Top-Down Peacemaking: States, Societies and Peacemaking Between Regional Rivals

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How do regional rivalries stabilize? While bitter rivalries can simmer for decades, punctuated by occasional wars, they sometimes terminate in peace treaties. My research investigates how these peace settlements come about and why some are stable and long-lasting, while others are fragile and/or short-lived. In particular, I examine whether peace is brought about and maintained by societal pressure on the state, or whether the state is the engine of peacemaking. I investigate these questions with an analysis of the universe of twentieth century peace agreements concluded between regional rivals that lasted for at least ten years.

Two key theoretical possibilities are suggested by the international relations literature. A bottom-up approach, derived from liberal and constructivist theories, suggests that peacemaking can be achieved by changing societal attitudes or by altering domestic institutions to allow for societal input into policy. In other words, by creating common interests through economic exchange or common identities through participation in regional security institutions, or by democratizing the states in question, the conditions can be created for society to compel peacemaking. Alternatively, a top-down approach, informed by realist and statist theories, views peacemaking as the product of states pursuing their own interests, both domestically and internationally. External pressures, such the existence of more pressing threats than the traditional rival or the demands of a more powerful state, can compel states to make peace, as can the need to institutionalize a new regime or shore up a more established leadership's precarious power position when facing an internal political or economic crisis.

My findings, published in Norrin M. Ripsman, *Peacemaking from Above, Peace from Below: Ending Conflict Between Regional Rivals* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2016), are that each of these approaches explain only one phase of the peacemaking process. The transition to peace is a top-down process led by states for statist reasons, whereas stabilizing peace depends on engaging society in the post-agreement period with mechanisms inspired by bottom-up approaches. In every single twentieth-century case of successful peacemaking between regional rivals, peace was negotiated by states, often over the vociferous objections of the public and key societal groups. In contrast, at the time of the treaties there was no evidence of public pressure for peace, any common regional identities that overwhelmed bilateral hostility, nor – except in the case of the Sino-Japanese treaty, where it played only a minimal role – demands for peace from the business communities of either state. Thus the movement toward peace was top-down, with society playing no role whatsoever.

After a treaty is signed, however, societal buy-in determines whether a treaty becomes stable or not. Thus, it becomes critical to socialize the rival populations at this stage by engaging in economic and cultural exchange, embedding them in cooperative regional institutions, and linking the treaty to the broader democratic peace by democratizing the states in question. In this regard, states like France and Germany, which socialized the peace settlement in this manner, enjoyed a stable peace settlement that not only has been respected and unchallenged, but has largely been devoid of attempt at revision or high level bilateral crises. Peace settlements that were not socialized

in this manner have been less than stable. Some, like the Israeli-Egyptian or Israeli-Jordanian treaties have endured for statist reasons, but while the basic security settlements have held and the treaties were not repudiated by either party, they lacked underlying stability as demonstrated by frequent bilateral crises and attempts by one or both parties to revise the treaty. Finally, settlements like the Russo-Turkish treaty that were not socialized with mechanisms inspired by bottom-up theories simply unraveled when state interests changed. Societal, therefore, become critical for turning a surface-level statist peace into one that can enduring changes of government and state interests.

The lesson is that third party states and international institutions interested in promoting regional peacemaking need to tailor their strategies to the appropriate stage of the peacemaking process. Before a treaty is signed, strategies need to target the rival state's leaderships, rather than society. At this stage, economic and other incentives that will benefit the state itself or its leadership could help encourage negotiations, as could pressure in the form of threats or economic sanctions that might exacerbate the leadership's domestic difficulties. Furthermore, it would help if third parties could help prevent an escalation of conflict during the negotiation process, at that can undermine peacemaking efforts. Conversely, once a peace treaty is signed, the target societies are the appropriate focus of third party efforts. In particular, efforts to provide the rival societies an economic peace dividend, as well as measures that encourage bilateral contact are likely to be useful strategies to help cement the peace. At the same time, outside actors can assist in monitoring the treaty and reassuring both states and societies that peace will hold.

What are the implications of these findings for naval strategy? To begin with, naval forces are not the principal tools through which peace can be promoted or maintained. Nonetheless, to the extent that naval forces can be used to support the third-party strategies mentioned above, they can play a supporting role. That means, in the first instance, to help monitor cease-fires and keep both sides' militaries apart to create space for peacemaking. In addition, if power projection is needed in support of threats and great power pressure on the regional rivals, or if a blockade can enforce economic sanctions, naval power can be useful in the first stage. In the post-agreement stage, outside naval forces can participate in monitoring the treaty to help reassure both parties. Therefore, while naval strategy is not central to peacemaking, it can be used in a limited fashion to support the mission.