Sara Hellmüller. *The Interaction between Local and International Peacebuilding Actors: Partners for Peace.* Rethinking Political Violence Series. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillian, 2018. 233 pp. $129.00, cloth, ISBN 978-3-319-65300-6.

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Since the phrase "local turn" emerged as a buzzword in the early 2000s, the distinct (and frequently contradictory) views and interests of international peace supporters and their local counterparts have been under extensive academic debate in peace and conflict studies. A large number of studies have highlighted the discrepancies between international and local actors as a major obstacle to successful peacebuilding (for example, the critiques of the liberal peace),[1] while other studies have attempted to find practical ways to foster and use local societies' inner resources to make peace more sustainable (for example, the discourse on local ownership).[2] Some studies have examined the coexistence and combinations of the local and international models of peacebuilding or explored the possibilities for promoting the collaboration of different peacebuilding actors (for example, the debates regarding hybrid peace).[3]

Nevertheless, compared to the keen academic interest in the perspectives, interests, and needs of key stakeholders at different levels, there has been a surprisingly smaller number of empirical studies that examine the mechanisms of the partnership and interaction between the stakeholders. Partly due to such challenges as the ambiguity in concepts and biases in approaches that focus pri‐

marily on international actors, many aspects of the partnership development have remained barely explained in the conventional scholarship. [4] In this regard, Sara Hellmüller's new book, *The Interaction between Local and International Peacebuilding Actors*, offers rarely available empirical evidence to examine the local-international interaction in peacebuilding. By examining the case study of Ituri, the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), this volume confirms the comparative advantages that local peacebuilders and international actors have and demonstrates how these advantages failed to be used due to the superficial level of "partnership" between them.

To introduce the key discussions first, this research monograph consists of one theoretical overview chapter and three research findings chapters, in addition to an introduction and a conclusion. In the theoretical overview (chapter 2), the author situates this project in the wider academic debates of "local turn" and adopts local ownership and hybridity as the central conceptual framework. It then explains how its particular attention to the roles of perception and the "interaction" between local and international can address some of the limitations that are frequently visible in the conventional academic scholarship.

Chapters 3-5 examine the case study of Ituri, respectively focusing on the "cause," "process of interaction," and "outcome" of the superficial local-international partnership. Chapter 3 clarifies the different perceptions of the actors and the perceptions that contributed to the formation of different peacebuilding programs. The author pays particular attention to the discrepancies in their judgment in the fundamental sources that generated the violence in Ituri. While local peacebuilding actors singled out ethnic tension and disputes over land as the primary causes, international actors understood the same conflicts more as the chaos that could not be controlled due to the collapse of the state system. Accordingly, the foci of the peacebuilding programs developed by these actors were aimed in different directions, namely, social cohesion and state (re)building. Nevertheless, it is argued, one actor's perspective illuminates only part of the complex and interrelated connection between ethnicity, land, and governance issues in the area.

Chapter 4 demonstrates that a lack of genuine local-international partnership failed to maximize the opportunities to effectively incorporate the comparative advantages that local and international actors have: access to funding to implement large-scale projects (international) and the ability to manage cost-effectiveness (local). This chapter highlights three main perceptual issues that prevent such collaboration: differing approaches to resources, capacity, and legitimacy. In the final section, it describes how these actors became more open to collaboration with actors on the other side and how such collaboration was mobilized and designed.

Chapter 5 examines limitations in the peacebuilding outcomes resulting from insufficient local-international collaboration. The author highlights what remained unachieved in the areas that local and international actors considered important. In terms of social reconciliation and land management, three areas need further improvement—truth-telling, justice, and institutional mechanisms—to address local conflicts. Regarding statebuilding, two areas that have achieved little advancement are legitimizing the monopoly of force and building legal-rational authority. Moreover, this chapter elaborates on how further collaboration could have used each side's comparative advantages to address the above limitations.

Then, the monograph concludes with a short wrap-up chapter. It concisely integrates the findings presented in the previous chapters and their contributions in different strands of academic discourse.

The book offers readers an extensive amount of information of why such collaboration could not have developed more and what opportunities for consolidating peace in Ituri have been missed due to the limited collaboration. I found three strengths particularly beneficial to other researchers and field practitioners. First, this study offers a good deal of information about the roles of perception as a key factor that determines the effectiveness of peacebuilding. While many researchers acknowledge the discrepancies in the perception between local and international peacebuilding actors, comprehensive empirical studies on such perceptual difference have rarely been conducted. I suspect this is partly due to the challenges in identifying and evaluating the differences and demonstrating the correlation between such perception issues and the outcomes of peacebuilding. To the best of my knowledge, Hellmüller's new book is one of the first studies that systematically examines how the dissimilar perceptions between local and international actors can supplement each other but how such opportunities are being missed in contemporary peacebuilding. It describes well how peacebuilders' perception influences the forms and procedures of peacebuilding programs as well as the effectiveness of local-international partnership.

Second, the author's efforts to capture the nuances in the dynamics of the interaction between

peacebuilding actors at local and international levels deserve particular acknowledgment. Although Hellmüller adopts the binary conceptual framework of "local vs. international" that is prevalent in the contemporary scholarship of peacebuilding, the author acknowledges well the limitation of such a simple framework and attempts to avoid the risk by carefully examining the dissimilar views, interests, and priorities of local and international actors within each conceptual framework. Hence, as a reader, I was able to begin to comprehend the multiple challenges that each of these types of actors faces in the interaction vis-à-vis other actors. In a sense, the overall discussion seems to set three analytical targets—local, national, and regional (international)—and examines the triangular communication between these levels. I am sure this examination will offer insightful empirical evidence for the people who aim to study similar issues.

Third, while reading through this volume, I continued to question "OK, then how can we overcome these obstacles? Are there any insights for better partnership?" Although the section "Bridging the Gap" in chapter 5 is quite brief, it offers great food for thought regarding these questions. By using the example of the collaboration between Pax (as an international supporter) and the RHA (Réseau Haki na Amani, a network of local peacebuilders), the author proposes six practice areas that require more attention to facilitate better partnership. Three areas ("appreciation of comparative advantages, acknowledgment of diversity and time commitment") are more related to selecting partners, whereas the other three ("joint strategy-making, relationship-building and working towards local actors' self-sustenance") are more relevant to the process of partnership building (pp. 198, 200). Having said this, I assume that the author deliberately kept the discussions concise because she did not want to make the description look like a prescription for other peacebuilding contexts. However, considering many field practitioners and researchers are looking for more concrete inspiration, some further explanation would have benefited readers.

A missed opportunity is that this volume does not substantially describe and examine the "scenes" of interaction between different peacebuilding actors considering the title of the book *The Interaction between Local and International Peacebuilding Actors*. While it offers extensive information about the perceptual and contextual factors that made genuine partnership difficult, it does not provide detailed examination of how the actors interact or collaborate with each other in practice. Hence, readers have insufficient clues to comprehend how the local-international interaction takes place and why the perceptual gaps and superficial collaboration fail to be overcome earlier.

Considering readership, I believe this study is most suitable to researchers and postgraduate students in peace and conflict studies who aim to study local peacebuilding in conflict-affected societies. It will also be a useful information source for the people who want to be updated with the social dynamics in contemporary DRC. Although it will definitely be helpful to policymakers, they may prefer to read the author's previous journal articles, which introduce and examine key issues covered in this monograph in a more concise manner.

Notes

[1]. Oliver P. Richmond, "Reclaiming Peace in International Relations," *Millennium – Journal of International Studies* 36, no. 3 (2008): 439-470; Susanna Campbell, David Chandler, and Meera Sabaratnam, *A Liberal Peace? The Problems and Practices of Peacebuilding* (London: Zed Books, 2011); and Carla Castañeda, "How Liberal Peacebuilding May Be Failing Sierra Leone," *Review of African Political Economy* 36, no. 120 (2009): 235-251.

[2]. Stefanie Kappler, "The Dynamic Local: Delocalisation and (Re-)localisation in the Search for Peacebuilding Identity," *The Third World Quarter-*

ly 36, no. 5 (2015): 875-889; Madoka Futamura and Mark Notaras, *Local Perspectives on International Peacebuilding*, Research Article Series (Tokyo: United Nations University, 2011); Roger Mac Ginty, *International Peacebuilding and Local Resistance: Hybrid Forms of Peace* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011); and Sung Yong Lee and Alpaslan Ozerdem, eds., *Local Ownership in International Peacebuilding: Key Theoretical and Practical Issues* (New York: Routledge, 2015).

[3]. Geroid Millar, "Disaggregating Hybridity: Why Hybrid Institutions Do Not Produce Predictable Experiences of Peace," *Journal of Peace Research* 51, no. 4 (2014): 501-514; Oliver P. Richmond, "The Dilemmas of a Hybrid Peace: Negative or Positive?," *Cooperation and Conflict* 50, no. 1 (2015): 50-68; and Volker Boege, Anne Brown, Kevin Clements, and Anna Nolan, "Building Peace and Political Community in Hybrid Political Orders," *International Peacekeeping* 16, no. 5 (2009): 599-615.

[4]. John Heathershaw, "The Practical Representation of Peacebuilding: An (Auto)ethnography of Programme Evaluation in Tajikistan," in *Hybrid Forms of Peace from Everyday Agency to Post-liberalism*, ed. Oliver P. Richmond and Audra Mitchell (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 162-187; Briony Jones, Julie Bertnath, and Sandra Rubli, "Reflections on a Research Agenda for Exploring Resistance to Transitional Justice" (Working Paper 3, Swisspeace, Bern, 2013); Edward Newman, Roland Paris, and Oliver P. Richmond, eds., *New Perspectives on Liberal Peacebuilding* (New York: United Nations University Press, 2009); and Tobias Pietz and Leopold von Carlowitz, "Local Ownership in Peacebuilding Processes in Failed States: Approaches, Experiences, and Prerequisites for Success," Center for International Peace Operations (ZIF) report, ZIF, Berlin, 2007.

4

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