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Review of Mats Berdal and David M. Malone's Greed and Grievance: Economic Agendas in Civil Wars

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Berdal, Mats and David M. Malone, eds. *Greed and Grievance: Economic Agendas in Civil Wars*. (London: Lynne Rienner, 2000).
International Peace Academy Project.

The argument set forth in this book adds a new dimension to research addressing contemporary civil conflict. The authors argue that civil wars have political motivations that empirical research cannot fully explain. Contemporary civil wars are driven more by economic forces, as opposed to the usual political forces. These economic motivations tend to prolong civil wars, rather than seek opportunities for common agreement to end them. This argument is not new. It is, however, different in the sense that it challenges the general premise, as David Keen states in Chapter 1 that, war is a contest between two sides, with each trying to win; and that war represents only a *breakdown* or *collapse* rather than the creation of an alternative system of profit, power and protection (19).

The book is a product of a conference on the "Economic Agendas in Civil Wars" held at Canada House, in London, in April 1999. It is divided into two sections. The first section, rightfully titled "Approaches to the Political Economy of Civil Wars," is an in-depth study of "economic considerations that often shape the calculations and behavior of the parties to conflict, giving rise to a particular *war economy* and a distinctive dynamic of conflict"(2). This complexity of motives and interactions allows the study of the *political economy* of civil wars. Part One is a collection of studies in which several arguments and observations are given as to why contemporary civil wars take place in Africa. The studies address the *incentives and disincentives*, and the need and functionality of violence (19). It looks at the creation

of a *shadow state* dictated by a personality for personal economic gains (43). The role of *globalization* and *transborder trade* as external factors provide the mechanism that facilitates resource exportation and the barter exchange for arms and other goods, creating tremendous wealth for warlords, thereby threatening any initiatives or incentives for peace (69). There is also the need for war to legitimize actions [looting, drug smuggling, unjustified killings] that would otherwise be illegal in times of peace. The *resource curse*, of African countries endowed with a wealth of natural resources, conveys that these assets may act as stimulants for civil wars, as we see in diamond rich Angola, Sierra Leone, and Liberia (113).

In Liberia, the former warlord leader of the NPFL, Charles Taylor, now president, is estimated to have made more than US\$400 million per year from the war in the years between 1992 and 1996, from selling diamonds, timber and mining equipment (5). In Angola, the National Union for the Total Independence of Angola (UNITA) has since 1992 controlled 70 percent of Angola's one billion dollar per year diamond industry. Musifiky Mwanasali, in "The View from Below" (Chapter 7), points out how the ongoing war in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) has enabled DRC neighbors, Rwanda and Uganda, to become major exporters of raw materials, including gold and cobalt—materials that these countries do not naturally possess.

Part Two, "Confronting Economic Agendas in Civil Wars," is a study of the formulation of economic agendas in civil war, and addresses why some intervention mechanisms work and others fail. This part of the book also prescribes some mechanisms for international bodies to consider when attempting or negotiating peace. In Chapter 8, "Arms, Elites and Resources in the Angolan Civil War," the authors convey the role of the self-regulating arms industry in making an abundance of arms readily available to both parties

in the Angolan civil war. According to Gamba and Cornwell, weapons fueling armed conflict in Angola have three sources: (1) They are still part of the stocks freely dumped into the country by governments sympathetic to the different warring parties during the Cold War era; (2) They are old stocks of small arms recirculating in the region of Southern Africa from conflict area to conflict area; (3) They are new supplies sold and transferred to serve the Angolan government or UNITA forces.

The last three chapters of the book are key to the prescriptive approach for international intervention in civil wars. In Chapter 9, "Targeted Financial Sanctions," Porteous cites financial sanctions as one way to force warlords and leaders of government to alter their behavior. However he cites the costliness of financial sanctions and the many avenues of wealth transference that are at the disposal of authoritarian rogues, including cyber-banking and non-Western banking systems, such as the Hundi system in India and the Chen, or "flying money," system in Chinese circles (183). The magnitude of the task of searching for hidden assets is also to be considered. The fact that many non-financial institutions such as brokerage houses and insurance companies are engaging in clandestine activities with these rogue leaders (criminals) for high-yielding profits, makes the task of enforcement more daunting for organizations such as the U.S. Financial Crimes Enforcement Network (FINCEN) and UNSCOM. In Chapter 10, "Aiding and Abetting," David Shearer defends the general exaggeration of critics of aid agencies. According to the evidence, the accusations that aid agencies are aiding and abetting warlords (leaders of warring factions in civil wars in Africa) are exaggerations. What appears to be the case is that relief aid is stolen and even taxed as a contribution to the warlords—"the Liberian faction leader Charles Taylor, now head of state, frequently charged, or attempted to charge, an aid tax for relief brought into the area under his control" (192).

The final chapter (Chapter 11) by Tom Farer, "Shaping Agendas in Civil Wars," looks at international criminal law as a mechanism that fosters the disincentives for civil wars. The primary focus is on the International Criminal Court acquiring increased power and readiness to prosecute the "Milosovics" of the world for *war crimes* and *crimes against humanity*.

To conclude, the arguments set forth by the authors were succinctly developed and supported by a wealth of evidence. This study is an impetus for further research of the economic dimension of civil war, not from an eco-political, structural cost-analysis perspective centered on the state, but more from an economic dimension that looks at *greed and grievances* that mitigate the prosecution of civil wars. The authors in their various essays were able to not only identify the "virus" causing the "sickness," they were able to identify some initiatives being implemented by international law enforcement organizations such as FINCEN and UNSCOM, to reduce resource exploitation on the black market. The evidence as to the causes of civil wars lies in the motives of the parties of civil wars, *greed and grievances*—a title most appropriate for this subject matter. The book is an appropriate departure from conventional political debates on civil wars as being products of ethnic hatred or a reaction to the nation-state. It provides an excellent insight on civil wars, and adds a new dimension to the political debate on the causal factors of contemporary civil wars in Africa.

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