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Abstract

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The contributors to Challenges to Peacebuilding are interested in how spoilers and spoiling behavior explain the increased length of peace processes. They argue that it is necessary to take a broader view of spoiling, one that extends the understanding of spoilers and spoiling beyond the conventional greed and grievance perspective. Through a combination of theory chapters and case studies the contributors demonstrate how such a broad interpretation of spoilers and spoiling behavior better addresses the actions, and particularly the violence, that challenges modern peacebuilding efforts. Furthermore, to ensure that peace processes are successful, those responsible for the peacebuildilng process must anticipate and successfully manage the full range of spoilers.

Challenges to Peacebuilding is organized into two parts. The first part presents theoretical arguments in favor of a broader view of spoilers and spoiling. In the fist three chapters the contributors examine spoilers and spoiling behavior according to negotiation theory, organization theory, and opportunity models. The next three contributors look at the link between spoiling behavior and terrorism, diasporas, and new wars. In the second part spoilers, spoiling behavior and their interaction with the peacebuilding process are examined in the specific cases of Northern Ireland, the Basque Country, Bosnia, Colombia, Israel-Palestine, Cyprus, Abkhazia and South Ossetia, and Kashmir.

Taken together the contributors argue that current views of the peacebuilding process are based on three invalid assumptions. First is the assumption that all parties prefer a democratic peace to the continuation of violent conflict. Instead the contributors cite instances where one or more parties benefit from the conflict more than they would a democratic peace, either materially or otherwise, and thus prefer the status quo. Second, peacebuilders assume that disputants come to the peace process because they are looking for a compromise. Here the authors argue that some actors come to the peace process with "devious objectives" such as using the process to regroup or to legitimize their actions. Third, violence is assumed to be contrary to the peace process. The contributors cite the fact that violence increases at key junctures of peacebuilding processes without derailing progress. Successful peacebuilding processes, according to the contributors, must be designed according to the underlying issues and actor motivations specific to the conflict. Rather than assuming that parties prefer a compromise and democratic peace, the peacebuilding process should be designed to ensure that the parties remain committed to the process. Rather than seeing violence as always an obstacle to the peacebuilding process, it should be acknowledged that violence is likely to occur. Rather than using repressive measures to prevent violence, efforts should be made to understand and manage the cause of violence.

Once these assumptions are challenged, the context specific view of spoilers and spoiling provides a more thorough understanding of challenges to the peacebuilding process. Each of the contributors to the theory chapters explores the impact to the peacebuilding process when spoilers are considered in the broader view and recommends how spoiling behavior could be mitigated. Two common ideas emerge across these chapters. First, spoiling is inherently political and those responsible for the peacebuilding process must handle spoilers as they would any political actor. Consequently there must be an acceptance that there will be times when actors who participate in the peacebuilding process only for the gains it will bring to them will succeed.

There must also be an understanding that, like any political actor, the participants in the peacebuilding process have constituencies that can influence their goals and behaviors. Second, spoilers and spoiling behavior must be analyzed in the context of the specific conflict. Only by analyzing the motivations of actors, their potential to engage in spoiling behavior, and the potential that the nature of the conflict and peace process can foster spoiling behavior can the range of spoilers be identified and managed. There is not one particular group or definition of spoilers that can be clearly identified at the beginning of the peacebuilding process or that remains consistent throughout the process since motivations are altered by the peace process itself. Nor is there a consistent reason for spoiling. This presumes that those responsible for the peacebuilding process must constantly attempt to outthink the potential spoilers and assess the meaning of spoiling behavior at the time that it occurs.

Each of the case studies support the arguments made in the theory chapters by demonstrating either how spoilers were successfully managed, or mismanaged, through the politics of the peacebuilding process. Selection of the case studies also supports the overall argument that a narrow view of "spoilers" has caused an increase in the duration of conflicts and, as a result, has made peacebuilding more complicated. The cases of Palestine, Colombia, Bosnia, and the Basque Country clearly illustrate that extended conflict and failed peacebuilding processes foster a mutation of the goals and behaviors of spoilers. While the cases address the less common examples of "spoilers" they only marginally address the harder, and more violent, conflicts where availability of natural resources funds the conflict. Conversely, the only successful case of Northern Ireland clearly indicates that part of the success is attributable to the lack of natural resources which could be use to fund spoilers.

An important contribution of the case studies is a demonstration that resources available to spoilers do not have to be material and may be unintended consequences of unrelated activities. The Basque case presents the global dimension of spoiling by arguing that reaction to the United States' "war on terror" provided resources to both sides of the conflict. While this supports the theories that international actors can fuel rather than mediate spoiling behavior and that public support for the peacebuilding process is necessary for its success, it also extends the concept of resources available to potential spoilers. Current actions by the Spanish government would not be possible without the support and justification of the United States "war on terror." Similarly, the Palestinian cases demonstrate how potential spoilers can use cultural myths and manipulate, or frame, information to feed on such myths to garner support for spoiling behavior.

Although this volume offers hope for the peacebuilding process by arguing that a more thorough understanding of spoilers and spoiling behavior, it also paints management of spoilers as a complicated process. By adding legitimization to the list of "devious objectives" those responsible for peacebuilding are forced to consider the effects of their own actions on the process. By adding international actors to the list of potential spoilers, and foreign policy to the list of spoiling behavior, the contributors move peacebuilding into the realm of globalization and force those responsible for the peacebuilding process to consider the political actions and impacts of those not only directly involved in the process but all international actors. By adding framing to the list of spoiler resources those responsible for the peacebuilding process are forced to consider mitigating, or even challenging, long and widely held perceptions of the parties involved in the conflict. Although the impact of these factors have been demonstrated in analysis

of such conflicts as El Salvador, Iraq, Cambodia, and Afghanistan, this volume applies them in a broader, more theoretical context.

Rather than attempt a unified theory or single definition of spoilers and spoiling behavior, the editors of Challenges to Peacebuilding encourage a context-specific approach. The advantage to this approach is that it allows a more inclusive identification of spoilers and their motivations. The disadvantage is a potential for overuse, manipulation, and "conceptual stretching" of the terms. As the contributors acknowledge, the terms themselves can contribute to spoiling when actions are politically framed as spoiling. Yet the editors set a baseline of actors and activities that seek to disrupt the peacebuilding process thus establishing a definition. The context specific approach then allows identification of the "greed or grievance" that underlies the spoiling process, in other words the root cause. While this still lends itself to stretching, for example the inclusion of the United States' "war on terror," it does allow useful categorization, for example the Spanish government's application of the war on terror.

Challenges to Peacebuilding is recommended for anyone interested in conflict resolution. Not only does the volume challenge conventional peacebuilding assumptions (such as the desirability of democratic peace and the positive influence of third parties), it challenges the reader to look at the motivations of all actors and sub-actors in the conflict. It also reminds the reader of the inherent political nature of the conflict and that peacebuilding must also be inherently political.

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