

## Book Review

**Title of the Book:** *Liberal Peace: On Conflict, Gender, and Peacebuilding (Democratic Republic of Congo Case Study)*

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### Introduction

*Liberal Peace: On Conflict, Gender, and Peacebuilding* presents a critical examination of the liberal peace model of peacebuilding, particularly its application in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC). The book comes in eighteen chapters and covers diverse areas of peacebuilding in the context of DRC-Chapter 1: Democratic Republic of Congo's Conflict and Gendered Nature, Chapter 2: Interventionism and the Responsibility to Protect, Chapter 3: Ontological Underpinnings of the Conflict, Chapter 4: Addressing Gender Issues Locally and Internationally, Chapter 5: Rape, Women's Bodies versus Resources, Chapter 6: Gender Exclusion and Exploitation as Capitalist and Colonial Hangovers, Chapter 7: No Permanent Allies but Permanent Interests, Chapter 8: The Institutionalisation of GBV, Chapter 9: Socially Entrenched Culture of Violence: Authors' Testimonies and Congolese Women's Peacebuilding Initiatives, Chapter 10: National and Global Politico-Economic Factors, Chapter 11: International Conspiracy against the DRC Africa's Typical Replica, Chapter 12: Rape as the Weapon of Capitalism, Chapter 13: The Internalisation of Rape, Chapter 14: Prostitution, Chapter 15: When Liberal Peace Fails, Chapter 16: Forces Behind the Conflict, Chapter 17: Human Rights Vs Security, Chapter 18: Whose Human Rights? Interesting, each chapter of the book comes ends with discussion questions probably intended to broaden and deepen reader's insights into the issues covered in the chapter. Students of Peace and Conflict Studies (PCS), International Relations, Political Sciences, Public Administration, Sociology, Economics, Political Economy, Social Works, Environmental and Resource Management, etc. would find the content of this book useful. Thus, the multidisciplinary content of the book makes it appealing to the social science and development discourse.

### Basic Arguments of the Book

Generally, the book critiques the Western-centric framework of liberal peace, arguing that it prioritizes the interests of interveners over those of local populations. Through the lens of gender and conflict, the text explores how international peacebuilding mechanisms often exclude local voices, particularly those of women, and fail to address the underlying structural issues of post-conflict societies. In addition to the above contention, the authors presented other key critiques of the liberal peace model as briefly described below:

**Hegemonic Western Influence-**The book argues that liberal peace is an instrument of Western interventionism, often forced upon non-Western societies without regard for local histories, cultures,

and needs. It argues that peacebuilding efforts in the DRC have been primarily designed to serve the economic and strategic interests of the West rather than the affected populations.

**Gender Exclusion and Patriarchy**-The text highlighted the patriarchal structure of international peace processes, which marginalize women despite their disproportionate suffering in conflicts. It emphasizes the necessity to incorporate feminist perspectives into peacebuilding initiatives to create a more equitable and effective framework.

**Failure to Address Root Causes**-The book criticizes the liberal peace model for its top-down approach, which prioritizes economic liberalization and state-building over addressing systemic issues such as corruption, inequality, and historical injustices. It calls for an approach that integrates local peacebuilding mechanisms with international efforts.

**Critique of Peacebuilding Economics**-The book discusses how liberal peace serves as a capitalist enterprise, with international actors benefiting from the conflicts they claim to resolve. It argues that peace efforts in the DRC have largely failed because they are driven by financial incentives rather than genuine commitment to stability.

### **Comparative Analysis with other works in peacebuilding**

When compared with other scholarly works on peacebuilding, *Liberal Peace: On Conflict, Gender, and Peacebuilding (Democratic Republic of Congo Case Study)* aligns with and challenges various perspectives:

**Richmond's Critique of Liberal Peace:** Oliver Richmond (2011) has longed argued similarly that liberal peace often disregards local agency and imposes externally driven solutions. Richmond suggests a "post-liberal peace" that combines local and international efforts, an argument echoed in this book's call for integrating indigenous peacebuilding mechanisms. It is important to note that the position of *Liberal Peace: On Conflict, Gender, and Peacebuilding (Democratic Republic of Congo Case Study)* on peacebuilding aligns with Oliver Richmond's critique of liberal peacebuilding, as captured in various works. In some of his works, Richmond highlighted significant shortcomings in the liberal peace framework of analysis. He argues that the liberal peace approach often fails to consider local contexts and needs, focusing excessively on establishing liberal democratic institutions and neoliberal economic systems without adequately engaging with the local populations or understanding their specific needs and desires (Talentino, 2010; Tellidis, 2012; Richmond, 2016). This approach can lead to the imposition of ill-suited solutions that do not resonate with the local populace, thereby undermining the legitimacy and effectiveness of peacebuilding efforts (Richmond, 2016; Richmond, 2014). Richmond's critique also emphasizes the need for a shift towards "post-liberal" peacebuilding, which prioritizes local agency and knowledge. This approach advocates for empowering local actors and incorporating their perspectives into peacebuilding processes, thus challenging the reductionist and universalist assumptions of traditional liberal peacebuilding (Finkenbusch, 2016; Tadjbakhsh, 2011). Through focusing on local dynamics and the concept of peace formation, Richmond suggests that sustainable peace is more likely to be achieved when local actors are involved in mapping and addressing the root causes of conflict (Richmond, 2016). This is also the submission and prescriptions of the authors of *Liberal Peace: On Conflict, Gender, and Peacebuilding (Democratic Republic of Congo Case Study)*. Richmond's critique and the prescriptive position of *Liberal Peace: On Conflict, Gender, and Peacebuilding (Democratic Republic of Congo*

*Case Study*) call for a reevaluation of the liberal peace paradigm, urging the international community to move beyond its current practices and consider more context-sensitive and locally driven approaches to peacebuilding (Tellidis, 2012; Maschietto, 2020). This critique has sparked significant debate in the field, encouraging scholars and practitioners to explore new paradigms that better address the complexities of post-conflict societies.

**Mac Ginty's Hybrid Peace:** Roger Mac Ginty (2010) introduces the idea of "hybrid peace," where local and international mechanisms coexist. While *Liberal Peace: On Conflict, Gender, and Peacebuilding* acknowledges the need for such hybridity, it is more critical of the extent to which liberal peace can be reformed without fundamentally altering its underlying power structures. Roger Mac Ginty's concept of "hybrid peace" emphasizes the coexistence and interaction between local and international mechanisms in peacebuilding efforts. This idea challenges the traditional liberal peace framework by highlighting the dynamic interplay between external interventions and local practices, norms, and institutions (Lemay-Hébert & Kühn, 2015; Bargués-Pedreny & Randazzo, 2018; Möttus, 2018). Mac Ginty argues that hybrid peace allows for a more nuanced understanding of peace processes, moving beyond the binary distinctions of local versus international or modern versus traditional (Lemay-Hébert & Kühn, 2015; Mac Ginty, 2010).

In contrast, the book "Liberal Peace: On Conflict, Gender, and Peacebuilding" critically examines the limitations of reforming liberal peace without fundamentally altering its underlying power structures. It suggests that while hybridity offers a theoretical alternative, it often reproduces the same logics of inclusion and exclusion inherent in the liberal peace paradigm (Nadarajah & Rampton, 2015; Popplewell, 2019). The critique is that hybrid peace, while potentially transformative, can also perpetuate existing power dynamics and fail to address the deeper issues of legitimacy and authenticity in peacebuilding efforts (Nadarajah & Rampton, 2015; Simangan, 2018). In summary, while Mac Ginty's hybrid peace provides a framework for integrating local and international efforts, the critique from the liberal peace perspective underscores the challenges of achieving genuine transformation without addressing the foundational power imbalances.

**Feminist Perspectives on Peacebuilding:** Works by Cynthia Enloe (2000) and Laura Sjoberg (2013) emphasize the gendered dimensions of conflict and peacebuilding. Like these scholars, this book underscores the systematic exclusion of women in peace processes and argues for feminist interventions as a means to achieve sustainable peace.

**Johan Galtung's Structural Violence:** Galtung's (1969) concept of structural violence is relevant to the book's critique of peacebuilding. The book highlights how liberal peace often perpetuates economic and social inequalities rather than addressing them, mirroring Galtung's argument that peace must go beyond the absence of war to include justice and equality.

### Concluding Remarks

The book provides a well-researched critique of liberal peace, supported by historical examples and contemporary cases. It rationally integrates discussions on gender, colonial history, and economic power structures in peacebuilding. The emphasis on local peacebuilding mechanisms presents a constructive alternative to top-down interventions. In addition to criticizing the cosmetic nature of liberal peace models, there is need to provide a clear framework for implementing alternative peacebuilding models. The argument that all Western interventions are driven solely by self-interest

may oversimplify some international efforts that have had positive impacts. Finally, we acknowledge that *Liberal Peace: On Conflict, Gender, and Peacebuilding* is an important contribution to the debate on peacebuilding, challenging the dominant paradigms of liberal peace and advocating for a more inclusive and locally driven approach. Its focus on gender and the political economy of peacebuilding distinguishes it from other critiques, making it a valuable resource for scholars and practitioners in peace and conflict studies. However, while its arguments are compelling, a more detailed blueprint for alternative peacebuilding models would strengthen its practical impact.

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