

Kahler, Miles, and Barbara F. Walter, eds. *Territoriality and Conflict in an Era of Globalization*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006.

Brandon Valeriano

Volume 27, numéro 1, summer 2007

URI : https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/jcs27_1br09

[Aller au sommaire du numéro](#)

Éditeur(s)

The University of New Brunswick

ISSN

1198-8614 (imprimé)

1715-5673 (numérique)

[Découvrir la revue](#)

Citer ce compte rendu

Valeriano, B. (2007). Compte rendu de [Kahler, Miles, and Barbara F. Walter, eds. *Territoriality and Conflict in an Era of Globalization*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006.] *Journal of Conflict Studies*, 27(1), 123–124.

Kahler, Miles, and Barbara F. Walter, eds. *Territoriality and Conflict in an Era of Globalization*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006.

Edited volumes are obviously difficult enterprises. The challenges of collecting scholarship in a unified voice and tone are eminently understandable and overwhelm just about every volume that seeks to collect a diverse set of research. This collection of scholarship does make a few important contributions to the state of knowledge regarding territory and globalization and leaves the reader with many questions that require further investigation.

The goal of this book is to understand the dynamics of conflict over territory in the current era of globalization. Globalization is defined as “economic integration at the global level, a reduction in the barriers to economic exchange and factor mobility that creates one economic space from many.” (p. 6) Conflict is studied from both the intrastate and interstate perspectives. Territory is key in that there is an increased likelihood of violent conflict over issues of a territorial nature. The question that remains is: how does globalization impact the propensity of entities to fight over territory?

This volume, as a unit, finds that globalization does not have a consistent impact on territorial conflict, that the state is still an important actor, and that we know little about the resolution of conflict over territorial questions. According to one of the contributors, one of the volume’s overall themes is that “individuals only have an instrumental attachment to territory.” (p. 152) Yet, it seems clear that territorial and boundary questions represent much more than rational considerations or attachments that can be shed lightly. In fact, territory has the propensity to include symbolic elements that make the questions difficult to settle and practically intractable.

The chapter by Erik Gartzke is particularly striking and impressive. After reviewing the motivations for territorial disputes and contemporary knowledge regarding globalization and conflict, he runs a series of statistical models to uncover the dynamics between territorial disputes and globalization. He finds that the integration of economies has no impact on the dynamics of territorial conflict, although developed states are less likely to engage in territorial disputes. This finding seems to be counterintuitive given the statistical literature, but any scholar of contemporary territorial disputes will concur with the hypothesis that money, wealth, and economic ties are not a cure for the territorial trap. The Halvard Buhang and Nils Petter Gleditsch chapter also present results that indicate globalization is a weak or nonexistent predictor of conflict.

The David Newman and Terence Lyons chapters are also particularly useful. Newman first notes that “the existence of ethnoterritorial conflicts reminds us that many groups continue to lay claim to specific pieces of territory in what could be described as a primordial, pre-modern, fashion.” (p. 85) Territorial questions will continue to inflame violent conflict well into an advanced stage of

globalization. Pushing the notion of borders as institutions (see also the important Beth Simmons chapter) seems to be the most promising aspect of progress on territorial questions in a globalizing world. Lyons also makes a useful contribution by suggesting that economic migrants will have little attachment to the “homeland,” but that Diaspora communities will retain a strong attachment to territorial space. Diaspora communities can be important actors in settling territorial questions if they can be pushed to accept conflict resolution efforts.

The introductory theory chapter by Hein Goemans contends that there is no causal mechanism proposed for the finding that territorial disputes are more likely to lead to war. Therefore, he proposes that the concepts of the homeland and focal points can serve as a causal mechanism. The concept of the homeland seems to work well enough when applied to defensive issues but rarely do we see homeland extensions mentioned as the factor behind territorial aggrandizement. In fact, though territorial disputes are constructed and learned in such a way that the homeland concept can be helpful in “marketing” the efficacy of territorial disputes, we still do not have a true mechanism at work.

I was also disappointed to find that this volume does not include contributions from those who have been working on the forefront of territorial research, including but not limited to Paul Diehl, Doug Gibling, Jaroslav Tir, Paul Hensel, John Vasquez, and Paul Huth. The Joel Robbins contribution is interesting as a study of how to de-symbolize territorial attachments, but it seems applicable to a poor, undeveloped, recently converted Pentecostal community such as the one found in the Papua New Guinea jungles.

Overall, the authors in this volume find territorial conflict ongoing in the current era of globalization. While conquest in the form of annexation has declined, territorial disputes continue to recur and fester. Globalization seems to have no impact on this process; even well-integrated economies such as China and Taiwan still seem poised to fight over ancient territorial questions. Miles Kahler notes that “both eras of globalization have been marked by continued and perhaps growing attachment to well-defined border regime.” (p. 18) So the question remains, regardless of historical era: why are territorial disputes so intractable and how do scholars help entities de-link the symbolic from the tangible aspects of territory?

Brandon Valeriano is Assistant Professor of Political Science at the University of Illinois at Chicago.