

Joanne McEvoy and Brendan O'Leary (eds.) *Power Sharing in Deeply Divided Places*  
Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2013, 448pp. £55.50 (hbk).

Power-sharing is a key component of many peace settlements in divided societies. Scholarship on power-sharing is heavily influenced by Arend Lijphart's pioneering work on consociational theory. Advocates of consociational power-sharing argue that it is a pragmatic means of dealing with competing ethnic identities which are durable, (as opposed to primordial), rather than malleable – a proposition not without its critics.

Joanne McEvoy and Brendan O'Leary's collection seeks to highlight the merits of power-sharing, and how it can be used to foster a spirit of accommodation in zones of conflict. The volume consists of fourteen chapters that analyse variants of power-sharing systems, past and present, and critically engages with the role of electoral and judicial systems in underpinning these arrangements. The collection is book-ended by lengthy introductory and concluding chapters by O'Leary.

The book's subject matter is a timely one, given the proliferation of contemporary ethno-religious conflicts from Africa to the Middle-East, and beyond. The book is aimed at policy makers and scholars alike. O'Leary's introduction argues that the book contains ideas that both governments and guerrillas 'would do well to ponder as alternatives to the costs of repression and revolution' (p. 51). The book will be of greatest interest to political scientists, however.

The book is structured in three parts. Part one examines the role of electoral systems in the promotion or inhibition of interethnic accommodation. Chapters in this section comprise an analysis of electoral rules for ethnic accommodation (Grofman), a well-researched critique (contra Horowitz) of the application of centripetalist electoral systems (the Alternative Vote) in deeply divided places (McCulloch), and a proposal for the creation of a countrywide electoral district to ameliorate the historic ethno-linguistic divisions that have often led to political deadlock in Belgium in an excellent contribution by Deschouwer and Van Parijs.

The book's second part concerns 'historical and conceptual forays into power-sharing'. The section is impressive both in terms of the geographical range of the case studies covered (from Israel-Palestine to South Africa), and its use of historical as well as contemporary examples. A recurring motif in this section is the contribution that political institutions can make to promoting accommodation and preventing conflict.

The book's final section explores 'contemporary power-sharing questions'. The chapters deal with the legacy of violent conflict, and processes of conflict resolution. There is a strong emphasis, throughout, on institutions and procedures, such as McEvoy's chapter which considers how veto powers in power-sharing arrangements can 'respond to the political challenges in deeply divided places' (p. 235).

This section includes innovative work on governing polarised cities both in comparative perspective (Bollens) and through a detailed single case study of Kirkuk in Northern Iraq (Anderson). Unsurprisingly, Northern Ireland also features prominently here. Recent failures by that region's politicians to reach agreement on flags, parades, and dealing with the past, suggest that Ed Cairns's (Chapter 11) hoped-for emergence of 'a shared identity between Catholics and Protestants' (p. 290) is unlikely in the short-to-medium term future, if at all. This reality tends to reinforce the notion, advanced by consociationalists, that identity is more durable than malleable.

The book is rounded off with an essay entitled 'Power Sharing: An Advocate's Conclusion' by O'Leary. Here, he discusses power-sharing in action with reference to the European Union (EU). The EU's current problems, he argues, remind us that 'power sharing is neither a panacea nor easy' (p. 395). The application of power-sharing has obvious limits, particularly if it is imposed where electoral outcomes are disputed, for example in Zimbabwe (pp. 402-03).

Concluding, O'Leary argues for further research on power-sharing. In the course of this research, 'social scientists [will] need to work with (or indeed as) historians to provide detailed knowledge of why some cases of power sharing have proven successful while others have failed' (p. 411). Whilst few would question the benefits of historically-informed research, a note of caution might be sounded here. Political arrangements based on consociational principles may offer successful institutional bases for the regulation of conflict. However, there is a risk that a fixation on power-sharing could lead to the presumption that the absence of or reluctance to impose such a system is a factor in *explaining* why conflict emerges or persists when it may not necessarily be so.

Stylistically, the book sometimes suffers from O'Leary's penchant for comic asides, (with mixed results), that occasionally seem out of place. However, this collection makes a persuasive case for power-sharing arrangements as a tool in conflict regulation, and provides pertinent suggestions for how such arrangements can be improved. Despite the diversity of the chapters, to which a review of this length cannot do justice, the book displays a remarkable intellectual coherence. It is a timely and valuable addition to the literature on a subject that will feature prominently in future debates concerning the resolution of conflict in deeply divided places throughout the world.

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