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Judith Eve Lipton and Daniel P. Barash. *Strength Through Peace: How Demilitarization Led to Peace and Happiness in Costa Rica and What the Rest of the World Can Learn from a Tiny Tropical Nation*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2019. ISBN: 978-0-1999-2497-4 (Hbk). Pp. 261.

This is a timely book! It shows how a small country like Costa Rica, a hugely successful nation-state, has become one of the most prosperous and progressive countries on earth. It also has maintained and kept itself in a peaceful state since 1948, the year Costa Rica decided to disband its army and create a zero-military budget.

The decision gives it the distinction of being the largest independent country to become completely demilitarized. This has led, as the authors claim, to a nation that is thriving despite its small size and circumstances. Considering New Zealand, Iceland, and Bhutan as other success stories, this shows that demilitarized states are unique and thus to be admired as possible role models for other states.

I first went to Costa Rica in the late 1980s and was surprised at how such a small country could survive amidst a hotbed of countries facing civil strife such as Nicaragua, where the Sandinistas and Contras squared off, or Panama, where a long-standing dictator reigned until the USA decided to get rid of him. Honduras, El Salvador, and Colombia were also conflict spots in Central America, a region infamous for coups and the backyard meddling of the USA. It is interesting that Costa Rica has somehow managed to set up a model state, comparatively speaking, in a region more known for turmoil than stability.

It should be noted though, that there is some merit in the claim that Costa Rica is not a resource-rich country and that it is difficult to access compared to the other central American states. Consequently, it did not experience colonialism and its devastating after-effects. In contrast, social

democracy embedded itself in the early stages of nation-state building. This allowed for the development of a rural middle class which helped to stabilise politics and society. The authors emphasize on strong and good governance with leaders who were willing to make decisions which would benefit the nation.

Why and how did all of this happen and what are the political and social implications? ~~This is the question that the book seeks to answer.~~ Of course, it is a paradox when all its neighbours have endured long periods without peace and stability similarly to what seems to be common throughout Latin America.

The book is divided into ten chapters which develop the theme of strength through peace. It is not peace through strength, as the authors note on the first page. They also argue that the lessons learned from Costa Rica are transferable to other states if they are adopted. The book exemplifies that happiness is well developed in Costa Rica; its citizens live longer, healthier, and happier lives than their counterparts in neighbouring states.

Chapter 4 examines other examples of de-militarization such as Iceland and New Zealand, countries that have avoided conflicts and have become successful democracies. There is, of course, the argument that democracies don't go to war (at least not with each other). Perhaps de-militarization and democracy go together with prosperity and peace as the state decides to spend its resources on other public goods like education and health.

Overall, the book is theoretically well developed, with a wealth of information on this understudied topic, and represents an original and innovative piece of scholarship which adds to the literature. Moreover, it's well-written and lucid which should appeal to generalists seeking a better contextualization of Costa Rica and the region. It should be read by those wanting to understand not only the way in which de-militarization is a conscious choice and one that favours the brave but also the distinctive lessons and implications of that choice, such as peace, stability, and the promotion of non-violent solutions to problems and conflict. Given the contemporary way in which states in Central America tend to have evolved into institutional messes, it is also a timely reminder to focus on the diversity and differences which permeate them and the region.

Lastly the authors conclude with a note of caution on the "fragility of good things." We are reminded that while good luck might not necessarily be imported everywhere, good decisions might be the key to change things.

Perhaps the best decision noted in the book was the one to deliberately demilitarize Costa Rica which has led to strength through peace. The history of Latin American countries who have chosen the alternative has been difficult and less happy. Costa Rica is a place to be admired and envied by the region. Any spillover effects should be welcomed and embraced.

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Steven E. Lobell, and Norrin M. Ripsman, eds. *The Political Economy of Regional Peacemaking*. Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 2016. ISBN 978-0-472-05307-8 (Hbk), ISBN 978-0-472-05307-0 (Pbk). Pp. 260.

The book addresses peacebuilding through economic incentives. The contributions result from a workshop that was held at Concordia University in Montreal in 2012. The book attempts to address five leading questions:

1. How should states and international institutions employ incentives and sanctions to encourage regional peacemaking?
2. Who should be targeted as the benefactors of incentives and who should bear the consequences of sanctions?
3. When should economic instruments be used to promote peace?
4. What limits and risks do economic policy instruments carry with them?
5. How can economic statecraft be used to move from a bilateral agreement to regional peace?

The Foreword by Yair Hirschfeld frames the questions with reference to the Israeli-Palestinian and Israeli-Arab peace processes already showing the complexity of using economic rewards and sanctions for peacebuilding.