

The Aftermath of Civil War

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War has devastating effects, and its aftermath can be immensely difficult. Nevertheless, when the end of war marks the beginning of lasting peace, recovery and improvement are feasible realities. This paper attempts to provide a comprehensive evaluation of the aftermath of civil war. For this purpose, it considers the behavior of basic indicators of economic performance, health and education, political development, demographic trends, and conflict and security concerns in a sample of 41 conflict countries during the period 1960-2003. For each of these indicators, the paper first compares the post- and pre-war situations and then examines their trends during the post-conflict period.

The cost of war is manifest in the failure of conflict countries to make similar progress as other developing countries in key areas of political development and some aspects of health and educational achievement during the war. However, when peace is achieved and sustained, recovery is indeed possible. Virtually all aspects of economic, social, and political development experience gradual improvement in the aftermath of civil war. Progress in social areas is accompanied by a continuous reallocation of public resources away from military expenditures and, above all, a steady rise in average income per capita (see graph below). A caveat on this paper is that it serves mainly as a broad overview: Its conclusions refer to the typical or average country afflicted by war and reflect mostly a descriptive and statistical examination. Further research should analyze the heterogeneity of post-conflict situations, their causal mechanisms, and the policies that make them successful.

