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BOOK SYMPOSIUM

Comments on *Nested Security*

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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

The Necessity of Regional Stability for Inter-Ethnic Peace

Erin Jenne's *Nested Security: Lessons in Conflict Management from the League of Nations and the European Union* is a very important book. It takes a major step toward filling a gap in security studies about the management of low-intensity conflicts. A rich body of scholarship focuses on violent and "intractable" conflicts. The question of how conflicts can be prevented from becoming intractable, however, remains underexplored. Jenne's book offers a compelling theory of "nested security," which identifies conditions and mechanisms for successful conflict management by external actors. In what follows, I will comment on the significance of the theory and of the comparative historical analysis; and I will highlight some limitations of external construction.

A Bold Theory About Externally-Constructed Domestic Peace

Jenne convincingly argues that "effective civil conflict management requires building security from the outside in—that is, stabilizing the external environment before (or at the same time as) reconfiguring domestic institutions. If sectarian conflicts are securely 'nested' in a stable regional and hegemonic environment, they are likely to be far more tractable" (10). In cases of deeply entrenched conflict, successful mediation requires both a stable regional security regime and third parties that provide credible "hard-power backing" for conflict managers.

Although the significance of external involvement in successful conflict management is well known among scholars and practitioners, Jenne pushes the boundary further by developing a theory of domestic conflict management in which regional security regimes become the agents. In other words, the regional environment appears in this model not as an abstract structural condition but rather as a cooperative network of external actors in charge of building domestic peace through mediation. The success or failure of mediation at reducing domestic tensions depends on how well "nested" domestic disputes are in a stable regional environment. The specific actors involved in conflict management, and the strategies of mediation, vary across time periods and cases. Nonetheless, Jenne finds that mediation can succeed in reducing tensions in a variety of settings, involving a variety of actors—if external agents create regional stability before any efforts are made to influence domestic relations. Jenne claims that domestic peace "can be built from the outside in, even when conditions on the ground are *sub*optimal for conflict mediation" (13). Moreover, "nested security may be not just a necessary, *but also a sufficient*, condition for domestic conflict reduction" (14). This is a bold theory about externally-constructed peace through cooperative conflict management, which places a great deal of responsibility on regional organizations, as well as on great powers with a credible capacity to use hard power if necessary.

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The way this theory is developed makes another original contribution to security studies. The comparative historical analysis focuses on the intervention records of the League of Nations and the European Union. Although a comparison across these time periods might seem intuitive to students of ethnic conflict in Europe, Jenne's book is the first comparative study about the conflict management records of the League of Nations and the European Union and its partner institutions, among which the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) played a major role. The analysis compares cases of mediated low-intensity domestic (ethnic) conflict involving these international conflict managers, and it identifies key conditions under which mediation de-escalated the conflict. The amount and diversity of the research material analyzed is formidable, including primary field data and secondary sources. The comparative historical analysis is original and compelling. The findings are derived through a careful process tracing that identifies changes in conflict levels and assesses the role of external (or exogenous) as opposed to internal (endogenous) stabilization in cases where domestic conflicts de-escalated.

Additionally, the historical account provides important correctives about the scope and performance of the League of Nations' system, which in much of the literature appears as a failed experiment with little wisdom to offer to future peacemakers. For instance, according to the mainstream portrayal, the League provided extensive collective rights to ethno-national minorities, sometimes at the detriment of states. Jenne's "granular" analysis sets the record straight about both the limitations of the League's right protections and the lessons that can be drawn from the organization's successful interventions, which occurred before the organization became hijacked by Germany's Nazi leadership in the 1930s. On the question of collective rights, the record shows that the League's definition of these was quite limited, "consisting mostly of negative rights, such as the right to non-discrimination, the free exercise of religion, and the right to form minority associations" (5). On the question of the League's record of conflict management, Jenne's analysis identifies elements of the system that are worth revisiting—including the emphasis on the well-being of minorities as a condition for sustainable peace. On the sustainability of peace, however, the power of a theory of externally-constructed domestic peace remains limited.

The Limitations of External Construction

Domestic conditions are built into the model as necessary for the "endogenous stabilization" of conflict settings. The model emphasizes the need to integrate domestic, regional, and international levels of security (Jenne 2015, 180). The integrative aspect of the model, however, remains underdeveloped in the analysis. The characteristics of the domestic environment, including the interests and power relations between domestic actors, and their relationship with external mediators at the time of the conflict, remain outside the focus of the case summaries. Yet evidence from different subregions of Europe indicate that these conditions matter a great deal for conflict management—particularly in low-intensity conflict settings, where interethnic peace requires continuous balancing, and the balance can be easily disrupted by either domestic or external events or actors.

For instance, external mediation was indeed necessary for the de-escalation of the crisis triggered by the 1993 "Alien Act" in Estonia, which caused significant legal uncertainties for nonresidents (including the majority of Russophones), and triggered a demand for territorial autonomy in Estonia's north east region, where Russophones compose local majorities. The autonomy claim was nonnegotiable for Estonian politicians, and Russian state officials made threatening remarks about potential Russian intervention. Under those circumstances, collaborative external mediation became key to the de-escalation of the crisis. The success of mediation, however, depended on a combination of external and domestic conditions that were specific to the time of the conflict. The identity of actors (both external and domestic), and the relationship between external and internal actors, also mattered. The crisis emerged at the beginning of the 1990s, before Estonia's EU and North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) accession, when the membership conditionality

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framework made Estonian governments particularly keen on cooperating with European and US mediators. Additionally, Russia in the early 1990s, under President Boris Yeltsin, was significantly more interested in cooperating with European and US actors, as well as in accepting pro-European and pro-NATO governments, on former Soviet territories than it became in the post-2000 period, under President Vladimir Putin. Domestically, Russophones in Estonia were politically weaker in the early 1990s, and their expectations about European integration as a driver of minority accommodation were higher than they are in the 2010s (Cianetti and Nakai 2017). These conditions together help to account for the success of de-escalation in 1993. Domestic conditions also played a major role in the sustainability of interethnic peace after the crisis. A tangible outcome of the process was the introduction of local-level voting rights (without the right to run for office) to permanent residents (Smith 2002). This policy change made it possible for the mainstream Estonian party (the Center Party) to capture and sustain Russian votes in the heavily Russian-populated Narva region; and for other mainstream parties to make efforts to attract Russian votes—thus providing some degree of political agency to Russian speakers (Csergő and Regelmann 2017). The long-term sustainability of peace, despite the continuing reluctance of Estonian politicians to ease naturalization laws, gained salience after the mid-2000s, as, however, the EU lost leverage over Estonian governments in the post-accession period, and Russia increased its activism throughout the region. Under those conditions, the role of domestic actors in preventing the conflict from escalating (and withstanding the potentially radicalizing influence from Russia) became even more significant.

A similar dynamic was observable in the evolution of low intensity interethnic conflict in Romania since the early 2000s, where Hungarian minority political elites pursue a territorial self-government claim for the historic "Szeklerland," a region in the middle of Romania (south eastern Transylvania), where Hungarians still compose over 80 percent of the population. Romanian political elites and society reject this claim as nonnegotiable, while the Hungarian government under Prime Minister Viktor Orbán has provided support for its strongest advocates, against the more consensual Hungarian minority leadership. Although both Hungary and Romania belong to both the EU and NATO, the Hungarian kin-state presented the primary source of potential radicalization, and domestic actors became key agents of de-escalation. Despite growing Hungarian kin-state support for the more radical autonomist Hungarian groups, Hungarian minority voters continued to vote for the moderate and consensual elites that led the Democratic Alliance for Hungarians in Romania. The ability of the moderate leadership to sustain support, however, depended greatly on domestic politics (Kiss and Székely 2016). In other words, in both the Estonian and Romanian cases, the role of domestic actors in managing interethnic peace increased as the regional environment became less stable.

Timing and the specific combination of external and domestic conditions, and the domestic configuration of political elites, mattered also in the de-escalation of the Macedonian conflict in the late 1990s. Although cooperative conflict management was necessary for successful de-escalation, the explanatory strength of the nested security argument would gain also in this case if it accorded more attention to the particularities of political leadership in place at the time, and the relations of power between European and US mediators and the Macedonian governments in that period. During the 1990s and early 2000s, European and US actors had a great deal of leverage over Macedonia's governments, which had high hopes for the country's EU accession. Macedonian governments had been relying on US support for Macedonia's mere existence in the early 1990s, in the face of Greek objections to the newly independent state's international recognition under the name "Macedonia," coupled with a Greek economic embargo. US involvement was key to the successful brokering of an Interim Accord between Macedonia and Greece in 1995, which ended the embargo and secured the recognition of Macedonia by Greece under a provisional name. US support for the UN preventive mission (UNPREDEP) at the border with FR Yugoslavia (and Kosovo) provided additional grounds for US leverage over Macedonian governments at the time. Still, mediation was possible only after a grand coalition was established in May 2001, and the Social-Democratic opposition gained power over the Ministry of Defense. A new balance of power between the moderates and the "hawks" in the

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grand coalition, under the leadership of a moderate president (Trajkovski) facilitated the Ohrid negotiations (Ackermann 1999; Pardew 2011). It would be difficult to imagine a similar process of de-escalation, with the externally-mediated 2001 Ohrid Agreement as an outcome accepted by the Macedonian government, had Macedonia been governed by a nationalist government akin to the governments in place at the time in Croatia, Serbia, and Bosnia; or a government like the post-2008 camp of Nikola Gruevski in Northern Macedonia.

These examples suggest an important avenue for future research—to explore how domestic conditions and political agency become part of the construction of broadly accepted and sustainable inter-ethnic peace. Conflict management cannot be expected to eliminate conflict. Contestation is an important element of social life. In multiethnic settings, low-intensity "ethnic struggle" can become an important form of democratic interest articulation and debate (Stroschein 2012). Jenne's impressive comparative study demonstrates that regional security organizations, as well as great powers, have a major responsibility in creating "nested security" environments in which such forms of contestation can take place, without becoming "intractable" conflicts.

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