

Richard Caplan, *International Governance of War-Torn Territories: Rule and Reconstruction*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2005.

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which engenders shifting alliances among warring groups. Even as she concludes by emphasizing the “structural” factors explaining the recurrence of civil wars, she returns to domestic explanations of why they are susceptible to systemic (international) pressures.

There are many small mistakes in the book. On page 13 referring to Figure 2.1, she notes the rise of civil war activity in the early and mid-nineteenth century, but the tables indicates the twentieth century. On page 41, she curiously associates anti-secessionist discourse with civil war but states on page 99 that secessionism is strong in Africa and Asia. What is the systemic effect here? She argues that outside influences extended the Congolese civil war (p. 94), while they may have ended it. On page 98, she calls Sri Lanka a “moderately strong state,” while later she notes “. . . a weak state such as Sri Lanka.” She uses Zimbabwe to illustrate the division of the international community into two camps (East versus West), but ZANU and ZAPU fighting within Zimbabwe (Rhodesia) were supported by China and the USSR respectively. On page 137 she avers that if Libya had directly intervened in Chad “significant international rebuke would have followed.” The rebuke came anyway, as she described in previous pages.

From a regionalist perspective, books pitched at this level of theory making or theory confirmation often seem flawed. In fact, the book reflects a very superficial understanding of the countries covered. But this kind of flaw can be compensated for at least from a theory building perspective, in part, with rigorous modeling. In this case, the modeling exacerbates the problem. The case studies are a perverse form of selection bias that actually weakens the thesis.

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Richard Caplan’s new book examines the “New Interventionism” (p. 5), beyond peacekeeping and different from colonial rule, military occupation, mandates, and trusteeships. Although these provide precursors on which Caplan occasionally draws, he argues persuasively that UN Transitional Administrations (TAs) are qualitatively distinct. TAs are internationally recognized and accepted. They enjoy multilateral support. They operate with many other international organizations (IOs) and NGOs on the ground. They explicitly strive to implant liberal, democratic, and welfarist capitalist values and structures. Nor are they

cloaks for imperialism; they aim for the area to be as self-sustaining as rapidly as possible. TAs work assiduously for their own irrelevance.

The spur behind the book is the emergence of “internationalized territories” (p. 28) since the end of the Cold War. Post-conflict zones have increasingly seen significant levels of UN involvement in reconstruction. In eastern Slavonia, Bosnia, Kosovo, and East Timor — Caplan’s four cases — UN involvement escalated to the full loss of local sovereignty to the TA. This is dramatically new, and represents a major expansion beyond traditional UN peace-keeping and for which there is no codicil in the UN charter. Like much in the TA projects themselves, the legality of such activities is not very clear, and the process is frequently improvised by the UN and the neighbors closest to the disputed area. The involvement of neighbors, as well as a host of third parties (IOs like the World Bank, or NGOs like Amnesty International, donors like the EU or the US) significantly complicates the process. Coordination is a problem Caplan flags across his four cases.

Caplan argues that TAs have five major functions: restoring public order, repatriating refugees, civil administration, building local political institutions, and economic reconstruction. All get mediocre marks. No international legal code exists for foreign police to deploy on arrival, so rules are frequently improvised. Similarly, local elites have persistently resisted repatriation, especially after ‘successful’ ethnic cleansing (the Balkan cases). Administration is caught between governing effectively with international staff and improving local buy-in and capacity by hiring locals. The most common answer is a rocky phased involvement of locals until the closure of the TA. Political institution building is even harder. The stakes for locals and neighbors are high. Elections in highly nationalized populations can return a balkanized rather than national unity legislature. TAs have occasionally tried to raise moderate parties over others but this undercuts their legitimacy and usually backfires. Economic reconstruction is a long process over which TAs have little control. Most war-torn territories were already dysfunctional, statist, and poor. Efforts focus on basic institutions like a central bank and monetarism. The ultimate goal is foreign direct investment (FDI) but given the truculence of neighbors, competing property and repatriation claims, and rampant gangsterism, foreign inflows are low.

Caplan proposes solutions for these many problems, although some are inherent to the TA process. Far more planning is necessary. TAs are thrown together at the last minute because the UN simply has not the resources for major contingency planning. Indeed, resource constraints are remarked on throughout the book as a major impediment to almost all TA activities. Increased donor and great power support of the UN would help but is hardly forthcoming, so shoe-string operations will likely continue as the norm. TA’s absolute authority also creates problems. It undercuts local legitimacy because TA staffs are removed from accountability. Further, such undemocratic practices are at odds with the

democracy TAs are trying to build. One accountability mechanism Caplan pushes hard is an ombudsman to whom locals can take grievances. Others include informal mechanisms like the media or press. Finally, TA withdrawal is highly contested because benchmarks of success are so disputed. Elections, once a final act of TAs, have lost their luster as badly balkanized legislatures portend further violence after the internationals exit. Most TAs need far more time than donors or neighbors will tolerate, so Caplan suggests follow-on missions, but these ring of mission creep of the original TA and may simply replicate previous problems.

Caplan concludes by defining TA success as “reducing the threat of violent conflict, achieving a durable political settlement, and establishing a viable state.” (p. 251) East Timor reasonably meets these criteria, but the Balkan cases do not. But Caplan is quick to note, correctly, that without TAs these already dismal areas would likely be far worse. TAs, for all their flaws, have brought some relief from the violence. Given more resources and planning, they might function even more effectively in the future.

This is an important book. It fills a gap in the literature. I know of no similar text. It is clearly for specialists, however. The topic is quite narrow (which is fine), so even most IR scholars will find it beyond their interest. On the other hand, for those specializing in peacekeeping/building, whether scholar or academic, this is required reading. Formal theorists may dislike the qualitative analysis but there are only a few cases on which to build, so a structured, focused comparison works well here. The research is quite thorough; particularly impressive is Caplan’s mastery of UN material. I have only two criticisms. First, the blizzard of UN jargon and acronyms is overwhelming at first — INTERFET, IMFT, RRTF, UNMISSET. It takes the reader several chapters to start tracking this language easily. Second, the book needs more theory. While it is well-structured and the material well-categorized, there are too few references to larger bodies of theory from IR in general or peacekeeping/building studies specifically. A minor deficiency to be sure but a second edition with more cases and newer information might also include efforts to tie this excellent work to the larger IR edifice.

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