At War’s End

All fourteen major peacebuilding missions launched between 1989 and 1999 shared a common strategy for consolidating peace after internal conflicts: immediate democratization and marketization. This volume argues that transforming war-shattered states into market democracies is a basically sound idea, but that pushing the process too quickly can have damaging and destabilizing effects. A more sensible approach would first establish a system of domestic institutions capable of managing the disruptive effects of democratization and marketization, and only then phase in political and economic reforms as conditions warrant. Avoiding the problems that marred many peacebuilding missions in the 1990s will require longer-lasting, better-planned, and ultimately more intrusive forms of intervention in the domestic affairs of war-torn states.

Roland Paris is Assistant Professor of Political Science and International Affairs at the University of Colorado at Boulder. He is an award-winning scholar and teacher, and a regular commentator on international affairs in national and local media.
At War’s End

Building Peace After Civil Conflict

ROLAND PARIS
University of Colorado, Boulder
For Katie
Il est plus facile de faire la guerre que de faire la paix.
– Georges Clemenceau, 1918
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Preface

This book examines every major peacebuilding mission launched between 1989 and 1999. There were fourteen in total; all were deployed to countries in which a civil war had just ended. Despite many differences, these missions shared a common strategy for consolidating peace after internal conflicts: immediate democratization and marketization. What can we learn from the peacebuilding record about the effectiveness of this strategy as a means of preventing the recurrence of fighting in postconflict situations? This volume argues that the idea of transforming war-shattered states into stable market democracies is basically sound, but that pushing this process too quickly can have damaging and destabilizing effects. Market democracy is not the miracle cure for internal conflict. On the contrary, the process of political and economic liberalization is inherently tumultuous: It can exacerbate social tensions and undermine the prospects for stable peace in the fragile conditions that typically exist in countries just emerging from civil war.

A more sensible approach to postconflict peacebuilding would seek, first, to establish a system of domestic institutions that are capable of managing the destabilizing effects of democratization and marketization within peaceful bounds and, second, to phase in political and economic reforms slowly over time, as conditions warrant. To do this effectively, international peacebuilders will have to abandon the notion that war-shattered states can be hurriedly rehabilitated. One set of elections, without creating stable political and economic institutions, does not produce durable peace in most cases. Avoiding the problems that marred many peacebuilding operations in the 1990s will require longer-lasting and ultimately more intrusive forms of intervention in the domestic affairs of these states, because more gradual and controlled approaches to postconflict liberalization are more likely to achieve the central goal of peacebuilding: the establishment of a peace that endures long after the departure of the peacebuilders themselves.

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¹ The source of the quotation is Alexandre Ribot, Journal d’Alexandre Ribot et Correspondences