



Producing Spoilers: Peacemaking and the Production of Enmity in a Secular Age

Joyce Dalsheim

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Supporters of Hamas and radical religious Israeli settlers seem to serve one purpose in the international peace process: to provide an excuse for its failure. High-level diplomatic negotiators and grassroots peace activists alike blame religious extremists for acting as "spoilers" of rational negotiation, and have often attempted to neutralize, co-opt, or marginalize them. In *Producing Spoilers*, Joyce Dalsheim explores the problem of stalled peacemaking by viewing spoilers not as the cause, but as a symptom of systemic malfunctions within the concept of the nation-state itself, and the secular constructs of historicism that support it. She argues that spoilers are generated as internal enemies in the course of conflict and used to explain why processes of peace and reconciliation fail. In other words, peacemaking efforts can work to produce enmity.

Focusing on the case of Israel and Palestine, Dalsheim shows how processes of conflict resolution, diplomacy, dialogue, education, and social theorizing about liberation, peace, and social justice actually participate in constructing enemies, thus limiting the options for peaceful outcomes. Dalsheim examines the work of politicians and diplomats as well as scholars and grass-roots level peacemakers, drawing on her research and her own experience as an activist for peace. She identifies a number of common techniques and assumptions that help to produce spoilers, among them the constraints of the narrative form and how storytelling is employed in conflict resolution, and the idea of anachronism, which prevents theorists and activists from seeing creative possibilities for peaceful coexistence. Dalsheim also looks at the limits of territorial solutions and the consequences of nationalism—the context in which spoilers of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict are produced. She contrasts that nationalism with current theorizing on flexible citizenship and diasporic identity. The book culminates by moving beyond national enmity and outside conventional peacemaking to clear a space in which to think about alternative forms of negotiation, exchange, community, and coexistence.

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