Lutmar, C. and Ockey, J. (Eds). (2019). *Peacebuilding in the Asia-Pacific.* **Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan. 261pp, hbk, ISBN: 978-3-319-78594-3. € 89.99.**

'Liberal peace' approaches to peacebuilding, founded on the idea that peace after civil strife will flow from the rebuilding of liberal democratic institutions and neoliberal economic policies (see Greener's chapter), have been subjected to two decades of sustained critique. In this volume, Lutmar and Ockey have added several more voices to the chorus, doing so by presenting an alternative understanding of conflict to the one underlying the liberal peace. I found their alternative compelling, despite some shortcomings in their application of the concept.

The first three chapters detail the theoretical state of play that the volume attempts to move beyond, which hinges on the difference between "contingent" and "inherent" models of conflict. The former sees conflict as a breakdown of the institutional structures that had previously prevented its outbreak, which ultimately leads unproblematically to the liberal peace. The latter is the model of conflict the authors endorse, and it posits that the potential for conflict "is always present in any political system" (p. 3).

Ockey and Lutmar note in their respective introductory and concluding chapters that the implications of the inherent conflict model for peace-building reach too far and wide for a single volume to encompass. So, they choose to focus on the influence of political leadership on the management of conflicts *after* a "transition" has begun or peace agreement achieved. Reilly's case study chapter is a quantitative analysis of political power-sharing arrangements across the region, while the rest are detailed process tracing narratives about political leadership in the Asia Pacific region, which include the small states of Timor-Leste, Tonga, Samoa and Solomon Islands.

A further implication for peacebuilding that the authors draw from the inherency model is that lessons can be gleaned from a larger universe of cases than peacebuilding scholars might typically consider. Indeed, if conflict is inherent to all political systems, then no case is out of reach. Thus, readers will learn about the comparatively peaceful Pacific Islands states of Tonga (from Ian C. Campbell) and Samoa (from Iati Iati). Conflict in these cases has been comparatively well contained, although by customary institutions and leadership more than liberal democracy. Iati's contribution, in particular, is a cogent analysis of conflict management in the *fa'aSamoa* (the 'Samoan way of life'), where relations between individuals, groups and institutions ramify outwards, incorporate each other, and can thus be the source of both peace and conflict. The cases do indeed show the utility of the inherency model of conflict, and the implications just described were new and interesting to me.

However, I found the volume somewhat off balance insofar as the theoretical discussion outlining the problem was far more comprehensive than discussion of how the cases move the theory forward. This could have been resolved, in part, with more ruthless editing to remove repetition from the theoretical discussions in Part 1 (and typographical errors from the volume). The additional space might have allowed other authors to delve into instances where their case studies and analysis seemed to be in tension with each other. For instance, Campbell's argument that strong leadership is the "critical variable in the maintenance of peace" (p. 151) sits somewhat awkwardly with Lutmar and Terris' more nuanced picture of the effects of leadership change on the resolution of civil conflict. And these discussions of leadership could be brought into useful dialogue with Talib's findings from the Philippines where both the Supreme Court and Congress have spoiled government efforts to pursue peace.

More space for forward-looking theoretical discussion might have also allowed the contributors to reflect further on the specific contexts to which they have applied the inherency model. I think such reflection is particularly important because a lack of attention to context is a criticism also levelled at the theories the inherency model tries to leave behind: the contingency model of conflict and the liberal peace. For example, following an analysis of the intervention in Solomon Islands against the tenets of the liberal peace, Greener suggests that the international community might be able to confront issues that national governments refuse to tackle. Thus an alternative to conventional state-building could be an intervention that is "stronger" but limited to a specific priority area. Greener uses the Solomon Islands government's suppression of the Solomon Islands Truth and Reconciliation Commission (SITRC) report as evidence that both Solomon Islanders and the state-building mission lacked the desire to deal with important underlying issues. There is some truth in that, but the story of the SITRC is more complex than its suppression by political elites in government. Several PhD projects, including mine, have demonstrated that the SITRC was far more international template than indigenous institution. It sidelined indigenous understandings of conflict and mechanisms for achieving reconciliation, which do in fact tackle underlying issues in the terms individuals on the ground define them: a vital context for peacebuilding.

If the threat of conflict is always present, then the inherency theory does indeed require scholars to embrace the idea that underlying issues transcend interventions or "transitions," as Greener's analysis highlights. Yet not even the case study chapters delve deeply into the root and proximal causes of the conflicts that precipitated the peace processes in the first place. Not including those causes runs the risk of excluding from the analysis the terms in which protagonists on the ground understood their situation prior to conflict breaking out. The analysis then risks excluding how the original drivers of violence transform or interact with the new opportunities for conflict that emerge during and after a peace process, such as those opportunities that might emerge in Solomon Islands if details of past violence became widely known but untethered from the contexts that can be used to address them.

Ultimately, while I thought the volume could have done more to tease out the implications for peacebuilding, I found its understanding of conflict a useful tool to think with, and the data certainly supported the authors' advocacy for it.

David Oakeshott
PhD Candidate, Department of Pacific Affairs
Australian National University
Australia
david.oakeshott@anu.edu.au