

However, the reviewer does have a few minor criticisms. First, periodically Russett drops the names of authors and their work (eg, Lowi's work on the presidency) but does not adequately integrate them into his argument. (p. 30) Second, and by extension, some of the citations embedded in the text are tangential. Does it help us to know, for example, that Tocqueville was "first published in 1835." Third, the book also lacks historical depth; most of the chapters deal with events and processes that occurred only during the past quarter century and hence its connection to deeper causes of events may be overlooked. In particular, he focuses too much on the Carter and Reagan presidencies and the age of nuclear weapons, and does not consider other time periods. A longer time frame would have better placed the problems in a more comprehensive context, and helped us to identify the genesis of these actions and to understand the success or failure, if any, of solutions implemented. Fourth, the book is out of date. The Soviet Union no longer exists and the remaining republics are considerably different kinds of threats than they used to be. Unfortunately, at the end, in keeping with the hypotheses-generating nature of his book, we are no more certain which constituencies he believes are more important causes or factors affecting presidential national security policy making than when we started the book.

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Child, Jack. *The Central American Peace Process, 1983-1991*. Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner, 1992.

This is an era of peace processes but there can have been few of these often comforting developments as complicated as the recent one in Central America. The levels of this complexity were at times mind-boggling as the United Nations discovered as it became increasingly involved in the process from the early 1980s on.

In the first place, there were five regional states deeply involved in three separate conflicts going on concurrently. Moreover, the conflicts were internal, at least formally, and three major guerrilla movements, themselves made up of disparate groups brought together for often merely tactical reasons, were pitted against their respective national governments and armed forces.

As if such regional and internal considerations were not complicated enough, the conflicts were perceived by the regional superpower as part of the East-West struggle for preeminence on the world stage. This meant that Soviet and Cuban roles were both partial cause and partial product of a massive United States involvement in the wars in order to "roll back" communism in the Americas, to use the language of the Reagan presidency.

Outside intervention in the region was, however, hardly restricted to the superpowers and Cuba. Latin American countries close by, whose conservative governments were fearful that the contagion of war would spread, were soon active in trying to bring about the peace. Canada, Spain, and West Germany, for similar if not completely shared reasons, were anxious to convince the United States to adopt a less stridently anti-reformist policy and to concentrate its attention on what those countries saw as more crucial and less divisive areas of concern to the NATO alliance.

To complicate matters even further, the downward spiral in the evolution of Latin American support for the inter-American system in the 1970s and 1980s encouraged that region as a whole to search for Latin American solutions to what was seen as a Latin American problem. The newly established democracies of Argentina, Peru, Brazil and Uruguay were particularly active in this regard.

Finally, within Central America itself, the conflicts spilled across borders in a tradition of meddling in one another's affairs going back to independence from Spain and the ill-starred attempts at a Central American federated state in the 1820s and 1830s. Sandinista Nicaragua sent support (probably infinitely less than it was accused of doing by Washington) to the FMLN rebels in El Salvador, and Honduras lodged and supported Contra rebels in their raids across the border into Nicaragua. In the early years of the contra war, even highly-respected Costa Rica turned a blind eye to Contra activities on its border with Nicaragua, and Guatemala itself was not at times averse to helping out the Salvadorean government cause against the FMLN.

Into this quagmire stepped a number of well-intentioned parties in the early 1980s. First Mexico and France sought to start a peace process. The Contadora initiatives, mounted by neighboring Mexico, Panama, Colombia and Venezuela and supported to varying degrees by the diplomatic efforts of Canada, Spain and West Germany, followed and carried the process much further. Finally, the United Nations, and to some extent the Organization of American States (OAS), became very much involved, and the Central American states, taking advantage of the disarray in US policy following the Iran-Contra scandals, took matters into their own hands and made enormous progress towards the resolution of at least two of the three conflicts still raging.

Trying to make sense out of all this, much less doing an analysis of it, is obviously neither easy nor a project of *courte durée*. Yet Jack Child has stepped into the breach and attempted to address not one or some of the complexities mentioned, but rather (at least to some extent) all of them. And he has done so with a view to drawing lessons from the experience for the international community as a whole, as well as for Latin America, the United States, the UN, the OAS, Canada, and the region. More striking still, he has succeeded in all this.

Basing himself on a solid analysis of the setting and instruments of the peace process, as well as refusing to take up the challenge of an excessively detailed look at the wars themselves (something which would have made this short and highly

readable book extremely long and no doubt virtually indigestible), he goes on to a chronological analysis of the Contadora and Esquipulas process, and finally the implementation of the peace plan, particularly in Nicaragua but to some extent in the region as well.

Throughout the emphasis is on the peace process, the role of outside actors, particularly the Canadians (who are included among the “helpful fixers” to whom the book is dedicated), the OAS, and the vital assistance of the United Nations. Sections on the UN observer mission in Central America (ONUCA) and the demobilization of the Contras, are especially well done and needed. Comparisons are made between the UN and OAS roles which are very instructive, and a sound analysis of the nature and effects of United States actions makes illuminating reading.

It is the chapter on assessment and implications, however, which literally crowns this work by an author already well-known for his excellent books on security matters in Latin America. In it he discusses the importance and impact of the peace process at a series of levels: Central America, Latin America, the United States, Canada, the United Nations, and the OAS. He then goes on to address the importance of the process for conflict resolution, especially peacekeeping, “zones of peace,” and confidence-building measures, all rather new or at least misunderstood in Central and Latin America.

While one could quibble on matters such as a lack of maps (only one is provided and it is of only marginal usefulness), the reality is that this is the best work by far on the Central American peace process and the only one which puts it squarely into the current discussion of the peaceful resolution of disputes in regional and international contexts. It is essential reading for anyone interested in either and a highly pleasurable and stimulating read for those interested in both.

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Chen, Min. *The Strategic Triangle and Regional Conflicts: Lessons from the Indochina Wars*. Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner, 1992.

A perusal of the book exhibits at the meeting of the American Political Science Association in Chicago in 1992 confirmed to this writer that the gush of titles on Vietnam continues unabated eighteen years after the fall of Saigon. This war, evidently, cannot finish providing all the lessons it has to teach. In the midst of this flow is Min Chen’s *Strategic Triangle and Regional Conflicts*, which contains flickers of real insight.

The insights offered by this book lie principally in the perspective or vantage point from which the war is considered. As we now move beyond the simple and