

At War's End

Building Peace After Civil Conflict

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Introduction

In the early 1990s, a new threat to global security and human welfare caught the attention of political analysts and policymakers around the world, a threat that few observers had anticipated: pervasive and pernicious internal violence. They were right to be concerned. Civil wars (which take place primarily within the borders of a single state and among belligerents who normally reside in that state) accounted for 94 percent of all armed conflicts fought in the 1990s.¹ From Africa to Central Asia, internecine violence and collapsing states became an unfortunate but familiar feature of the post-Cold War political landscape.²

The nature of the threat posed by these conflicts was both humanitarian and strategic. From a humanitarian standpoint, this violence inflicted appalling losses on civilian noncombatants. At the beginning of the twentieth century, approximately 90 percent of war victims were soldiers; during the 1990s, by contrast, an estimated 90 percent of those killed in armed conflicts were civilians.³ Attacks and atrocities against noncombatants became widely employed as deliberate strategies of warfare – including such tactics as systematic rape, mass executions, ethnic cleansing, and even genocide – prompting some commentators to lament the revival of “premodern” forms of fighting that dispensed with customary constraints on the waging of war.⁴ Internal conflicts were also the principal source of mass

¹ Wallenstein and Sollenberg 2001, p. 632. From 1989 to 2000 (inclusive), there were 111 armed conflicts in the world, of which 104 were intrastate conflicts.

² For vivid though somewhat apocalyptic description of these conflict zones, see Kaplan 1996.

³ UNDP 2002, p. 85; and Collier et al. 2003, p. 17. Also striking is the fact that the ratio of civilian-to-military deaths nearly tripled from the 1980s to the 1990s alone (Kaldor 1999, p. 9).

⁴ For example, Snow 1996; and Ignatieff 1997.

refugee movements in the 1990s, which often gave rise to further humanitarian emergencies.⁵

In addition, chronic civil unrest represented a threat to regional, and even global, stability. Several internal conflicts spilled over international borders and undermined the security of adjacent states – as the Rwandan conflict did when it spread to neighboring Zaire in the mid-1990s, causing the collapse of the Zaire government and triggering a regional war that continued for the rest of the decade. Even when fighting remained geographically contained, the flight of refugees from war-torn states endangered the political stability of nearby countries – as in the case of Macedonia, which became the reluctant host to millions of refugees from Kosovo in 1999. Terrorist and criminal networks, operating with relative impunity in states riven by civil war, also posed security threats to other countries.⁶ The September 2001 attacks on New York and Washington, D.C., reportedly perpetrated by a terrorist group based in war-ravaged Afghanistan, dramatically illustrated the danger of allowing civil conflicts to fester. As British Foreign Secretary Jack Straw observed in light of these attacks, “When we allow governments to fail, warlords, drug barons, or terrorists fill the vacuum. . . . Terrorists are strongest where states are weakest.”⁷

In response to these challenges, the international community experimented with a number of new techniques for managing the problem of civil unrest and state failure. This task fell largely to the United Nations (UN) and several other leading governmental and nongovernmental organizations, which launched a succession of major operations in countries plagued by internal violence. A few of these missions sought to deliver humanitarian assistance and protect civilian populations in the midst of ongoing conflicts. Most, however, were deployed in the immediate aftermath of civil wars with the goal of preventing a recurrence of violence. These postconflict missions became known as “peacebuilding” operations.⁸

The aim of peacebuilding, in the words of UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan, was “to create the conditions necessary for a sustainable peace in war-torn societies” – that is, a peace that would endure long after the departure of the peacebuilders themselves.⁹ Annan’s predecessor, Boutros Boutros-Ghali, similarly defined the purpose of peacebuilding as the attempt “to identify and support structures which will tend to strengthen and solidify peace

⁵ Of the twenty countries that were the largest sources of refugees in the world in 1995, no fewer than nineteen were embroiled in intrastate conflicts at the time (Kane 1995, p. 18; and Kane 1996, p. 96).

⁶ Takeyh and Gvosdev 2002. ⁷ Quoted in Chege 2002, p. 147.

⁸ Some commentators define peacebuilding more broadly – as efforts to avert conflict either before or after war. This volume adopts the more common designation of peacebuilding as a *postconflict* activity, as I shall explain in Chapter 1.

⁹ Annan 1999b, para. 101.

in order to avoid a relapse into conflict.”¹⁰ The rationale for this kind of mission was straightforward and compelling: Without effective techniques for preventing the recurrence of violence in war-shattered states, large-scale conflict might resume after the initial termination of hostilities, thereby undermining and squandering international efforts to stop the fighting in the first place. But creating the conditions for a stable and lasting peace in the immediate aftermath of a civil war would not be an easy task, because it entailed much more than just monitoring a ceasefire. As both Annan and Boutros-Ghali pointed out, peacebuilding involved identifying and alleviating the underlying sources of conflict within a war-shattered state, which required a thorough understanding of local conditions.¹¹

To complicate matters, many states emerging from civil conflicts were teetering on the brink between peace and war, with their inhabitants divided by mutual animosities, resentments, and fears, and with large numbers of readily available weapons and ex-combatants proficient in using them. In addition, conditions of general economic distress, weak or nonexistent governmental institutions, few social services for the needy (including those displaced or dispossessed during the war), and damaged physical infrastructure combined to exacerbate local instability. Yet these volatile conditions were precisely what made postconflict peacebuilding so indispensable. The very fragility of war-shattered states – and the fact that countries with a recent history of civil violence had an almost 50 percent chance of slipping back into violence – created the need.¹²

Postconflict peacebuilding developed into something of a growth industry in the 1990s. The first major operation was deployed to Namibia in 1989, followed by missions to Nicaragua (1989), Angola (1991), Cambodia (1991), El Salvador (1991), Mozambique (1992), Liberia (1993), Rwanda (1993), Bosnia (1995), Croatia (1995), Guatemala (1997), East Timor (1999), Kosovo (1999), and Sierra Leone (1999). In total, fourteen major peacebuilding operations were deployed between 1989 and 1999 to territories that had recently experienced civil conflicts.¹³ These operations involved a diverse array of international actors performing a wide range of functions – from

¹⁰ Boutros-Ghali 1992, p. 11.

¹¹ Boutros-Ghali 1992, p. 32; Boutros-Ghali 1995, para. 49; and Annan 1998, para. 63.

¹² Collier et al. (2003, p. 83) report that the typical country emerging from a civil war has a 44% chance of sliding back into conflict within the first five years of peace. They base this finding on a study of seventy-eight large civil conflicts between 1960 and 1999. See also Collier and Sambanis 2002, p. 5.

¹³ This excludes missions that did not follow a civil war (such as the one deployed to Haiti) and missions that took place in the midst of an ongoing conflict (such as the operation in Somalia). For a full explanation of why I define certain missions, and not others, as “major postconflict peacebuilding operations,” see Chapter 3. Bosnia-Herzegovina is referred to as “Bosnia” throughout this book.

writing and rewriting national constitutions to drafting criminal laws, organizing and administering elections, tutoring policemen, lawyers, and judges, formulating economic policies, and temporarily taking over the administration of entire territories – all in the hope of establishing the conditions for stable and lasting peace. Some missions, such as the operations in Bosnia and Kosovo, attracted close attention from the international news media, while others labored away in relative obscurity. But taken together, these fourteen peacebuilding operations represented the most ambitious and concerted international effort to rehabilitate war-shattered states since the Allied reconstruction of Germany and Japan following World War II. Peacebuilding was nothing less than an enormous experiment in social engineering, aimed at creating the domestic conditions for durable peace within countries just emerging from civil wars.

What principles and assumptions guided this experiment? Which models or theories of conflict management, if any, did international peacebuilders apply in their efforts to rehabilitate war-shattered states? While the literature on peacebuilding has burgeoned since the end of the Cold War, few writers have scrutinized the assumptions that underpin the design and conduct of these operations.¹⁴ Observers have dissected the strengths and weaknesses of many missions, but paid relatively little attention to the conceptual foundations of peacebuilding itself, or the basic premises upon which these operations are based.¹⁵ Such questions are important, however, because they allow us to investigate whether the prevailing approach is, or is not, well suited to the task of consolidating peace in war-shattered states, and whether alternative means might be more appropriate. Given the importance of peacebuilding as a means of managing civil violence in the post-Cold War world and the threats that uncontrolled internal conflicts pose to regional and global security and to human welfare, any opportunity to improve the effectiveness of future operations should be vigorously pursued.

Indeed, there is no sign that the demand for new peacebuilding missions will decline in the coming years. Although this book focuses on postconflict operations launched between 1989 and 1999, the early years of the twenty-first century have already witnessed the deployment of new missions to places such as Afghanistan (2002), Ivory Coast (2003), and Liberia

¹⁴ I elaborate this critique in Paris 2000. Recent works on peacebuilding that pay little attention to the underlying assumptions of peacebuilding include Doyle and Sambanis 2000; Cousens and Kumar 2001; Reyhler and Paffenholz 2001; Stedman, Rothchild, and Cousens 2002; Fortna 2002; Howard 2002; and Caplan 2002. Many of these works offer important insights into the challenges that peacebuilders have encountered in the field, but they do not “problematize” the theoretical underpinnings of these operations. For a comprehensive bibliography of pre-2000 publications on peacebuilding, see Clerc 2000.

¹⁵ Works that *do* consider the underlying assumptions of peacebuilding include Barnett 1995 and 1997; Debrix 1999; Pugh 2000b; Stanley and Peceny 2001; Lipson 2002; and Jakobsen 2002.

(2003)¹⁶ – and at this writing, the United States is seeking to rebuild Iraq, a country that it occupied in the late spring of 2003. This volume does not investigate these latter operations, not only because they were launched after 1999, the cut-off date for this study, but also because the Afghanistan and Iraq missions followed foreign invasions of these countries. The challenges of peacebuilding after foreign conquest are quite different from those in post-civil war missions, particularly when the peacebuilders are the conquering powers themselves. So while it is essential to apply the lessons of the 1990s to new and future operations, this book focuses on a particular category of peacebuilding missions – those deployed in the aftermath of internal wars – and the lessons of these missions do not apply automatically, or directly, to other types of operations.¹⁷

The Argument of This Book

My thesis is straightforward. Peacebuilding missions in the 1990s were guided by a generally unstated but widely accepted theory of conflict management: the notion that promoting “liberalization” in countries that had recently experienced civil war would help to create the conditions for a stable and lasting peace. In the political realm, liberalization means democratization, or the promotion of periodic and genuine elections, constitutional limitations on the exercise of governmental power, and respect for basic civil liberties, including freedom of speech, assembly, and conscience. In the economic realm, liberalization means marketization, or movement toward a market-oriented economic model, including measures aimed at minimizing government intrusion in the economy, and maximizing the freedom for private investors, producers, and consumers to pursue their respective economic interests. Although the fourteen peacebuilding operations launched between 1989 and 1999 varied in many respects, their most striking similarity is that they all sought to transform war-shattered states into “liberal market democracies” as quickly as possible.

Underlying the design and practice of these operations was the hope and expectation that democratization would shift societal conflicts away from the battlefield and into the peaceful arena of electoral politics, thereby replacing the breaking of heads with the counting of heads; and that marketization would promote sustainable economic growth, which would also help to reduce tensions. Peacebuilding, in this sense, was a specific *kind* of social

¹⁶ The 2003 mission to Liberia (the United Nations Mission in Liberia, or UNMIL) should not be confused with the operation that was launched in 1993 (the United Nations Observer Mission in Liberia, or UNOMIL), which ended in 1997 and is analyzed in Chapter 5.

¹⁷ Because Afghanistan had been suffering from its own civil war prior to the U.S. intervention, I shall briefly discuss the early results of peacebuilding in that country in Chapter 11.

engineering, based on a particular set of assumptions about how best to establish durable domestic peace.

However, this approach turned out to be more problematic than anticipated. If the test of “successful” peacebuilding is simply whether large-scale conflict resumed in the aftermath of a peacebuilding mission, then most of the operations conducted in the 1990s were successful, because in all but three cases (Angola, Rwanda, and Liberia), large-scale hostilities have not resumed. But if we use instead the standard of success articulated by Kofi Annan and Boutros Boutros-Ghali – namely, the establishment of a “sustainable” peace, or a peace that will endure long after the peacebuilders depart from the country – then the picture becomes less favorable.¹⁸ As we shall see, international efforts to transform war-shattered states have, in a number of cases, inadvertently exacerbated societal tensions or reproduced conditions that historically fueled violence in these countries. The very strategy that peacebuilders have employed to consolidate peace – political and economic liberalization – seems, paradoxically, to have increased the likelihood of renewed violence in several of these states.

Peacebuilders apparently believed that democratization and marketization would foster domestic peace; and, as it happens, there is a large body of empirical scholarship that partially supports this belief. Students of the “liberal peace thesis,” from John Locke to the present day, have argued that liberally constituted states tend to be more peaceful both domestically and in their dealings with other countries, and recent evidence has shown that well-established market democracies are, indeed, less subject to internal violence than other types of states.¹⁹ But it also appears that the *transition* from civil conflict to a well-established market democracy is full of pitfalls: Promoting democratization and marketization has the potential to stimulate higher levels of societal competition at the very moment (immediately following the conflict) when states are least equipped to contain such tensions within peaceful bounds. Peacebuilders in the 1990s seemed to underestimate the destabilizing effects of the liberalization process in the fragile circumstances of countries just emerging from civil wars. Their desire to turn war-torn states into stable market democracies was not the problem; rather, the *methods* they used to effect this change, including their failure to anticipate and forestall the destabilizing effects of liberalization, proved to be the Achilles’ heel of peacebuilding.

I call the belief that democratization and marketization will foster peace in war-shattered states “Wilsonianism” – after Woodrow Wilson, the twenty-eighth president of the United States, who believed that liberalism was the key to peace and security in both international and domestic politics. Democracy, he wrote, promotes the “ascendancy of reason over passion” and promises

¹⁸ See Chapter 3 for a discussion of standards for evaluating peacebuilding.

¹⁹ For example, Rummel 1997. See Chapter 2 for more references to this literature.

“the supreme and peaceful rule of counsel,” or rational debate, which is a recipe for “peace and progress” in political life.²⁰ Drawing on these ideas, Wilson insisted that the only way to establish a durable peace in Europe after the First World War was to emancipate the various nationalities that lived under authoritarian rule and to open the conduct of international relations to public scrutiny. Until the nationalities, or “peoples,” of Eastern and Central Europe were permitted to exercise their right to self-government, he argued, unrequited grievances would continue to foment new conflicts. Any attempt to build peace that did not “recognize and accept the principle that governments derive all their just powers from the consent of the governed” was bound to fail.²¹ Only a peace “planted on the tested foundations of political liberty” would be likely to endure.²²

Peacebuilding missions in the 1990s reproduced Wilson’s faith in the peace-producing powers of liberalization. This faith proved to be overly optimistic in Central and Eastern Europe after World War I, where tensions remained and fighting resumed, and also seems to be an overly optimistic formula for peacebuilding in the post–Cold War era. The purpose of this book, however, is not to reject the Wilsonian peacebuilding strategy in its entirety, but to expose the weaknesses of the naive version of Wilsonianism that informed the missions of the 1990s. Indeed, I shall argue that peacebuilders should preserve the broad goal of converting war-shattered states into liberal market democracies, because well-established liberal market democracies tend to be peaceful in both their domestic affairs and their relations with other states. The challenge, however, is to devise methods of achieving this Wilsonian goal without endangering the very peace that the liberalization process is supposed to consolidate. To this end, I shall propose a new peacebuilding strategy called “Institutionalization Before Liberalization,” which begins from the premise that democratization and marketization are inherently tumultuous transformations that have the potential to undermine a fragile peace.

The new strategy would seek to minimize the destabilizing effects of liberalization in several ways. First, peacebuilders should delay the introduction of democratic and market-oriented reforms until a rudimentary network of domestic institutions, capable of managing the strains of liberalization, have been established. Second, once these institutions are in place, peacebuilders should manage the democratization and marketization process as a series of incremental and deliberate steps, rather than immediately unleashing political and economic competition. The strategy contains many other elements, but its core principle is this: What is needed in the immediate postconflict period is not quick elections, democratic ferment, or economic “shock therapy” but a more controlled and gradual approach to liberalization, combined with

²⁰ Wilson 1968, p. 90. ²¹ Quoted in Knock 1992, p. 121.

²² Quoted in Pomerance 1976, p. 2.

the immediate building of governmental institutions that can manage these political and economic reforms.

Institutionalization Before Liberalization may, at first glance, seem more costly and time-consuming than the “quick and dirty” approach to liberalization that predominated in the 1990s. However, the potentially higher expense and longer duration of such operations must be weighed against the costs, both in human lives and material resources, that would follow a recurrence of large-scale violence. This strategy may also appear to be contrary to the goal of promoting market democracy, because it calls upon peacebuilders to delay the liberalization of political and economic life during the first, fragile period of postwar reconstruction. The objective of this approach, however, is ultimately to achieve more successful transitions to market democracy in countries that are vulnerable to the destabilizing effects of rapid liberalization, and thus to establish a more durable peace. If, as I argue, pervasive civil conflict poses one of the principal threats to human welfare and global security in the post–Cold War era, and the prevailing approach to peacebuilding is flawed, then new policies for more effective peacebuilding are warranted.

Bridging Theory and Practice

The book speaks simultaneously to scholars and practitioners of peacebuilding, and to others interested in the challenges of managing civil violence. The central finding – that implementing liberalization too quickly and in the absence of effective institutions can counteract efforts to consolidate peace – has immediate implications for policymakers in national governments and international organizations who have the primary responsibility for designing peacebuilding operations. Yet this is not simply a work of policy analysis or policy prescription, for it raises questions that scholars of international relations and comparative politics have yet to explore in depth. In what ways, for example, might the transition to market democracy *imperil* domestic peace, particularly in the immediate aftermath of civil conflict? The liberalization process itself, I shall argue, can give rise to several different “pathologies” that may occur in any state undergoing such a transition. Peacebuilding host states are particularly susceptible to these problems because of the distinctive characteristics of societies that have recently experienced internecine violence – characteristics that will be described in Chapter 9 – and, as we shall see, the Institutionalization Before Liberalization strategy is specifically designed to anticipate and avert these pathologies.

This volume also contributes to ongoing debates over the liberal peace thesis. As noted, supporters of this thesis have long argued that liberal states tend to be more peaceful than other kinds of states. Unlike their Enlightenment-era predecessors, however, contemporary contributors to this literature have tended to “bracket” or ignore the question of how to *build* market democracies in conditions where governmental institutions do not exist or are only

fragmentary.²³ As a result, we have learned a great deal from this literature about the benefits of market democracy once it is established, but very little about the war-proneness of states undergoing this transition, particularly in the immediate aftermath of internal violence. This book uses the record of peacebuilding to investigate this little-explored branch of the liberal peace thesis: the relationship between liberalization, institution building, and peace in countries that are just emerging from civil conflict.

In addition to addressing the specific concerns of both practitioners and theorists of conflict management, this book seeks to break down the artificial separation between those who study “theory” and those who focus on the “real world” problems of policy analysis and implementation. Too often, the practitioners of peacebuilding dismiss academic theorizing as overly abstract and detached from the practical challenges of running field operations. At the same time, many theorists of international relations and comparative politics make too little effort to translate their findings into recommendations for policymakers. This volume, by contrast, aims to set out and scrutinize the theoretical foundations of peacebuilding, and in so doing, to diagnose problems in the design and practice of these operations that might otherwise go undetected.

Organization of the Book

At War's End is divided into three parts. Part I (“Foundations”) examines the political and ideological origins of peacebuilding, and investigates the assumptions that underpin these operations. Chapter 1 traces the history of peacebuilding and the resurgence of Wilsonian approaches to conflict management at the end of the Cold War. Chapter 2 examines historical and contemporary scholarship on the liberal peace thesis, arguing that many important questions remain unanswered, including the question of whether marketization and democratization offer a reliable remedy for civil conflict.

Part II (“The Peacebuilding Record”) evaluates the effects of internationally sponsored liberalization efforts in eleven peacebuilding missions deployed between 1989 and 1998. Chapter 3 explains the methodology and scope of the case studies. Chapters 4 through 8 examine the effects of democratization and marketization in Namibia, Nicaragua, Angola, Cambodia, El Salvador, Mozambique, Liberia, Rwanda, Bosnia, Croatia, and Guatemala. Three post-1998 operations – in Kosovo, East Timor, and Sierra Leone – are discussed later in the book and in more provisional terms, because of their relative recentness.

Part III (“Problems and Solutions”) describes the shortcomings of rapid liberalization as a peacebuilding strategy during the 1990s and recommends a new approach for future operations. Chapter 9 summarizes the findings of

²³ See Chapter 2.

the case studies and explains why liberalization has sometimes had destabilizing effects on peacebuilding host states. Chapter 10 elaborates the “Institutionalization Before Liberalization” strategy and responds to several possible critiques of this approach. Chapter 11 examines the record of missions launched after 1998, and explores the logistical and political challenges to reforming peacebuilding in the future.