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## BOOK REVIEWS

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### **Civil War and Uncivil Development. Economic Globalisation and Political Violence in Colombia and Beyond, by David Maher, Palgrave Macmillan, 2018, pp. 326.**

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Since the end of the Cold War, security and development have become increasingly interwoven. The security-development nexus has attracted a considerable attention from scholars and practitioners across the social sciences and has informed and sustained donor-driven agendas of liberal interventionism along the unstable and fragile peripheries of the Global South (Duffield 2001). In the post-Cold War period, as the world order shifted from a bipolar system to a triumphant unipolar neoliberal system under the aegis of the United States, new challenges and threats were identified as endangering international peace and security. In particular, the proliferation of intra-state conflicts and civil wars – much of which were now called ‘New Wars’ – and the trans-border effects of migration flows increasingly were put

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at the forefront of a risk-containment, humanitarian agenda promoted by the United Nations and a plethora of Western States (Duffield 2010; Kaldor 1999).

At the policy level, this was translated on the ground with the promotion of peacebuilding and state-building missions, with lasting consequences for the re-definition and transformation of security, state sovereignty and statehood, key pillars upon which the international order was founded (Hameiri 2010).

David Maher's *Civil War and Uncivil Development. Economic Globalisation and Political Violence in Colombia and Beyond* is an ambitious and empirically-rich endeavor that makes a theoretically important contribution to civil war and development scholarships. Central to the security-development agendas and studies has been the link between civil war and (under-) development (Duffield 2001, p. 27). By seeing conflict as a reflection of a developmental *malaise* these studies have postulated a circular and straightforward relationship between the two concepts, i.e., more development would bring more security and *vice versa*, as well as greater liberalization and globalization would be conducive to more peace (Blanton and Apodaca 2007). Maher shy away from both the 'New Wars' debates with their emphasis on human (in)security and from poverty-centered explanatory models of conflict and political violence underpinned by the 'Greed versus Grievance' thesis (Collier and Hoeffler 2000). He does so by addressing a rather overlooked question in the civil war literature: What

are the economic consequences of violent conflict and how do economic development and political violence interact? (p. 6).

While much has been written on how development affects the onset and duration of civil war, Maher's book seeks to understand how civil war affects economic development and processes of economic globalization (chapter 2). The study aims to challenge the 'civil war as development in reverse' logic and asks a rather heterodox and 'uneasy' question: Can violence in civil wars facilitate economic development and integration into the global economy? The book's central claim is that 'violence in Colombia's civil war did not preclude the country's economic development and economic openness. On the contrary, the violence perpetrated by central actors of Colombia's civil war has served to facilitate the country's impressive economic performance and integration into the global economy.' (p. 23-24)

While incorporating some of the critical theoretical approaches that have emphasized the centrality of violence to progress, economic and global capitalist development, the book's original contribution to this debate consists in exploring the nuances and complexities of the types of mechanisms that can lead to economic growth in war-torn countries as well as the different economic effects that certain types of civil war violence can produce. Contrary to most quantitative scholarly research on civil war that focuses on battle-deaths, this book analyses political violence against civilians perpetrated by recognized armed groups, mainly state and

right-wing paramilitary forces (chapter 4 and 5). Theoretically, the book is informed by Critical Theory and largely underpinned by Historical Materialism. This means questioning existing power relations and knowledge on civil war and economic development, in particular those postulating incongruence between capitalism and political violence in civil war. Methodologically, the analysis uses process tracing and benefits from the detailed, individual case study analysis of political violence and economic development in Colombia.

The author shows how during the 2000s when Colombia's civil war intensified, the country witnessed increases in international trade, foreign direct investment (FDI) and economic growth (chapter 3). Maher argues that state/paramilitary violence targeting both armed and unarmed groups has made Colombia attractive for domestic and foreign investors (chapter 3). The analysis sheds light on how a certain type of violence – forced displacement and human rights violations to trade unions and indigenous groups – perpetrated by state forces and paramilitaries protected the interests of investors in the oil industry and indeed facilitated the development of the oil sector in Arauca (chapter 4). The development of the palm oil sector in Meta – the second case study in the book – has followed a similar trajectory, where widespread forced displacement known as 'land grabbing' against indigenous communities and trade unionists and perpetrated by state/paramilitary forces has served the same rationale and has produced the same results: the protection of the

interests of palm oil investors and Colombia's palm oil competitiveness in the global market (chapter 5).

The author shows how violence is highly fluid in civil wars, and different types of violence may simultaneously exist within the same conflict and lead to varied economic effects (chapter 6). He then proceeds to expand the broader implications of the Colombian case study by briefly discussing similar civil wars and their economic trends, i.e., Uganda, Sri Lanka, Peru and Sudan (chapter 6). While he recognizes that trade and FDI are important to the neo-liberal doctrine and to contemporary globalization, Maher also leaves to future research investigating how violence is linked to neo-liberal policies in civil war economies (chapter 7). Although the book has not explicitly engaged with a political economy perspective, it speaks to such a framework by showing who is benefiting and who is losing from the war and political violence in the Colombian case. The analysis shows how violence is both instrumental and functional to economic development. However, the fact that it is functional to a certain type of economic model, underpinned by neoliberalism, is more assumed than explicitly addressed. Moreover, by focusing on the types of mechanisms of political violence, the analysis overlooks a range of equally instrumental tools – such as Corporate Social Responsibility – that in the same regional case studies have made the violence of development illegible and have often equated resistance with irrationality or subversion (Coleman 2018). As the book seems to

suggest, in specific world's and countries' peripheries, regions and borders, development is not only uncivil but it is also deeply violent and economic progress is ensured through blood, forced displacement and human rights violations (Coleman 2018).

The book speaks to students, scholars, practitioners and human rights activists interested in the relationship between political violence, development and globalization. Moreover, it is relevant for International Relations discipline as well as for peace and conflict scholars interested in the complex relationship between peace, political violence and development in conflict areas. Scholars and students of civil war will find the book a theoretically sound and empirically rich source as it advances knowledge on a particularly relevant yet overlooked area in civil war studies through the lenses of critical theory and historical materialism.

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