

Hancock, Landon E. and Mitchell, Christopher (Eds.). *Local Peacebuilding and Legitimacy: Interactions Between National and Local Levels*. Routledge: London & New York, 2018.

Local Peacebuilding and Legitimacy: Interactions Between National and Local Levels, edited by Peace and Conflict Studies professor, Landon E. Hancock, and Emeritus Professor of Conflict Research, Christopher Mitchell, presents a suite of essays that focuses on the role legitimacy plays in the success of peacebuilding efforts at all levels of society. Mitchell (Chapter 1) sets the tone as well as the direction of the book by pointing to the ambiguous nature of the understanding of legitimacy as an analytical tool and the “bewildering profusion of definitions in the literature” (p. 1). This ambiguity, Mitchell asserts, leads to difficulty in understanding situations of conflict, particularly where multiple legitimacies compete. By focusing on the concept of legitimacy, this edition searches for pragmatic answers to the problems faced by peacebuilding efforts at every level of society. “This is hardly a trivial point,” Mitchell states. “The whole point about legitimacy is that it theoretically confers upon some entity the right to demand from someone else respect, support, and obedience for its activities” (p. 1).

Undertaking a survey of the nature and usages of the term legitimacy, Mitchell concludes that legitimacy is relational in nature and varies upon the circumstances and the environment within which the relationship exists. Mitchell further finds that in situations of protracted conflict, it is common to find high degrees of competition for legitimacy and that there are differing degrees of legitimacy ranging from an outright sense of illegitimacy to high degrees of support, often leading to fragmented legitimacy among those involved in the conflict. However, despite the competition, there is an element that binds rival legitimacies together (pp. 16-17).

Co-editor Landon E. Hancock follows with an examination (Chapter 2) of how agency is generated through some models of peacebuilding practice and whether this agency translates into perceptions of legitimacy by both the communities affected by peacebuilding projects and by external agencies (p. 20). Like Mitchell’s examination of the concept of legitimacy, Hancock’s investigation of the concept of local ownership in peacebuilding points to the fact that the concept of ownership is ambiguous. Hancock notes that the word *ownership* refers to “everything from a turn-key operation to full control over design and implementation,” and that it might be better replaced with the word agency (p. 21). The concept of *agency* would better address what many definitions of ownership lack, that is, an attention to power and how that power is exercised.

This analytical framework constructed by Mitchell and Hancock helps to consolidate the various meanings of these terms for use in the studies presented in the volume. It is a unique and interesting framework in that this type of view deviates from “classical” views of legitimacy that are tied to the concept of “the state” and “liberal” peacebuilding notions of ownership. In this way, their framework is particularly helpful because it allows us to be able to consider protracted conflicts in a more nuanced way to include a wider variety of actors and perspectives. This is particularly helpful to consider, for example, non-governmental or non-state actors, conflicts involving stateless peoples, transnational movements, fragile or failed states and the interconnected realms at the local, national and international level where multiple legitimacies and stakeholders compete.

In addition to this innovative analytical framework, the book includes a variety of essays from both scholars and practitioners in peacebuilding and conflict resolution, resulting in a well-balanced mix of theoretical discussions and aggregate case studies that expand upon the concepts presented in the volume. The book is very efficiently organized. Each chapter is laid out with

clear introductions and conclusions and content that effectively ties back to the framework created by Mitchell and Hancock. The editors conclude the work (Chapter 12) with a summary of the contributions made by each author and tie them, neatly, to the volume's discussion of legitimacy. The book's clear organization and mix of theory and practice lends itself as a handy teaching tool for any classroom. A summary of the content follows:

In Chapter 3, Annette Idler, Cécile Mouly and María Belén Garrido present their case study of how various forms of local order have shaped everyday life in Las Mercedes, a rural community in Eastern Colombia (p. 43). Through examples based in on-site fieldwork, the authors demonstrate how the concept of empirical legitimacy helps to explain the evolving relationships between the local community and non-state actors in the context of an internal armed conflict (p. 58). Specifically, this case shows that while external actors helped to change people's attitudes towards making concessions, ultimately, rejection of local guerilla rule was unsustainable because local and national authorities failed to assume the protection and responsibilities those groups provided.

In Chapter 4, Rajit H. Das considers the question of legitimacy in the context of the conflict over Kashmir and how the legitimacy afforded to the stakeholders might be more important than that of those intervening in the conflict (p. 84). Das utilizes a comparative analysis of the use of multi-track diplomacy through the IMTD (Institute for Multi-Track Diplomacy) in Kashmir and Cyprus. Das concludes that in the context of South Asia, legitimacy "tends to be based indirectly upon stakeholder identity," and that it is "based largely upon the identities of those who become directly involved in the dialogue process" (p. 97).

Utilizing examples of protective accompaniment from Colombia, Catherine Ammen and Christopher Mitchell (Chapter 5) explore the extent to which a focus on international protection enhances or undermines the legitimacy and effectiveness of the particular individual or organization being protected (p. 102). Ammen and Mitchell conclude that in the cases where IPA (International Protective Accompaniment) was used, the effects on the legitimacy experienced by both adversaries and protectors could vary greatly (p. 116). This chapter further illustrates the difficulties of using the concept of legitimacy.

In Chapter 7, Laura Villanueva explores "Virtual Infrastructures for Peace" through a civilian-led, closed virtual community named *Porteando por la Paz* as an example of a new type of "Zone of Peace," with a note to the varied and different sources of legitimacy that virtual networks engender (pp. 121-122). The chapter approaches agency as a human need that can preclude legitimacy. Further, it considers legitimacy in the light of digital technologies that act as both a new medium and as a tool (p. 122). Villanueva shows that the closed virtual community emerged as a way to seek sanctuary after a triggering event in a politically repressive environment and served to expand the ways in which individuals and groups were able to harness agency (p. 136). Villanueva's work points to the development of new social structures and, consequently, new forms of human agency (p. 137).

In Chapter 8, Patricia A. Maulden considers schools as post-conflict spaces. Maulden utilizes Nepal as the primary case study with comparative examples from the Philippines and Afghanistan. This chapter explores four topics: how legitimacy is situated, claimed, justified, and believed; the aspects of legitimacy that led to the SZoP projects (schools as zones of peace); the political and ideological spaces of school and education; and their potential as a domain of protection as well as of recovery from war. Maulden highlights the tensions between order and legitimacy in an environment where peace is nascent (p. 155). While SZoP projects are found to have limited global implementation due to the difficulties of mounting and sustaining zone of

peace spaces (p. 156), Maulden suggests that, “The roles for zones of peace could well be reshaped to work within ongoing situations, legitimized as a locus of survival and renewal encouraged through moral correctness” (p. 157).

In Chapter 9, Sweta Sen explores the shift from conflict that threatens civilian safety to civilian protection to try to answer the question, “Why did the insurgents decide to participate in upholding humanitarian norms while engaging in a violent conflict with the state and thus greatly limiting an effective tool of war?” (p. 161). Sen surmises that the Sudanese civil war was about a struggle between two political parties where military strength between the NSAG and the SPLA/M was disproportionate. As such, the SPLA/M was forced to seek both horizontal as well as vertical legitimacy (p. 176).

In Chapter 10, Jacqueline Wilson argues that legitimacy can apply to non-state actors and to individuals, thereby adding greater complexity to the concept, particularly in environments where the presence and influence of the state is weak, or in “traditional” settings where legitimacy may be defined and framed in ways different from those in more “modern” societies (p. 181). Wilson’s examination finds that legitimacy in fragile states shows a major disconnect between local views of legitimacy and the more customary, state-centric views, and that concepts of legitimacy in fragile states require further exploration and research (p. 196).

Finally, in Chapter 11, Mary Hope Schwoebel utilizes the case of Somaliland to probe the concept of legitimacy in cases where no recognizable state exists and a struggle develops between entities claiming the legitimate right to construct a state and to maintain peace within a stateless society (p. 200). Schwoebel demonstrates that, in the case of Somaliland, peacebuilding and state-building have been explicitly based on the hybridization of indigenous structures and processes and those of an international nation-state, and implicitly on those of Islam (p. 218). Yet, in this case, efforts have not been entirely successful due to the persistence of clan-based politics. Schwoebel suggests that, “Rethinking needs to occur,” and that, “Perhaps the rethinking needs to center on continuing to build on and expand the resilience of traditional clan-based consensus-based democracy and sources of legitimacy” (p. 219).

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