Hakan Wiberg and Christian Scherrer(Eds).
*Ethnicity and Intra-State Conflicts: Types, Causes and Peace Strategies*
(Aldershot: Ashgate, 1999, 327pp.)

Christian Scherrer notes in his important essay "Towards a Comprehensive Analysis of Ethnicity and Mass Violence" in this collection " *The task of conflict research remains a Herculean one: to detect the roots, genesis and dynamics of intra-state conflicts. The aim is to give a survey of conflict potentials, to identify belligerent actors and their goals, to analyse characteristics of rebel forces, to research the course of a particular conflict...Furthermore, the task for peace research is to think about ways* of structural prevention, transformation and resolution."

This task has been undertaken by the Copenhagen Peace Research Institute in its research programme: Intra-State Conflicts: Causes and Peace Strategies. This book is an outgrowth of the symposium organised at the start of the research to gain an overview of the field and to identify the lacunae needing further research or fact-finding.

As the editor and director of the Institute Hakan Wiberg notes in his introduction " *the lesson from studies of inter-state wars is that we should also have quite modest expectations when it comes to clearly demonstrated causal factors behind intra-state wars*." Since many different causes can be credibly given for an intra-state conflict, there is a tendency not to generalise but rather to present case studies. Thus the current literature tends to swing between fairly abstract generalisations on such aspects as third-party mediation to highly specific case studies of a particular conflict which usually warns one not to generalise from the study.

As a result, we are still far from a policy science concerning intra-state or ethnic conflicts as they are often called. It is, of course, useful to study past attempts at mediation in order to identify mediation patterns and processes that could ideally be used to resolve other conflicts. It is also necessary to train specialists in intra-state conflicts. The United Nations and most regional multi-state organizations were created with the settlement of inter-state wars in mind. Their institutional structures and rules were created to deal with wars between states.

State representatives are trained to negotiate with other state representatives. Even small states today have a small core of diplomats of good quality who are able to "hold their own" in negotiations; One could cite examples of leadership in UN negotiations of ambassadors from Singapore, Malta, Cyprus, and Nepal. However, diplomatic skills work less well with non-state formations whose representatives usually have more military or insurgency experience than in negotiating in multilateral forums. Moreover, there are opportunities for the representatives of states at war to meet at the United Nations. During the 1980-1988 Iran-Iraq war, the representatives of the two states had to sit next to each other at the UN – due to the ironies of alphabetical seating. They rarely talked, but, at least, they knew where each other was when the protracted peace negotiations finally started at the UN in Geneva. Meetings between governments and insurgency representatives are more difficult to arrange. There are no informal possibilities to meet such as at UN receptions where regular government diplomats meet for a drink and possible talk.

Some insurgency representatives have been accredited as non-governmental representatives at some UN meetings, but this can place the NGOs in a difficult position as people might consider the NGOs as allied to the insurgency movement.  In fact, NGOs have served to help keep lines of communication open in such cases.  As Marta Martinelli points out in her essay 'Forms of Third Party Intervention: Typology, Theoretical Approaches, Empirical Results; " *In particular, effective mediation by a third party can help minimise the risks involved in establishing communication between opposing parties to a conflict...Among the initiatives that mediators try to perform is to act as an instrument to establish or re-establish sufficiently good communications between conflicting parties, so that they can talk sensibly to each other by reducing exaggerated reciprocal perceptions and contributing to making them more realistic.  This does not necessarily resolve the conflict.  Mediation must be followed up by skilled negotiation, usually directly between two protagonists."*

The growth of intra-state conflicts has led to increased attention being given to capacity-building.  Capacity-building is concerned with addressing root causes of conflict by strengthening local forces for development, promotion of human rights, conflict resolution, and democratisation.  Such democratisation may improve the capacity of the state to carry out its functions of providing organization, rules, institutions, and services necessary for a society.  If the state does not carry out its functions in a way that is considered by most as fair, and if there is little way of changing those in power, there will be more and more movements for separation and demands for the creation of new states.

Today, many intra-state conflicts are secession-related.  Most states are the products of past conquests involving diverse ethnic groups; so there is ample potential for lines of fracture especially when there are leaders who can use identity issues coupled with a sense of injustice as a base for mobilisation.  Tarja Vayrynen's 'Socially Constructed Ethnic Identities: A Need for Identity Management? And Ralf Ronnquist's 'Identity and Intra-State Ethnonational Mobilisation' provide useful overviews of the political role of identity.  Tarja Vayrynen correctly stresses the need to develop a strong dialogic community which "*anticipates non-violent strategies of conflict resolution as well as encouraging cooperative and associative methods of problem-solving.  It is a matter of political imagination  as well as collective fantasy to project institutions, practices, and ways of life which promote non-violent conflict resolution strategies and associative problem-solving methods."*

In many ways today, we are in a race between those who would create such a "dialogic community" and those who would use ethnic identity and ethnic myths to mobilise for narrower ends.  This book, written primarily for scholars who are familiar with some of the literature on intra-state wars and conflict resolution techniques, can be a useful overview for those building such a dialogic community.

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