focus of international initiatives, for example, in Bosnia.

Where the book is less informative is the theoretical understanding of the problems of ‘capacity-building’ and policy alternatives offered. Hudock illustrates that the resource inequalities between Northern donors and Southern NGOs have resulted in a relationship of dependency which gives donors leverage over the operations and aims of Southern NGOs. The alternatives are clearly limited, yet she seems certain that their can be a technical ‘fix’ that can make the power inequalities disappear, giving Southern NGOs a say in the ‘capacity-building’ process. She makes a number of suggestions for overcoming this structural inequality in the donor/NGO ‘partnership’ - from a plea for



donors to give funds on a secured long-term basis with less monitoring and conditionality so that Southern NGOs can pursue their own, independent, strategies, to ideas for alternative funding through corporate sponsorship or networks of dinner parties. She argues that 'capacity-building' should not be focused on 'internal' questions of management and administration but 'external' ones which address the key problem of resources, such as fund-raising capacities, for example by funding the post of fundraiser. The discussion of policy alternatives is at worst, a facile one, and at best, merely a circular argument, failing to address the main questions at issue.

The problems with the book are not merely at the level of solutions. She makes a number of key assumptions which are never examined, for example, that Southern NGOs can actually 'empower' the poor and excluded (if left to their own devices) and that Northern donors can 'empower' Southern NGOs (once they adopt her strategy of giving money without strings attached). These assumptions indicate that Hudock is not as hostile to 'democracy by proxy' as it may at first appear. In her work there is little consideration of the importance of the political process, democracy or self-government, and certainly little hostility to international donors calling the shots. Hudock, in fact, appears to be supportive of elite advocacy or 'democracy by proxy'. She argues that: 'it is imperative that NGOs engage with international organizations. NGOs often represent local communities' only opportunity to influence international agencies' policies and programmes, and in the process change local conditions' (p.57). How unelected and unaccountable Southern NGOs which spend their time in international policy forums can claim to either represent 'local communities' or to be better representatives than governments or to 'influence' international agencies are issues which are all conveniently ignored.

It appears that Hudock's concern is not that NGOs, being feted by international donors, are creating 'democracy by proxy' but that this process, whereby international control over the work of NGOs is so overt and NGO dependency on international donors so transparent, may undermine NGO's legitimacy and new role as preferred policy partners to governments. Hudock's theoretical assumptions about the role of NGOs and of civil society advocacy seem to be directly challenged by her empirical work. It is this contradiction at the heart of her book which makes her seek refuge in technical solutions and restricts the discussion of the political issues raised to the aside of 'areas for further study'. Nevertheless, despite the contradictions and the truncated nature of the analysis, this book still makes a valuable contribution to the current discussion on NGOs and civil society-building.

**David Chandler**, Brunel University, UK

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**Can Liberal Pluralism be Exported? Western Political Theory and Ethnic Relations in Eastern Europe**

Will Kymlicka and Magda Opalski (eds.)

Oxford University Press, 2002

HBK: ISBN: 0199240639 £45.00

PBD: ISBN: 019924815X £14.99

pp. 439 (including: index & bibliography)

For many years, Will Kymlicka has elaborated a political theory that seeks to reconcile classical liberal theory with the claims made by groups defining and distinguishing

themselves from majority populations by cultural, linguistic, religious and other traits. The resulting theory of ethnocultural justice is as much descriptive of situations in some (western) countries, such as Canada, Belgium or Switzerland, as it is prescriptive in terms of how and why liberalism and the recognition and implementation of group-specific rights are not mutually exclusive. Kymlicka's theory is in itself conclusive; whether one finds it persuasive depends very much upon whether one shares its underlying premises.

This debate to one side, what is an almost entirely different issue is the applicability of such a theory to situations outside the specific geographical, political, cultural and intellectual context within and for which it was developed. Kymlicka has always been quite clear that his is part of western political theory, and he makes this obvious again in the introductory chapter to this volume in which he aptly summarises the key premises, concepts and implications of ethnocultural justice (pp. 13-84). His own reluctance about a transfer of this theory into the quite different context of Central and Eastern Europe, is one thing, but it is undeniable that many of the concepts with which he operates have found their way into policy documents of a great number of predominantly western or western-dominated organisations that have influenced the choice and establishment of (political) institutions in countries in Central and Eastern Europe that have embarked on the difficult transition to democracy over the past decade. It is thus not only an intellectually stimulating and productive exercise to explore if and how western notions of ethnocultural justice can be transplanted into this region (and whether this is at all necessary and desirable), but it has also significant practical implications for the societies that are affected by this western agenda. The aim of this volume – to have an engaging debate between Kymlicka and scholars, policy-makers and advocates from the region – is thus a laudable venture.

The quality of the commentaries on Kymlicka's introductory chapter and his own concluding response ensure that the volume overall fulfils its purpose of critically examining the applicability of western political theory to the ethnopolitics of Central and Eastern Europe. The mix of contributors – one-third of the commentary chapters are written by western-based specialists on, two-thirds by experts in, the countries concerned – allows for a balanced debate of Kymlicka's views. Some of these chapters, particularly the one by Doroszewska, (to a lesser extent those by Barša, Fesenko, Opalski and Djumaev), are bleak in their assessment of the capability of countries in Central and Eastern Europe to cope with the complex challenges that ethnocultural diversity poses to democratising states. Others, Kolstø, Pettai and Andreescu, for example, take a more optimistic perspective. What emerges from these contributions is a divide between countries not in terms of the degree of their ethnocultural diversity, but in terms of the level of success they have had in democratising their institutions and political culture. Thus, Russia, Ukraine and the Central Asian successor states of the Soviet Union turn out to be the least promising cases, while the Baltic republics and Romania are described as more promising. In such a generalising distinction, this may be too simplistic a picture of the very complex situation in each of these countries. Yet, the authors submit ample evidence for their point of view, even though it might be argued that they leave out cases that would be potentially contradictory. Barša's account of the situation in the Czech Republic is, from the perspective of successful democratisation, the odd one out – nobody would dispute that the country has made great advances in its transition process over the last decade. However, the treatment of its Roma minority by state institutions and the high levels of distrust and discrimination that Roma experience at the hands of some sections of the Czech public, while others



simply stand by or look away, reveals that the democratisation of political culture in this respect is lagging behind. This is not a unique Czech problem as other authors remind the reader. Such problems also exist in Russia, Ukraine and Uzbekistan, and they were (and to some extent still are) also present in Romania, Latvia and Estonia.

A third category of commentaries engages with Kymlicka on a more theoretical level, focusing less on the applicability of his theory than on some problems that their authors perceive in applying it in the context of Central and Eastern Europe. I found this part of the debate especially valuable as it pinpoints a number of differences as well as similarities between west and east. Schöpflin and Várady, for example, both rightly point out that the idea of ethnocultural justice is not a novelty in Central and Eastern Europe, but was part of political strategies of accommodation and pacification in parts of the Austro-Hungarian and Ottoman empires. Tsilevich presents a thorough analysis of the similarities and differences between actual and potential ethnic conflict situations in east and west, concluding correctly that, despite all the existing differences, the threat to peace and stability emanating from these conflicts is a concern for the west as much as it is one for the directly affected countries in the east. Of all the contributors, Ossipov is the one most critical of Kymlicka's theory of ethnocultural justice, questioning some of its assumptions and its internal logic and wondering whether the assessment of the consequences of its application is comprehensive enough. Even though I personally do not share most of Ossipov's criticisms, I found it unfortunate that Kymlicka did not directly re-engage with him at any great length in his conclusion.

There are a number of other shortcomings in this volume. First of all, Kymlicka never defines precisely what he means by 'western'. This may seem trivial because it should be self-evident, but if the OSCE and the Council of Europe are called western organisations despite the fact that their membership includes numerous countries from Central and Eastern Europe, then 'western' clearly means more than a particular geographic region, cultural context or intellectual tradition. There is a second reason, why such a definition would have been important. In many ways, it could be argued that what Kymlicka refers to as western values are in fact universal values. While using the term 'western' may avoid a direct debate over universalism, it leaves the question unanswered whether there are certain aspects of ethnocultural justice that are indeed universal values and thus worthy of transferring to different geographic areas regardless of their distinct cultural contexts. Another problem are certain structural and factual inconsistencies: on page 6 Kymlicka and Opalski refer to 'six types of ethnocultural groups', while on pages 23ff. Kymlicka only discusses 'five types of ethnocultural groups'. The Flemings in Belgium are not a national minority, as claimed on pp. 25 and 29, devolution in the United Kingdom also encompasses Northern Ireland, not just Scotland and Wales, and there is still a sizable group of ethnic Germans left in Kazakhstan, numbering in their hundreds of thousands, even if there has been a measurable decline over the past ten years (yet emigration has not only, and over the past years not even predominantly, been to Germany, but also to German rayons in Russia). To be sure, these are very minor, and perhaps unavoidable, flaws in what is otherwise an extremely important book.

The significance of this volume is probably best summarised by saying that it does not just make a contribution to an ongoing debate, but rather that it is, in fact, the best reflection and most comprehensive and authoritative summary of the debate on the universality of the western conception of ethnocultural justice.

**Stefan Wolff**, University of Bath, UK

### **Guns and Government: The Management of the Northern Ireland Peace Process**

Roger MacGinty & John Darby

Palgrave, 2002, Ethnic and Intercommunity Conflict series

HBK: ISBN: 0333779142 £45.00

pp. 226 + xvi (including: chronology of the peace process, map, notes, bibliography & index)

MacGinty and Darby point out that the Northern Ireland peace process has 'followed a 'stop-go' pattern, with long periods of stasis interrupted by concentrated bursts of political activity' (p. 2). This sounds almost like a technical description of me when I am drunk. The analogy between me when I am drunk and the peace process is appropriate at another level because when drunk I have only a vague idea of how to get from A to B. Arguably, however, I have more sense about where I am heading than any of the leaders involved in the peace process. As the authors point out midway through *Guns and Government*: '[t]he peace process has no endpoint. It is a process of managing rather than of ending conflict' (p. 75).

This last point is important to remember as you read the book. It is, as the subtitle states, a book about the *management* of the peace process in Northern Ireland. It is important to remember because in many respects the book is presented as an analysis of the peace process rather than a toolkit for conflict management.

The book is divided into two main sections, labelled 'narrative' and 'analysis'. The narrative contains three chapters providing a background to the peace process, the negotiations leading to the Good Friday (Belfast) Agreement in Northern Ireland and events relating to the implementation of the Agreement. The analysis devotes a chapter to each of six issues 'violence and security issues; economic factors; the role of external actors; popular responses; symbols and ritual; and progress towards political/constitutional agreement' (p. 5). All of this is topped and tailed by an introduction, which asks 'what are peace processes?', and a conclusion, which looks at the relative importance of, and interaction between, the six factors covered in the analysis.

MacGinty and Darby are hampered in their attempts to provide an analysis of the peace process by their *a priori* assumption that the peace process is a good thing. Events are not studied as illustrations of flux in the terrain of politics in Northern Ireland, but are judged in terms of whether they help to advance or retard the progress of the peace process. This underlying premise means that the book reads like a 'how-to-do-it' manual of peace processes.

This does not mean that the authors do not make any interesting observations. They recognise that the peace process focuses on the means to achieve peace rather than the end, peace. As they put it: '[i]n a sense, the peace process has become permanent politics in Northern Ireland' (p. 75). They point out that Clinton's involvement in the process was not because of any special devotion to Ireland. Rather 'promoting US economic interests lay at the heart of the Clinton foreign policy catechism, along with low risk interventions, soft facilitation and maximising public relations advantages. Northern Ireland fitted the bill perfectly' (p. 115). And they note that the Omagh bombing helped to promote the peace process not because of its severity, the bomb killed more people than any other single event in the history of the conflict, but because



of its timing. The Agreement, signed before the bombing, provided a context in which 'public outrage could be harnessed, as opposed to simply vented' (p. 104).

The *a priori* acceptance of the benefits of a peace process, however, blinds the authors to a key paradox of the peace process. The principle of inclusion is central to the peace process, but the process has been advanced through the exclusion of the majority of the population of the region from any significant decision-making. The authors note that while 'much in the peace process was impermanent and *ad hoc*, key elements were structural' (p. 72). One of the key elements that provided consistency and coherence to the process was 'the inclusive nature of the process... It was deliberately designed and organised to include those previously on the political margins' (p. 73). 'Those previously on the political margins' is a euphemism for the paramilitary organisations (and the political parties that represent them). The inclusion of these parties, however, was often at the expense of democratic norms. So, for example, in the elections to the negotiations that were to lead to the Agreement, the government employed an electoral system that was guaranteed to include the political representatives of the two main Loyalist paramilitary groupings. The elections gave the formal appearance of people being involved in decision-making when in fact the British government had already taken the key decision. MacGinty and Darby note something similar in relation to the referendum on the Agreement 'people power would only extend to giving or withholding consent on a government-set question' (p. 59).

MacGinty and Darby note that in 'Northern Ireland a popular desire for peace was not the vehicle which led to the ceasefires' (p. 138). This lack of popular support for the peace process is perhaps to be expected given that the process has been elite driven. As the process has progressed its perpetuation has depended on the exclusion of the public from political influence. Nervousness that elections may become a second, unfavourable, referendum led John Reid, secretary of State for Northern Ireland, to successively suspend the Northern Ireland Assembly in the summer of 2001.

MacGinty and Darby were well placed to produce a penetrating study of the peace process. Their research coincided with the negotiation of a peace process in Northern Ireland, so they were able to study the process as it emerged. This advantage was enhanced by their access to key players in the process which enabled the authors to record the 'unvarnished contemporary views and reactions' of the key players (p. 6). Their *a priori* assumption, however, has curtailed many of the interesting insights that their research might have brought to light.

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### **Paramilitary Imprisonment in Northern Ireland: Resistance, Management and Release**

Kieran McEvoy

Oxford University Press, 2002

Clarendon Studies in Criminology

HBK: ISBN: 0198299079 £45.00

pp. 442 (including: foreword, notes, bibliography, index, appendix)

Kieran McEvoy's book is an important contribution to an already substantial literature on the conflict in Ireland since the undeclared declaration of war between the British state

and the Irish Republican Army. What makes this work so distinctive is its exhaustive analysis of prison life within what is widely known as Long Kesh, but is officially described as Her Majesty's Prison (HMP) Maze. That confusion of tags provides both an emotive backdrop to the work as well as a thumbnail introduction to the history of Republican struggle since Unionist Prime Minister Brian Faulkner endorsed the introduction of internment, in August 1971.

This is a book about prison; but more than that, it is a book about prison struggle dominated by one politically inspired, determined section of the prison population. McEvoy puts his finger on the dominant theme by noting that '[t]he escape from prison of politically motivated prisoners goes to the very heart of ideological struggle between combatants and the state' (p. 50). This is an important observation. The prisoners saw themselves as engaging in a unique form of resistance to the authority of the state as it was represented in the prison. Much of this is dealt with thematically in the first half of the book. McEvoy traces the history of the protests from the earlier days when resistance to the condition of imprisonment was reflected in the prisoners attempting to find ways of managing the tedium and monotony of prison life to the open resistance which culminated in the protracted 'blanket' protests and the deaths of ten hunger strikers in 1980-81.

However one seeks to examine books from one or other of the numerous perspectives on politics and history in Northern Ireland, it is always difficult to find one which struggles to provide focus and particularly difficult when describing a prison such as Long Kesh/Maze. The complexity of the prison problem is made even more challenging by the persistent demands for 'balance', especially from within the one or other of the political/religious camps. But because of the nature of the study, one is inevitably drawn to the principal players in the prison struggle. Inevitably therefore, it concentrates on the Republican prisoners as the driving force behind the campaign against criminalisation and the attempt to force the British Government to recognise them as prisoners of war (POWs). For some, anxious to look for 'balance' that focus may be seen as a shortcoming. I would not agree. For those familiar with the events of the time, it is clear that although the 'Loyalist' prisoners did not involve themselves in the 'blanket' protests and hunger strikes, they benefited enormously from the outcome.

The contrasting attitude to imprisonment of both Loyalists and Republican prisoners is made most clear in the book's discussion of the 'ideology' of escape. McEvoy demonstrates that Loyalists were relatively ambivalent on the question of escape whereas Republican prisoners saw it as an obligation. As one former IRA prisoner puts it: 'escapes demonstrate to the British that they cannot imprison our struggle' (p. 48).

Many saw their period in Long Kesh as opening another opportunity for continuing the 'war' by 'other means'. In many ways the existence of the prison struggle was critical in the development of a revived Sinn Fein, even if it was unintentional. For many wondering at their rapid ascent into a position of power in Irish politics since 1981, one merely has to examine the political role played by the Republican prisoner before and during that time. It is often claimed that the powerhouse of republican politics emerged through the debates taking place in Long Kesh, during the period of 'special category status' and both before and during the protests in the 'H' Blocks. Indeed Sinn Fein President, Gerry Adams makes much of the defining role of the prisons in his much criticised address to a gathering of Republican families in Dublin recently. On the other hand a few former leading prisoners dispute the significance of that role. McEvoy quotes



one former prisoner, now a senior member of Sinn Fein, who believes that the 1981 hunger strike 'sowed the seeds that there were additional strategies to the armed struggle' (p. 99). Perhaps that is the significance of the prison struggle, it stimulated a diversification of strategies on the part of the Republican leadership, rather than acted as a powerhouse of Republican politics.

Many of the prisoners' leaders were acutely aware of the central importance and political advantages of a good propaganda opportunity. Indeed, McEvoy argues cogently in his book that there were a number of strategies asserted by the prisoners in their demand for political status. In this regard, it has to be said, it was the Republican prison community which transformed the nature of prison protest into something resembling a second front. They were conscious at all times that they were engaged in a political struggle, whilst some clearly saw their imprisonment as an opportunity to extend the military campaign to a new and unique location.

No book is perfect. A few matters marred this otherwise excellent contribution to the literature on the conflict in Northern Ireland. The term 'paramilitary', contained in the title, is also casually used throughout to describe all of those imprisoned for their involvement in the conflict. Almost all republicans believe that it is a pejorative term, however, as a badge of identification it sits comfortably on those who describe themselves as 'Loyalists'. A discussion on the implications of this differentiation would have been interesting because it reflects the distinct and separate ideological mindset of both sets of prisoners.

Finally, this is a book which charts the development of the politics of male prisoner resistance to prison authority and focuses almost exclusively on the experience of Long Kesh/Maze as the prison which has been the subject of much media attention since its establishment as an internment centre in 1971. But it was not the only prison and it did not hold women prisoners, most of whom, until HMP Maghaberry was built, were held in Armagh Jail. I look forward to Kieran McEvoy's next contribution which might restore the need for balance by charting the course of 'resistance, management and release' of the women who also attempted to escape, protested and embarked on a hunger strike against what they saw as the penal manifestation of state authority. Their persistence forced the 'H Block' committees outside the walls to add the name 'Armagh' to the title of the organisation. It is something worth remembering when contemplating the complexities surrounding the name identifying one of the most notorious prisons in western Europe, now thankfully, confined to another dustbin of Irish political history.

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### **Contemporary Politics in the Middle East**

Beverly Milton-Edwards

Polity Press, 2000

HBK: ISBN: 074561471X £50.00 \$66.95

PBK: ISBN: 0745614728 £14.99 \$30.95

pp. 256 (including: bibliography & index)

The Middle East is often portrayed as mysterious, violent and utterly unique. Beverly Milton-Edwards has taken up the task to prove that it is not, and that indeed, politics in the Middle East are similar to politics elsewhere. The author's stated objective in this

textbook is to challenge the misconceptions about the region and to encourage new students 'to rethink their own prejudices and test them against academic orthodoxy' (p. x).

Covering many Middle Eastern countries through case studies, the book explores eight key issues underlying contemporary politics in the Middle East. The first four chapters deal with such themes as the impact of colonial rule, the development of nationalism, the effect of oil, and the widespread phenomenon of unrest that has characterised the region.

Looking in chapter 1 at the nature of political rule and the economic motive behind colonialism, the author states that the example of the Middle East reveals a pattern comparable to that found elsewhere. Outlining the debate about the extent to which foreign intervention disrupted the region, she contends that much of the turmoil in the Middle East is rooted in the colonial era. But as further explained in chapter 4, factors such as the prevalence of the military, the nature of state-formation, issues of internal legitimacy and the role of international actors should not be underestimated when examining the reasons behind the region's instability.

Chapter 2 focuses on the rise, development and manifestations of nationalism and Arab nationalist ideologies such as Ba'athism and Nasserism, while chapter 3 discusses the impact the large oil reserves have had, not only on the economy of the Middle Eastern countries, but also on their political systems, their integration into the world-system, their relations with the West and among each other.

The last four chapters address the issues of non-state actors - political Islam, democratisation, women and ethnicity. The most sophisticated and probably best part discusses the impact of political Islam (chapter 5). The argument is that there is no such thing as political Islam, rather the term political Islams account better for the myriad phenomenon that has emerged throughout the century. The Iranian Revolution that transformed into a state system of government and the non-state actor Palestinian Hamas illustrate this diversity of manifestation of political Islam.

Chapter 6 links the debate on the revival of Islam with the issue of democratisation. The chapter reviews current debates about democratisation in the region, including a section which examines the claim of some theorists, particularly Huntington's in his 'Clash of civilisations' thesis, that the Middle East is culturally intolerant to the idea of democracy. The final two chapters address issues that have been an increasing focus of attention, ethnic minorities and women 'the invisible population' (p. 173) - and reflect new trends in scholarship on gender and ethno-nationalist politics.

The book is aimed at the non-specialist first time reader who wants to understand the modern history and politics of a region that has not been devoid of discord and misinterpretations. The approach differs from other regular textbooks in Middle Eastern issues in that it avoids both the linear chronological approach and the conventional state-centric approach.

Employing a clear-cut thematic structure, the book follows the same pattern throughout the eight chapters. The author starts by introducing and explaining key concepts, then outlines major debates revolving around the topic and discusses it in its context. Every



chapter contains two case studies illustrating the theme in hand and is concluded with a 'boxed' section suggesting useful sources for further reading.

Milton-Edwards' style is engaging, and she is engaged with her material. She makes no attempt at hiding her admiration for a 'fascinating world which is dynamic, political in all respects and which interacts culturally with a variety of forces' (p. 220) and a 'fascinating region of the contemporary world' (p. xii). One cannot resist a knowing smile when, after taking good care at presenting an unbiased and dispassionate overview of the region, she suddenly lets loose her anger against its leaders: 'while the Arab world burns, their leaders dance, eat and make merry on profits from state industries, revenues from state assets and investments, bribes from the business community and loans secured in the name of poor and destitute populations' (p. 73).

The book is a major achievement for at least two reasons: first the author has succeeded in introducing, through a comprehensible critical examination of major debates, the body of best informed literature on the region; second, by avoiding the 'orientalist' insistence on the peculiarity of the Middle East, she has succeeded in providing a study that is both accessible and penetrating.

Nevertheless, the book is not devoid of problems. As ever with a study of this kind, the coverage of the countries is uneven. Whereas Egypt is the subject of four case studies and Palestine of three, countries such as Libya, Morocco, Tunisia, and Yemen are given less importance, yet could have provided informative case studies for the author's analysis of colonial rule, democratisation or political Islam.

Also the choice of excluding Turkey from the definition of the Middle East on the grounds that it should be regarded as a southern European state is open to discussion. Alongside Iran and Israel, Turkey is naturally excluded from studies of the Arab world. But there is much in Turkey that argues for its inclusion in a study on the Middle East, especially if the study encompasses Iran and Israel. The role of the military in the politics, *Ätatisme*, the rise of political Islam, the ethnic conflict with the Kurdish minority all make Turkey a good informant of Middle Eastern politics.

A final problem lies, as often with books covering contemporary politics, with the rapid pace of changing events in the Middle East. This book was first published in 1999. It was possible then to talk of 'a growing awareness within the West that Islam and politics is not about armed terrorists' (p. 136) and 'the tendency to fixate on fundamentalists, particularly in America, is gradually waning in the popular conscious' (p. 136). Sadly, it is no longer true after the events of the 11th September 2001, and an update of the discussion on Islam, terrorism and the West is inescapable for future editions.

Despite these weaknesses, Milton-Edwards' book is an excellent introduction to present-day politics in the Middle East. It will engage readers to think about the Middle East in an unprejudiced fashion and will undoubtedly constitute a key reference for undergraduate students.

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**Victims, Perpetrators or Actors? Gender, Armed Conflict and Political Violence**

Caroline O. N. Moser and Fiona C. Clark (eds.)

Zed Books, 2002

HBK: ISBN: 1856493350 £45.00 \$65.00

PBK: ISBN: 1856493369 £15.95 \$25.00

pp. 243 (including: notes, diagrams, tables, bibliography and index)

The lack of a gender dimension in most analyses of the origins, impact or resolution of ethnic conflicts was, until recently, a familiar criticism of most of the torrent of writing which has charted the proliferation of violence with an ethnic dimension in the post Cold War world. A considerable number of recent studies have begun to redress the balance and this edited collection is one of the more recent contributions.

To describe it simply in these terms is, however, to underestimate the originality of at least some elements of the book. To generalise, most studies of the interaction of gender and ethnic violence follow one of two paths. There are those which present authentic and moving first hand testimonies from women in conflict areas of their experiences before, during and after periods of ethnic conflict. The rapes, economic privations and bereavements are chronicled in horrifying detail but analysis which seeks to explain the events or attempts to suggest a way forward are often limited. On the other hand more abstract examination of the ways in which gender and ethnicity interact during periods of violent conflict quite often in cast women in a unidimensional victim role and/or focus on ways in which the increased involvement of women in decision making could alleviate suffering. Such work frequently relies on 'motherist' models, which portray women as having specific qualities or interests which make them more likely to be able to compromise, negotiate successfully or reject violence.

This book makes a real contribution to breaking out of this pattern. The editors make it clear that they want to examine the extent to which women are actively involved in conflict situations at all levels. This implies analysis of women as direct participants in acts of violence, as supporters of movements, which engage in violence and as important elements in the constituencies, which must give assent to any attempts at political resolution. Perhaps not surprisingly the outcome of their efforts is of mixed quality. The actual structure of the collection, although divided into seven sections with titles which imply a focus on specific approaches to their theme, essentially follows a fairly standard pattern. There are initial chapters which provide theoretical or general examinations of underlying issues, these are followed by a series of case studies from varied conflict zones and the book concludes with attempts to draw together key questions. Or it almost ends in this way since there is a final chapter on women's testimonies to the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commissions, a sort of coda which initially seems rather oddly placed. Although it could be argued that it provides both an illustration and a summary of many of the arguments developed throughout the book.

The chapters by Cynthia Cockburn on 'The Gendered dynamics of armed conflict and political violence' and by Caroline Moser on 'The Gendered Continuum of Violence and Conflict' are particularly interesting. The first examines the extent to which gender is significant in different ways at all phases of ethnic conflict, not just in its obvious manifestations during the periods of open violence. The second presents a convincing analysis of the connections between the sorts of violence women experience during periods of armed conflict and other forms of sexual aggression in the family and the



community. Both these studies provide a basis for moving thinking and research in new directions. Similarly the chapter on sexual violence directed against men, by Dubravka Zarkov, is thought provoking and challenges some of the stereotypes about gender and violent conflict.

Perhaps it is hardly surprising that this level of originality is not sustained in the case studies. These are both more predictable in content and more variable in quality. They cover relatively familiar ground in their examination of the experiences of women in Peru, El Salvador, Guatemala, Colombia, India, Israel, South Africa and Northern Ireland. The dedicated and sensitive field work which has produced the moving and emotive testimonies of so many victims of violence cannot be doubted but there is the nagging doubt about how far they further our understanding of the complex social, economic, cultural and psychological forces which generate such acts.

The penultimate chapter returns to conceptual issues as Caroline Moser and Cathy McIlwaine examine 'Gender and Social Capital in Contexts of Political Violence', through an examination of women's organisations and activities in Colombia and Guatemala. Here there is an examination of the applicability of currently fashionable models of 'social capital' to women's roles in sustaining community institutions, both during periods when violence is at a high level and in subsequent phases of reconstruction. The varied aspects of social capital and the gendered nature of some of these is used to explain the different roles that men and women play in social and economic reconstruction and their differing needs and interests during peace processes. Again this points in new directions and reinforces the view that although this collection may be a little like the 'curate's egg' the best elements make it well worth a place on the bookshelf.

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### **Self and Nation**

Stephen Reicher and Nick Hopkins

Sage, 2000 (Pbk, 2001)

HBK: ISBN: 0761969195 £ 55.00

PBK: ISBN: 0761969209 £ 18.99

pp. 256 (including: references, author index, subject index)

Reicher and Hopkins present an elegantly written critique of certain limited psychological conceptions of national identity, especially ones that posit character traits to national identity. Using contemporary commentaries from politicians and commentators as evidence (mostly from interviews of politicians in Scotland about Scottish identity, political devolution or independence), they argue that national identity is socially constructed. In particular they point to the use of rhetorical devices to instigate and justify political projects that vary according to the propensities of the agent in question. Thus, being located in socio-historical context and negotiable, national identity is continually being reconstituted and reinterpreted by people in the community in a public arena of mass media that ensures widespread dissemination of commonplace expressions of national belonging. They castigate the propensity towards using psychology to pathologize aspects of national identity as being psychologically defective. Their closely argued text challenges social psychologists to engage with issues of national identity in such manner as to eschew tired old notions that typify national identity in terms of national traits and stereotypes.

The authors utilise Billig's (1979, 1995) pioneering analyses to effectively illustrate that politicians 'use' psychological concepts and models in a strategic fashion to implement their agendas. One might say 'misuse' them for their own purposes, except that a good proportion of such concepts derive from practitioners of professional psychology. Psychologists have frequently been implicated as actively providing rationales and support for politicians' agendas. This has often been with potentially horrific consequences, as during the Nazi era or periods of colonial conquests (Richards, 1997). *Self and Nation* is a wake-up call to psychologists to reform their discipline so as to be acutely aware of the limitations of their 'psychological knowledge' and to be cautious in their use of 'psychological concepts and models', which, given agentic human activity and thought, may be used, misused, reappraised or abandoned by others.

A further strength of their analysis is to demonstrate the limitations of generic theories of intergroup relations that currently predominate in academic social psychology:

If our position is accepted as self-evident (we need to look at the ways that others relate to ingroup interests if we want to know how group identification will affect our orientation to those others, and hence the way to affect these orientations is through the way we construct such relationships), then all attempts at generic theories of intergroup relations must be scratched from the start (p. 85).

Their critique of standard social psychology of stereotyping is equally comprehensive:

Any conceptual or methodological approach to stereotypes which abstracts them from their argumentative context is likely both to obscure our understanding of the phenomenon and to reify particular political dispensations (p. 104).

Reicher and Hopkins usefully elaborate processes of forming category boundaries to include variously defined 'prototypical' national constituents and demarcate them from others, and relate these contextually shifting boundaries with political leadership – central to the process of collective influence and mass mobilization. Contrary to standard social psychological analysis of leadership, their point is 'that leadership tends not to alight upon an individual but is actively sought. The practice of leadership is about the strategic creation of personal and collective realities so as to merge the two (or separate them in the case of one's rivals)' (p. 180). They continue their analysis by demonstrating the diachronic or historical construction of politicized categories, not as pre-existing givens based on evident national characteristics, but forged when politicians attempt to mobilize conceptions of nationhood: 'how the nature of social practice at one point in time feeds into the way we categorize things at another point in time and also how our categorizations at a given moment mobilize people to reorganize the nature of social practice at another moment' (p. 181).

Despite the authors' critiques of outmoded thinking in social psychology, their many evocative quotes, penetrating comments, and references to thoughtful commentaries by other contributors on issues of national identity, one is left wishing for a demonstration of what especial contribution psychology could make to comprehending processes that are so powerfully manifested under the guise of national identity. Reicher and Hopkins do not ask certain kinds of important questions. Why, for example, do so many people find appeals to primordialist sentiments about national identity so powerfully evocative? Why are others acutely aware that national identity is a situationalist construction? How



do such orientations to national identity relate to political orientations? What cultural contexts and biographical experiences influence primordialist and situationalist perspectives?

Conceptual and methodological tools of Identity Structure Analysis (ISA) together with empirical evidence from comparative research (Weinreich, Bacova & Rougier, 2002) elucidate such processes in a manner commensurate with this text, but focusing also on the foregoing questions. These tools and evidence delineate differences in national propensities towards primordialist cultural ethos, within which however 'primordialists' and 'situationalists' differentially identify with political entities, and wherein certain kinds of biographical experiences promote situationalist perspectives on nationality. This new research explains why primordialist sentiments about nationality constitute the primary perspective, which may *with hard won comprehension and first hand experience* become layered with situationalist elucidations. And consequently we can understand the continuing appeals to, and all-too-ready acceptance of, rhetoric about ancestral origins and exclusion of alien influences in the mobilization of nationhood and the effort required rebutting such rhetoric. ISA, avoiding the shortcomings in the psychological literature identified by Reicher and Hopkins, also emphasizes the agentic self that acts in relation to a nexus of others and continually constructs, reconstructs and elaborates one's identity in respect of negotiated discourses. It views such appraisals and reappraisals as occurring in relation to the individual's *biographical experiences that involve a complex of developmental processes*.

In summary, Reicher and Hopkins provide a refreshing and stimulating analysis of the processes that politicians and commentators engage in when mobilizing social action by appeal to, and in pursuit of, 'nationhood'. They provide a powerful warning that psychologists should be wary of their complicity in the promotion of nationalism. This does not, however, preclude psychologists from analysis of national identity. Important questions, which psychologists are best equipped to answer, remain. Reicher and Hopkins have helped to demolish many of the fallacies of the psychological research on national identity, in doing so they have helped to clear the way for the development of a more nuanced approach.

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### **How the Troubles Came to Northern Ireland**

Peter Rose

Palgrave, 2001

HBK: ISBN: 0333753461 £52.50

PBK: ISBN: 0333949412 £15.99

pp. xx + 216 (including: list of abbreviations, chronology, bibliography and index)

This is an important book because it introduces much valuable material into one of the less researched areas of the 'Troubles' literature - the preplay before the outbreak of violent conflict. More than half of the book is concerned with events up until March 1968, and the remainder takes the narrative up until August 1969. It is a worm's eye view and should be welcomed for that alone. Rose's research is prodigious: besides a through search of the secondary material he has made excellent use of the public records under the Thirty Year Rule as well as a seminar on Northern Ireland policy in the late 1960s which he conducted in conjunction with the Institute of Contemporary British History (ICBH). And since the aim of his research had been to 'analyse the role of Cabinet, Whitehall and Westminster not Ulster's political and social arrangements' (p. 172) that narrowness of focus added to the depth of his primary sources.

Here, then, we have a book which is laden with rich and diverse research. It highlights the deficiencies in much of the earlier publications. With one or two honourable exceptions, the period 1964-70 has not been academically productive because it belongs to the realm of the (unreliable) memoirist intent on getting their version in quickly, to the journalistic pot-boilers, and to those who mirrored too closely the (foul) temper of the times. They all lacked proper reflection and none had any understanding of the nature of the tidal wave that was sweeping aside an old order. Rose begins to redress that imbalance through a combination of painstaking research and judicious oversight. He is impressive on the intensity of the debate within the Cabinet and in Whitehall particularly after October 1968. He illustrates, too, the fissure inside the Labour movement between that small but persistent body committed to Irish nationalism and a more general view of indifference and/or fatalism, positions akin to those when the Attlee government grappled with the Irish question. Rose's evidence confirms that of Billy McCarrick who takes a longer view when he pays particular attention to the period 1918-24 and concludes that 'for Labour the Irish cause was never an end in itself but always a matter of British domestic politics' (1992, p. i).

So what to do when violence broke out on the streets of Derry and Belfast in 1968/69? Rose clears the Wilson government of the charge of indifference because, he emphasises, they had a contingency plan. The trouble was that it was not implemented and the author chases the reasons why. One was simply the daily grind of politics - one damned problem after another - and Wilson had more than his fair share of these. Ulster, because it was so messy and so 'foreign', had to take its place way down the food chain. That raises a second issue, the personnel implementing policy. Rose confirms the Home Office's complicity in its Nelson's eye view of Stormont. In one or two passing asides in footnotes he castigates the role of the great reforming Home Secretary of the twentieth century, the urbane and scholarly Roy Jenkins. Indeed so scholarly was he that one of his officials suggested that Jenkins's completion of his biography of Asquith at the time of Labour's victory in 1964 persuaded the Home Secretary to steer well clear of Ireland. It is good to know that scholarship should not get in the way of humanity! Thirdly, there is the role of the shadowy intelligence and security services. In the light of the IRA's unpreparedness in 1968-69, it is intriguing to read that there were potentially



3,000 IRA personnel willing to take advantage of the fiftieth anniversary of the 1916 rising. Given such alarmist predictions, is it not strange, as Rose suggests, that the government was taken unawares less than three years later? The simple fact of the matter is that any government response has to be understood against the benign neglect of the previous fifty years.

Rose's benchmark is the Attlee government so he misses on some of the deeper cultural misperceptions that (mis)guided Whitehall policymakers. It may seem churlish to criticise him for not taking the longer view. He never set out to produce that type of book so he must be judged by the standards of contemporary historical analysis. Here we enter into the business of methodology and one that should be pertinent particularly to readers of this journal. Contemporary history may produce a wealth of material but it raises at least two important issues. One concerns our capacity to re-remember, that is, we recreate what we once said or did in the light of where we now stand. Here I declare an interest. I was one of those who participated in the ICBH seminar in 1992 and yet three years later the author reminds me (and us) that I could not remember what I said about the implications of a particular incident. It is a small, but telling, point. At a much grander level Rose calls on the expertise of two former Northern Ireland civil servants. One, John Oliver, published his memoirs in 1978. His thoughts then do not measure up to a rather vainglorious interview he gave to Rose in 1995. In the latter he suggests that 'brainy chaps' such as himself and his Whitehall counterparts provided the model for addressing Catholic grievances as early as the mid-1960s. It was a model that could have been adapted on the political and constitutional side but it was 'a pity that the Home Office did not send over an equal team to come and talk to chaps like me' (p. 59). Since the Home Office was receiving advice from chaps like him and since they were happy with arrangements as they stood Oliver can scarcely be surprised that nothing came of this - that is, if the idea was even mooted in the first place. The second expert, Arthur Green, repudiated some of the sentiments of the Cameron Commission (1969) - of which he had been secretary - some quarter of a century later. That is his privilege. We begin to doubt his judgement, however, when after reading (p. 155) that he believed that Wilson had not imposed direct rule because he had been dissuaded by Unionist politicians and by 'leading Catholics' we then discover that the latter was a single 'Catholic judge' (p.169).

The second methodological issue concerns who gets their hands on the material. Rose is a former lobby correspondent who was able to gain wide access, all of which enriches his narrative. My own experience has been less successful. I note that the authors of a book on the Heath Government thank the Conservative Party for permitting the authors access to papers in the Bodleian Library for the period 1965-74 (Ball & Seldon, 1996). As one of the contributors this was news to me because I was turned down flat when I made a similar request (my chapter was the only one that focused on the Heath Government's record in Northern Ireland). Other examples of selective access can be supplied, but in a short review this may read like a paranoid whinge. I raise it not as a personal complaint, but as a methodological issue for researchers of contemporary history.

Students of ethnopolitics need to be aware of how research can be helped or hindered in the field of contemporary history. Peter Rose's book happily belongs to the former category. It is written with verve and coherence and is a model of a multi-faceted approach. I highly recommend it.

### References

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### An Introduction to African Politics

Alex Thomson

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The fact that sub-Saharan Africa tends to figure toward the bottom of most global social indicators is a matter of grave concern and a vexing puzzle for Africa analysts. It is perhaps not surprising therefore that books covering the past four decades of post-colonial Africa tend to converge on the issue of failure. In the recent past, and especially during the 1970s, emphasis was placed upon the legacy of colonialism and the stranglehold that Western powers and Western-dominated institutions exercised over the continent. While this approach remains with us today, it tends to carry less weight. The discourse has moved on from explanations largely drawn from underdevelopment theory and tends to make the African state the core analytical problem. Alex Thomson's problematisation of the African state as a 'vampire', 'kleptocratic', 'predatory' or 'pirate' state is in similar vein to Bayart, Ellis and Hibou's *The Criminalisation of the State in Africa* (1999).

In his introduction, Thomson makes two prefacing statements. First 'Africans are innately no more violent, no more corrupt, no more greedy and no more stupid than any other human beings that populate the world. They are no less capable of governing themselves. Not to believe this is to revive the racism that underpins the ethos of slavery and colonialism' (p. 2). Thomson posits the use of reason to discredit these assumptions and to provide explanations for even the worst events and processes that Africans have experienced. Secondly, he reminds us that Africa is a big place, its societies differ greatly and general statements about its political processes need to be approached with caution.

Methodologically, Thomson nevertheless does identify common elements across societies, deconstructing the 'whole' of African politics by dividing it into conceptual component parts that are examined in separate chapters. By examining the relationships between the three key actors: the state, civil society and external interests, he provides the tools for reconstructing these parts. Yet this schema largely excludes those engaged in subsistence agriculture. This large proportion of society is defined more by its non-absorption into the relations of the market and would perhaps need to be included as a fourth actor.

The emergence of the modern African state, being externally driven and shaped largely by external interests, was a process that resulted in state institutions having distant



relations with indigenous civil society. This provides a useful starting point for beginning to appreciate the tenuous position elites occupied at independence. Thomson's use of the term 'bureaucratic bourgeoisie' is apposite. With the significant exception of South Africa, Africa's elites lack the capacity to play an independent role in their national production processes. State institutions have had to compensate for the weakness, and in some cases continued absence, of indigenous capitalists. These polities have by default attempted to perform the role of economic regulators. Substituting themselves for either developed market mechanisms or fully socialised systems of production, the bureaucratic bourgeoisies took on a daunting task. African elites sought to overcome their weak social standing by adopting populist ideologies. Senghor's 'negritude', Nyerere's 'ujumaa', 'Mobutism' and even the 'scientific socialism' adopted by some a decade later, are here shown largely as populist variants of nationalism. The ideology of nationalism enjoyed particular salience due to its key role in the overthrow of the colonial state.

What has frustrated the transformation of the African 'bureaucratic' bourgeoisie into the real thing? It is worth remembering that in the 1960s Nigeria's economy compared favourably with Thailand's, as did Ghana's with Indonesia's. No-one could then have predicted their greatly divergent outcomes. Thomson discusses Africa's 'crisis of accumulation' in terms that centre largely upon the agency of the bureaucratic bourgeoisie. The core problems he develops are clientalism - the networking of relations succoured by state patronage - and bad policymaking. Instead of earning legitimacy by way of developing productive relations between the state and civil society, the bureaucratic bourgeoisies sought to short-circuit this process and buy legitimacy by means of clientalism. Poor policymaking led to the inappropriate allocations of resources. This meant that white elephant development projects soaked up precious resources while the potentially productive rural sector was undermined.

But are clientalism and deficient policymaking symptoms or causes of Africa's crisis of accumulation? When assessing the negative impact of the external actors, ex-colonial and other Western powers, and the Western-dominated institutions that mediate Africa's relations with the global economy, Thomson does show the price paid by much of Africa for being a Cold War arena. Yet he seems to accept rather uncritically the post-Cold War Western 'conditionalities' that began with good governance and democracy. In Thomson's view democracy is good because it allows civil society to exercise some power over the state. In this respect Thomson's discussion of the role of ethnicity in Africa is interesting.

According to Thomson, 'if nationalism was the ideological tool of the state, then ethnicity remained the tool of civil society' (p. 65). Thomson notes that all nationalists had to concede to the salience of ethnicity. He is careful, however, to point out that ethnic identities are not primordial or 'traditional', but modern social constructions. The salience of ethnic identity in the post-colonial period derived from the way that it was utilised by elite factions in a fashion similar to pork barrel politics. Thomson points out that ethnic mobilisation in Africa moderated authoritarianism and provided a modicum of pluralism. This is true, but it is a one-sided view. Ethnic mobilisation also drained resources and restricted the representation of civil society. The persistence and strength of ethnicity in Africa is a symptom of the weakness of the African state, rather than an indication of the strength of civil society.

Thomson's undue emphasis on clientalism obscures a more serious problem with African elites: weak bargaining power when dealing with donor states and institutions. Forces

external to Africa have shaped the internal institutions and processes of African states. The contemporary salience of ethnicity is a case in point; it derives from the decline of Cold War politics and the imperatives of conditionality.

The World Bank has admitted that its structural adjustment programmes have largely failed - going so far as to say that some states that resisted implementing these programmes have performed better than those that were compliant. Yet the price of this failure extends beyond the exacerbation of poverty. It has accelerating the region's marginalisation from the global economy. Since the scope and intrusiveness of conditionality is ever increasing and now penetrates the heart of decision-making capacities, this problem can only become greater. If structural adjustment has had negative consequences, shouldn't we be casting a more sceptical eye upon the latest conditionality of poverty reduction?

Africa certainly has problems of governance. Its leadership's limited ability to overcome the parameters set for it by the international community is arguably the more serious expression of its problems. Students should nevertheless find this book an extremely useful and stimulating introduction to African politics.

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