

# Review of: "Reflections on Bordering, Micropolitics and Everyday Life in Peacebuilding Processes: Revisiting the Lingering Legacy of the 1949 Armistice Agreements"

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As this review is being written, “the bombs trundle out in their magnificent dumbness” in Gaza, as American poet Charles Bukowski would put it; and the specter of genocide covers its population.

In all armed conflicts, history and memory play decisive roles and still mark daily matters and narratives. To discuss the root causes of the Israel-Palestine conflict and its durability in the present scenario is as relevant as ever.

This article focuses on the legacy of the 1949 Armistice Agreements, which initially drew the borders of the state of Israel. These borders have been one of the centers of dispute and one of the conflict’s driving forces. Stephenson Jr and Zanotti make a valuable argument: ultimately, borders are not drawn by war and politics, but are socially constructed by the people who inhabit them and live them, through their experiences, stories, and narratives. There’s nothing natural about borders; they’re scribbles that powerful men draw on maps. Africa’s borders were drawn with a ruler and square at the Berlin Congress. The map of the Middle East was largely generated by the Sykes-Picot agreements. Millions of people have been affected by these political decisions, but they also have contributed to shape and transform them. To understand the complexities surrounding borders, their impact on people’s everyday lives, emotions, and identities is a significant research challenge that the authors underline.

Drawing from the so-called “local turn” in Peace Studies, they propose to shift the scale from the micropolitics of diplomacy to a micropolitics of peace that explores the effects of conflict and borders in everyday life. Both the theoretical and the methodological standpoints are meaningful and bold. The debate on the potential and limitations of micropolitics and peacebuilding is taken one step further through a multidisciplinary approach that links the “local turn” with contributions from quantum theory, black feminism, and postmodernism. But the article’s core sustains an epistemological stance, the value of autoethnography to provide valuable insights into armed conflict experiences, often overlooked in IR and Political Science analyses. Stephenson Jr and Zanotti center on the work of Löwenheim’s autoethnography to reveal “the relational and entangled reality of conflict” and develop the valid and significant hypothesis that top-down diplomatic solutions are unlikely to succeed unless “they also include practices that actively and persistently question war identities” and opportunities for the population groups to interact and understand “the needs, interests, and perspectives of other.”

The value and contribution of the article lies specially in the lens it uses to approach the conflict and borders from the perspective of micropolitics and ethnography. Nevertheless, most of the questions, criticisms, and research paths are

suggested, rather than fully explored. I believe that therein lies most of the potential for improvement in future research. Löwenheim's work is analyzed, but to integrate his voice, testimonies, anecdotes, and stories in the text would greatly enrich the research and the argument. Moreover, some questions could expand the analysis and research problems: How does agency relate to and impact on structure? If identities have been shaped by war, borders, and walls, how can they be transformed and integrated in peacebuilding processes? How does micropolitics connect to the macrolevel of conflict resolution in the Israel-Palestine armed conflict? How do macro political and military dynamics condition and hinder day-to-day micro-peace efforts? As Palestinian poet Marwan Makhoul underlines, "in order for me to write poetry that isn't political, I must listen to the birds and in order to hear the birds the warplanes must be silent."