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Philip G. Roeder. *National Secession: Persuasion and Violence in Independence Campaigns*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2018. 312 pp. \$49.95 (cloth), ISBN 978-1-5017-2598-2.

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National Secession: Persuasion and Violence in Independence Campaigns offers a novel and interesting approach to the study of campaigns for national independence. The starting point for the study is that there are many possible national projects, but only some of them become significant, and only some of these become full-fledged wars for independence. Philip G. Roeder tackles the problem of understanding secession by taking a wide-angle view of the entire process through which a national people go from a proto-nation to a significant nationalist campaign to intractable war or successful secession.

Roeder's approach centers on the ability of nationalist elites to coordinate the expectations of the platform population (in other words, people who would comprise the nation-state). He suggests that the key goals of any national program should be the tight coordination of expectations among these people around the belief of national independence as the only possible answer to their struggle. In part, he focuses on this idea of "programmatic coordination" because the vast majority of independence projects can only hope to achieve success when there is an externally created window of opportunity for them to do so. Nationalist elites must rely on strategic opportunism and be ready for such windows of opportunity to arise. At the point at which the opportunity presents itself, the nationalist movement must convince the international community that independence is viable and necessary.

A key factor in the ability of nationalist elites to build and sustain independence campaigns is how they manage the diversity of motivations individuals have for par-

ticipating. Roeder identifies three types of motivation: purposive, material, and expressive. A successful campaign will be able to leverage individuals who truly seek independence as a "worthwhile cause," those who are motivated by "money and power," and those who participate as a form of "cathartic release" (p. 70).

In addition to novel theorizing about the ways that nationalist elites can succeed in programmatic coordination, the book provides a mix of evidence in support of the approach. Roeder provides in-depth studies of national campaigns that have succeeded in coordinating expectations, as well as those that have reached the level of intractability, including Nagorny Karabakh, Abkhazia, South Ossetia, Transdniestria, and Chechnya. The book also offers a new list of significant national campaigns and detailed information on a set of post-Soviet campaigns that have become intractable. While the majority of the book focuses on theory building and real-world illustrations of the process of programmatic coordination, Roeder also provides a set of quantitative analyses examining which campaigns become significant and which are likely to see intense violence.

This book departs from the existing literature in several ways. Some studies, such as my *Inside the Politics of Self-determination* (2014), focus on the internal dynamics of self-determination campaigns. Other books, such as Fotini Christia's *Alliance Formation in Civil War* (2012) and Paul Staniland's *Networks of Rebellion: Explaining Insurgent Cohesion and Collapse* (2016), focus on civil war. These other studies tend to assume that claims made by these actors are a given. By examining the creation and

maintenance of campaigns for national independence, Roeder centers on the practical process of running an independence campaign and highlights the challenges that elites face, the constraints that shape their likely success, and the myriad ways that a campaign can fail to get off the ground.

In addressing nationalist campaigns as a process, Roeder allows us to examine both proximate and end goals of nationalist elites. This provides a more nuanced and reasonable account for why these movements survive when their chance of success at any given moment is so low. This approach, in some ways, presents a significant challenge to another dominant approach: the conflict bargaining model. Based on James D. Fearon's article "Rationalist Explanations for War" (as well as other publications, such as Barbara F. Walter's *Committing to Peace*), a number of studies have centered on the bargaining approach to understand violence in civil war, focusing on information problems, credible commitments, and issue indivisibility.[1] Roeder's theory suggests several complications to this. First, he argues that the primary goal of an ongoing nationalist campaign is to be "ready." That is, the campaign must sustain itself over time with an eye toward rapid shows of strength at key moments of opportunity. Violence can play a role in this, as a way to mobilize individuals or signal intent or strength. The occurrence of violence is not, in and of itself, seen as a bargaining failure. Second, nationalist campaigns can turn into intractable disputes (aka frozen conflicts). In such disputes, Roeder argues, any bargaining we observe is pseudo-bargaining because sovereignty in these cases is not divisible.

Roeder makes clear that the book's focus is on national projects that achieve significance, which he conceptualizes and operationalizes as essentially sustained Western attention. Given what we know from such books as Bridget Coggins's *Power Politics and State Formation in the Twentieth Century: The Dynamics of Recognition* (2014) about the role of major powers in determining which national projects become independent states, this is a reasonable approach. However, it leaves many cases off the table in terms of analysis. Moreover, because the focus is on the coordination of expectations around independence, the book purposefully ignores autonomy campaigns. Given the importance of the international community to Roeder's theoretical story, it would be interesting to extend this logic to movements beyond those for national independence. Increasingly, movements that

seek something different than international statehood also rely on Western attention.[2] Additionally, although large-scale nonviolent campaigns are relatively uncommon in nationalist campaigns historically, the challenges presented for programmatic coordination and the potential for success in this endeavor could also lead to sustained nonviolent or conventional political movements. These outcomes may also be of interest to scholars of nationalist politics.

National Secession is a unique book. It provides a novel theoretical approach for understanding nationalist campaigns. Rooted in the work of Vladimir Lenin, it provides a theoretically informed action plan with clear suggestions for the coordination of a sustained nationalist campaign. Anyone interested in nationalism, conflict, or the political processes that leads to these phenomena will enjoy this book.

Note

[1]. James D. Fearon, "Rationalist Explanations for War," *International Organization* 49, no. 3 (Summer 1995): 379-414; and Barbara F. Walter, *Committing to Peace: The Successful Settlement of Civil Wars* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2002).

[2]. Hyreran Jo, *Compliant Rebels: Rebel Groups and International Law in World Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015); and Bridget Coggins, *Power Politics and State Formation in the Twentieth Century: The Dynamics of Recognition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014).

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