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Anmälan av Terrence Lyons

One of the great challenges of post-conflict peacebuilding is to encourage ex-combatants to demobilize, reintegrate, and engage constructively in civilian politics. Johanna Söderström's doctoral dissertation, *Politics of Affection: Ex-Combatants, Political Engagement and Reintegration Programs in Liberia*, provides an empirically rich and penetrating investigation of these essential issues. The study builds upon the literature on demobilization and reintegration and the transformation of militias into political parties but shifts the focus from the leadership and the larger organization to the individual ex-combatant. "Political reintegration", she argues, "is a process whereby political channels are increasingly seen as viable for handling societal problems for the individual ex-combatant" (p 59).

Processes of disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration (DDR) have been studied extensively as mechanisms to reduce the likelihood of a return to war. DDR, however, may also be an "important political space where political orientations and identities can be molded, and networks may be created" (p 21). In order to understand the relationships between reintegration and politics, DDR should be disaggregated so that the micro-processes of social, economic, and political reintegration can be analyzed separately and without presumptions that each necessarily reinforces the others. Finally, DDR offers

particularly important processes for shaping post-conflict state-society relationships. Söderström argues, "In the context of a weak state, DDR can provide an unusual opportunity for state-citizen interaction, and the potential impact is larger in this situation as compared to the context of big government where individuals encounter many and varying policies and programs" (p 43).

Söderström investigates two mechanisms that link reintegration programs with ex-combatants' political engagement. The first is an access mechanism, whereby providing ex-combatants with more socio-economic resources will have a positive impact on an individual's political engagement. Secondly, political engagement is encouraged through an interpretative mechanism and procedural effects as the methods employed in reintegration programs shape ex-combatants' norms and expectations. She is careful not to suggest that all political engagement will support democracy but that ex-combatants may be engaged politically through neo-patrimonial or authoritarian processes and structures. One of this study's central puzzles is to understand and evaluate ex-combatants' hesitations concerning active political participation and open public debate. Her nuanced case study teases out some of the tensions between the ideals of free speech and the right to dissent, on the one hand, and the imperatives of political order and consensus in a war-torn society such as Liberia on the other.

In order to collect data on ex-combatant attitudes in Liberia, Söderström used focus groups. This is a less common methodology than surveys or individual interviews but Söderström makes her case for the advantages of focus groups and is explicit about their limitations as well. Her research focused on five different Liberian reintegration programs, as

well as cases of ex-combatants who did not participate in a program, and provides a richly detailed account of how ex-combatants experienced the distinct processes. She identifies variation in political ideas and relationships and traces them back to the different program experiences and the mix of resource and procedural effects. She concludes that political attitudes of ex-combatants reflect a "politics of affection" whereby politics is driven less by issues of representation, accountability, and liberal democratic ideals but by the logic of emotion.

Söderström's interests emphasize political processes that begin during the post-conflict reintegration phase. There may be, however, more continuity between the kinds of rebel governance during the civil war and post-conflict political attitudes than this study suggests (see Mampilly, 2011). The language of "re-integration" implies that the ex-combatants are moving from an un-integrated status when in fact many were already integrated into powerful militarized networks that are explicitly political. The challenge of moving individuals from active members of a warring party into citizens participating in peacetime politics may require transformation of prior attitudes. Individuals integrated into insurgent groups must be integrated into alternative political institutions and networks. The political attitudes of ex-combatants likely will remain shaped by wartime experiences regardless of the efficacy and participatory nature of specific re-integration programs.

Political re-integration, therefore, may have more in common with the politics of insurgency than to democratic citizenship. By focusing on the literature on democracy and citizenship, Söderström looks for evidence of political involvement, tolerance of dissent, and inclusion. If, however, one sought to understand attitudes of ex-combatants relative to their experiences during the conflict, one might investigate attitudes toward insecurity, fear, and the use of violence. What Söderström characterizes as the "politics of

affection" may work on a neo-patrimonial logic where political integration is accomplished through establishing clientelistic relationships. Hydén's original concept of the "economy of affection" (1980) also draws attention to the social and political logic of such informal networks.

There has been a micro-political turn in recent scholarship on civil wars and a questioning of state-centric models (see for example Kalyvas, 2008; Humphreys & Weinstein, 2008). Some have relied upon large-N statistical studies of patterns of intra-state war but Söderström and others demonstrate that empirical research is possible and often results in conceptually rich findings. Söderström's work adds to this growing literature by disaggregating the category of "ex-combatant" and to focus on individual political attitudes rather than strategic decisions by elites.

The political attitudes of ex-combatants remain central to politics in Liberia. The shadow of the civil war clearly shaped the 2011 electoral campaign, the second since the conflict ended. Incumbent president Ellen Johnson Sirleaf was both one of the winners of the Noble Peace Prize (awarded just four days before the vote) and a candidate that the Liberian Truth and Reconciliation Commission placed on the list of those who should be barred from holding public office due to their association with former warring factions. Prince Johnson, one of the most notorious factional leaders of the early phase of the war, won a sizeable number of votes. Söderström's original research and nuanced argument helps us understand the fundamental processes of re-integration behind post-conflict politics in Liberia.

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Rejoinder by Johanna Söderström

Just as during my defense, Professor Lyons' comments and questions invite a further probing and a continued discussion of some of the issues that are raised by my thesis, *Politics of Affection: Ex-Combatants, Political Engagement and Reintegration Programs in Liberia*. As I enjoyed the conversation then, I cannot help but continue it here as well. In my reply, I would like to focus on the issue of political reintegration, and in particular how we should understand the 're' prefix. I agree with Professor Lyons when he notes that there may indeed be a large degree of continuity between pre-war and war politics on the one hand, and post-war politics on the other. I do not deny that the war experience is likely to shape post-war politics among former combatants in important ways, although here our research community is yet to come to a consensus if this is of a positive or negative nature (see among others, Teigen 2006; Blattman 2009; Greenstein 1978; Jennings & Markus 1977). However, the purpose of my thesis was not to locate all *explanantia* for the politics of ex-combatants. Rather, the purpose was to explore whether the post-war experience, in this case reintegration programs,

have any role in shaping their political voice and the nature of that voice.

That said, I would like to add that the use of the prefix 're' in the literature dealing with political reintegration of ex-combatants is truly problematic as Professor Lyons indicates, which has been noted by others as well (see e.g. Kingma 2002: 183; Mitton 2009: 175; Maclay & Özerdem 2010: 345; Bøås & Bjørkhaug 2010). Professor Lyons notes that ex-combatants may have been "already integrated into powerful militarized networks that are explicitly political," and thus cannot be considered as 'un-integrated,' and this is one way in which the term reintegration becomes problematic. In addition, I have argued that the term suggests a return to pre-war levels or forms of politics, which for some ex-combatants is not even possible as they are too young to have participated in politics prior to the war. Because society itself has changed over the course of the conflict it may also be impossible to return to pre-war politics for the entire population. And even if this is possible, returning to pre-war types of politics may not be desirable, as it may often have been quite exclusionary (and undemocratic) and in fact fed the conflict itself. Simply put, the term *reintegration* is a misnomer.

Despite this, we continue to use the term. Why is this? I suggest that this may reflect the democratic ideals that often are implicit in the discussion of political reintegration. This is why I opted to investigate the ex-combatants' engagement in politics, not only in terms of the extent of their involvement, but also the nature of this involvement, and in particular scrutinize the extent to which they embrace democratic ideals such as equality and tolerance. I believe this offers a better point of comparison, and certainly a more explicit point of comparison than what the original term (political) *reintegration* offers us. What is clear is that in order to make sense of ex-combatants' political involvement, we also need to scrutinize the nature of that involvement, and not only its extent. This can be

achieved through contrasting their values and attitudes with democratic ideals, but certainly we can also contrast it with other ideals, such as authoritarian, romantic or militarized ideals. Understanding the transformation of politics, in particular related to former rebels, in post-war settings is crucial for facilitating both peacebuilding and democratization processes. Here, Professor Lyons and myself share an interest which I hope we will have the opportunity to continue to discuss in the coming years.

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Engvall, Johan, 2011. *The State as Investment Market: An Analytical Framework for Interpreting Politics and Bureaucracy in Kyrgyzstan*.

Anmälan av Henry E. Hale

How should we understand the state? This question has been widely addressed for Western countries, but we know much less about what it is that we usually call "the state" once we travel east or south. Johan Engvall has written and defended an important dissertation addressing this question with respect to Kyrgyzstan, arguing that here and in similar countries, we can usefully understand the state as a kind of "investment market". This original proposition is sure to advance not only our understanding of post-communist transition, but to spark debate among theorists on the nature of the state and how best to understand the relationship between formal and informal authority, between states and markets, and between corruption and transitions from authoritarian to democratic rule.

Engvall begins by noting that standard treatments of the state found in the theoretical literature do not fit well with reality in Kyrgyzstan, a small remote country bordering China in post-Soviet Central Asia. It cannot be called a modern state, as recruitment into state offices is clearly not carried out according to merit. It sits uneasily with standard descriptions of the Soviet state since Kyrgyzstan's state is not all-encompassing. Examination of African states suggests the possibility of a "shadow" state dominated by clan and tribe, but Engvall shows that Kyrgyzstan's state involved far more than this.