Nationalities Papers (2019), 47: 4, 690–692
doi:10.1017/nps.2019.25

BOOK SYMPOSIUM

Human Agency, System Polarity, Regional Integration, and Nested Security

Harris Mylonas*

George Washington University, Washington, DC, USA
*Corresponding author. Email: harris.mylonas@gmail.com

Nested Security: Lessons in Conflict Management from the League of Nations and the European Union, by Jenne Erin, Ithaca, New York, Cornell University Press, 2015, $45.00 (hardcover), ISBN 9780801453908

Yuval Noah Harari recently claimed that during the past century "famine, plague and war have been transformed from incomprehensible and uncontrollable forces of nature into manageable challenges" (2016, 1–2). But how manageable are these challenges? Erin Jenne has written an important book qualifying humankind's conflict management skills and related success. Her research question is: What accounts for the variable success of soft-power conflict management within and across regional security regimes? Jenne presents a novel argument which opens the "black box" of conflict management. She suggests that successful conflict management—that is, preventing or de-escalating low intensity conflicts—at the local level is nested within broader regional security regimes. While third party mediation efforts are important, they are more likely to succeed when the regional environment is stable. In Jenne's framework, protracted low-intensity conflicts are very often nested in rivalries between states or conflict prone regions. In fact, according to her analysis, 'nested security' trumps alternative explanations such as "the mediation strategy, the identity of the mediator, the historical circumstances, and the nature and incentives of conflict participants" (26).

Jenne follows a multi-method empirical approach to test her argument. In Chapters 3 through 6, she conducts qualitative process tracing on cases of low-intensity conflicts from interwar and post-Cold War Europe. These involve thorough discussions of the League of Nations, in particular its Minorities Protection System, the work of the High Commissioner on National Minorities of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), as well as the European Union (EU) and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). In Chapter 7, Jenne conducts an out-of-sample test of her argument using Uppsala University's Mediated Intra-State Conflicts dataset. In what follows, I take a closer look at the main argument in the book and raise questions to facilitate a lively discussion in the context of this book symposium.

Erin Jenne highlights that there are three levels of nestedness: domestic, regional, and systemic. Nested conflicts—at the regional or global level—are at the heart of her work. Jenne defines the third level of nestedness as, "any extra-regional factor or actor (such as a military intervention by a major power) that can influence minority-majority relations in the target state" (32). The third level in *Nested Security* refers mainly to systemic level *actors' actions* (competition between great or major powers or military interventions) rather than the international system structure more broadly. It would be fruitful, however, to theorize of the third systemic level of nestedness in yet another way. For instance, Keith Darden and I (2012) have argued that the international system

© Association for the Study of Nationalities 2019.

https://doi.org/10.1017/nps.2019.25 Published online by Cambridge University Press

structure is critical for the success or failure of third party state-building efforts—what the US Department of Defense calls stability operations, what the European Union calls rule of law missions, and so forth. If I were to apply our reasoning to Jenne's dependent variable, ranging from nested *in*security to consolidated nested security, I would argue that whether conflict management is pursued in a unipolar or a multipolar or bipolar world has important implications. For example, in a bipolar international system, efforts of one pole to intervene in a conflict are likely to be undermined by the other pole. In a unipolar world the hegemon may have a freer hand to pursue its goals; while in a multipolar world the legitimacy of such an intervention is more contested. All in all, I concur with Jenne that "successful mediation of the domestic conflict requires neutralizing any harmful external influences on the target state—be they from the regional level, the systemic level, or both" (33), the question is, however, whether this is a product of human agency or the result of historically specific structural conditions of the international system.

Jenne argues that the regional security environment is a key factor for the success of various international regimes of conflict management. I find Jenne's argument convincing. In fact, one of the policy implications of the argument I developed in *The Politics of Nation-Building* was that in order to prevent minority discrimination and/or repression we need to increase interstate alliances through regional integration initiatives and international and regional institutions such as the EU and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (2012, 10, 198–199). The logic behind my argument is that states participating in vibrant regional integration schemes, such as the European Union, are less likely to be revisionist, more likely to be in an alliance with their neighboring states, and consequently expected to accommodate their non-core groups. It follows that in countries in regions with stable security configurations, multicultural arrangements are more probable.

A related question is whether *regional integration* efforts enhance the success of conflict management independently of the willingness of major or great powers to employ "hard military power" to maintain security arrangements—something Jenne emphasizes (21). Is there a normative or a socialization effect that we should consider? Maybe an effect of trade relations, as the French philosopher Montesquieu would expect? Moreover, even when we observe security regimes failing, this does not mean that the regional integration scheme has not had an effect since we cannot know how many more conflicts may have erupted in its absence.

Beyond *nested security*, today's global challenges and the international system structure highlight the importance of regional integration *and* multilateralism; what Emirhan Yorulmazlar and I (2012) called *regional multilateralism.* On the one hand, the EU serves as an example of regional integration and others (e.g., the African Union) are following its steps. But on top of regional schemes, *cross*-regional cooperation is key. For instance, the transatlantic dialogue model between the USA and Europe can and should be exported. According to this line of reasoning, the inability of any *one* power to confront global challenges will ultimately lead responsible powers into the fold of *regional multilateralism.* This way, every state will ultimately become a stakeholder in the international system through regional integration and cross-regional cooperation. We have a long road ahead. This process is different from the traditional spheres of influence system. It requires reassuring security umbrellas and mutually beneficial trade blocs.

Jenne has succeeded in doing something that all academics—consciously or subconsciously—worry about, namely to publish a second book that is equally good—if not better—than their first book. *Nested Security* is a terrific book and a significant contribution to the literature on security regimes and conflict resolution. Academics, practitioners, human rights activists, and policy-makers interested in peace research and conflict prevention/mediation should read it.

https://doi.org/10.1017/nps.2019.25 Published online by Cambridge University Press

References

Darden, Keith, and Harris Mylonas. 2012. "The Promethean Dilemma: Third-Party State-building in Occupied Territories." *Ethnopolitics* 1 (March): 85–93.

Harari, Yuval Noah. 2016. *Homo Deus: A Brief History of Tomorrow*. New York: Random House.

Mylonas, Harris. 2012. *The Politics of Nation-Building: Making Co-Nationals, Refugees, and Minorities*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

Mylonas, Harris, and Emirhan Yorulmazlar. 2012. "Regional Multilateralism: The Next Paradigm in Global Affairs." *CNN*. January 14. http://globalpublicsquare.blogs.cnn.com/2012/01/14/regional-multilateralism-should-be-the-next-paradigm-in-global-affairs/.

Cite this article: Mylonas, H. 2019. Human Agency, System Polarity, Regional Integration, and Nested Security. *Nationalities Papers* 47: 690–692, doi:10.1017/nps.2019.25

https://doi.org/10.1017/nps.2019.25 Published online by Cambridge University Press