

■ Carter, April, 2005. *Direct Action and Democracy Today*. Cambridge: Polity. xi + 298 pp. ISBN 0745629369.

Direct action, also called nonviolent action, is increasingly used around the world, and, therefore, its relation to political systems and theories is increasingly important. Over 30 years ago, April Carter wrote a key work on this topic. Her new book is not an update but rather a powerful new treatment of the same issues. The first part of the book deals with the nature of direct action and its connections with social movements and liberal democracy, with a focus on neoliberal globalization and opposition to it. The highlights of this treatment include confident explanations and dissections of key conceptual issues, numerous examples of direct action from around the world and their relevance to wider debates, and systematic coverage of the views of key theorists. The second part is more theoretical, though still well supported by examples. Carter looks in turn at theories of liberal democracy, participatory democracy and socialism, extracting themes relevant to direct action, especially justifications for it. Global dimensions remain a central theme. The analysis is wide-ranging and perceptive throughout: this book is the place to turn if you want a convenient summary of theoretical debates on deliberative democracy, globalization, liberalism and a host of related topics. Carter is obviously supportive of direct action, but her treatment is based on logic and evidence rather than advocacy. Her astute assessments strongly suggest that theorists have not been paying enough attention to the challenge posed by direct action, a challenge to both systems of power and the ideas that legitimate them. Her book is the definitive contribution to remedy this theoretical neglect.

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■ Collier, Paul & Nicholas Sambanis, 2005. *Understanding Civil War: Evidence and Analysis*. Vol. 1: *Africa*. Washington, DC: World Bank. 350 pp. ISBN 0821360477.

■ Collier, Paul & Nicholas Sambanis, 2005. *Understanding Civil War: Evidence and Analysis*. Vol. 2: *Europe, Central Asia, and Other Regions*. Washington, DC: World Bank. 350 pp. ISBN 0821360493.

This two-volume project sets out to evaluate and theoretically augment the Collier & Hoeffler (CH) model of civil war. The CH model argues that opportunity to rebel is a major impetus for the outbreak of war, and it is tested using a set of covariates that measure both grievance and opportunity. These volumes use case studies to examine how well the CH model predicts the outbreak and absence of civil war in specific cases. Through these rich historical accounts, Collier and Sambanis illustrate the fundamental strengths of the CH model but also highlight its weaknesses – principally, the myriad of possible causal links between the CH covariates and the outbreak of civil war. The success of the CH model varies across cases, but it is clearly a powerful predictor of the patterns of civil war we observe. All of the studies suggest ways in which the model could be improved. In particular, close analysis of individual cases reveals serious problems with country-level measurement specification of issues such as ethnicity and inequality. Moreover, these cases illustrate the important differences between starting an insurgency and engaging in civil war, and point out that the roles of grievance and opportunity should differ at these different stages of conflict. Another striking feature of these case studies is the variation in different types of wars and how the CH covariates affect conflict processes differently, based on type. This may be where grievance critically intersects with opportunity to rebel, and considering the type of conflict is one way to explore the theoretical link between the CH covariates and war outbreak. In sum, this book is an excellent complement to the large-N statistical analyses that have dominated this field, providing rich insight into the nuances of particular cases within a sound theoretical framework.

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