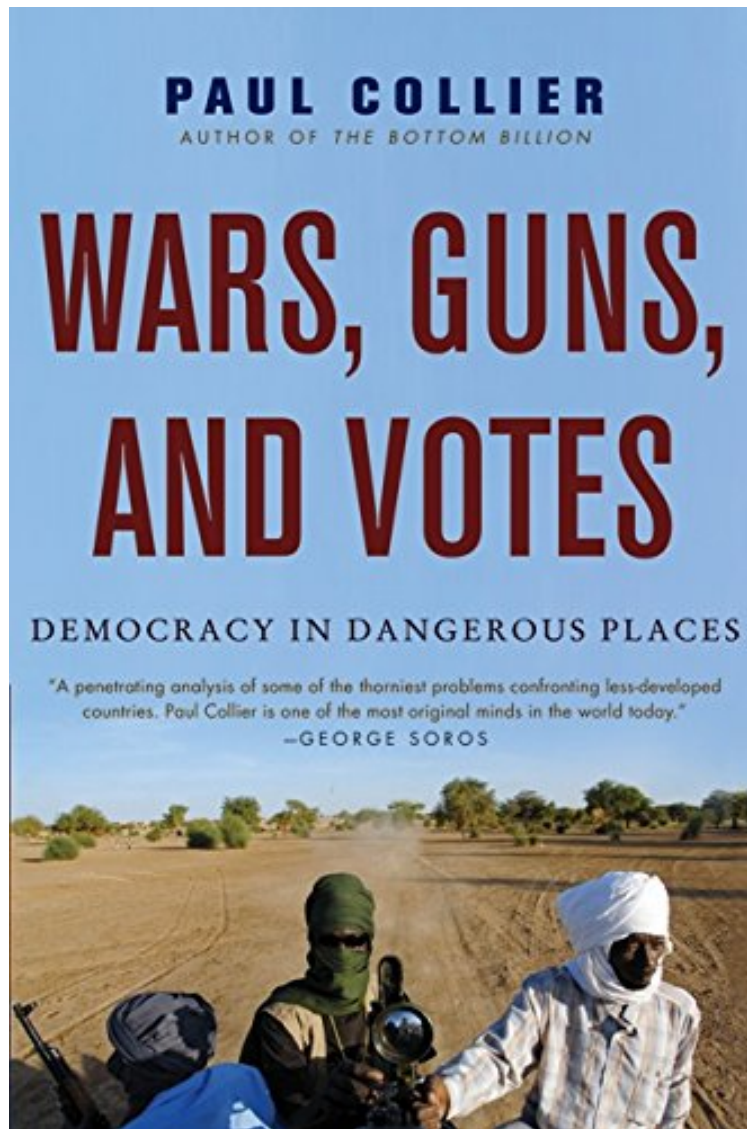


(Download pdf) Wars, Guns, and Votes: Democracy in Dangerous Places

Wars, Guns, and Votes: Democracy in Dangerous Places

Paul Collier

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#282521 in Books Paul Collier 2010-02-09 2010-02-09 Original language: English PDF # 1 8.00 x .61 x 5.311, .46 #File Name: 0061479640272 pages Wars Guns and Votes Democracy in Dangerous Places | File size: 49.Mb

Paul Collier : Wars, Guns, and Votes: Democracy in Dangerous Places before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Wars, Guns, and Votes: Democracy in Dangerous Places:

2 of 2 people found the following review helpful. An insightful and provocative analysis of Third World elections By Graham It seems natural that introducing democracy should be a key step along the way to better governance and more prosperity in the Third World. But is this true in practice? Collier is a Professor of Economics at Oxford who has

performed detailed statistical analysis on the practical consequences of elections. He asserts that introducing elections in poor nations tends to lead to increased political violence and misgovernance. The opposite is true for wealthier countries: there democracy tends to lead to more responsive and honest governance. This difference in outcomes is rather dismal news for the Third World, but as Collier carefully points out, we need to understand what is actually happening, which may be very different from what we would like. His analysis is that when a poor autocratic government decides to hold elections it is heavily motivated to win them. In countries without adequate checks and balances, elections tend to be winner-takes-all affairs, with few constraints on the victors. The autocratic incumbents reluctantly realize they are not popular and will need to "adjust" the electoral balance. To do so, they resort to a variety of techniques, including various forms of bribery, electoral fraud, coercion, elimination of opponents (by dubious legal trickery, or worse) and last but not least, by playing the ethnic identity card to rally the majority ethnicity against its "enemies". Unfortunately the net effect of these maneuvers is to make a bad situation worse. The regime retains power, but their tactics reinforce popular skepticism and distrust, and increase internal tensions. After a civil war, the international community typically insists on post-conflict elections to put the seal on the new settlement. Unfortunately such elections suffer from all the issues above and risk inflaming the situation. Typically the situation improves ahead of the elections, as they provide a temporary focus for orderly conflict, but the elections themselves tend to reflect the same issues that drove the civil war. So the losers do not accept the legitimacy of the winners. Collier reports that a variety of factors influence the likelihood of political violence. Bad elections are one. But so is poverty and small country size. (Smaller countries have more trouble meeting security goals.) Unfortunately a prior civil war makes a subsequent one more likely. Similarly with coups. Collier observes that one of the key vehicles for introducing true democracy seems to be increased prosperity. As countries become wealthier they seem to accept more of the package of legal norms that allows for more honest elections and eventually for regime change. Collier also argues that investing in building a strong sense of national identity (as Nyerere did successfully in Tanzania) can help diminish regional and ethnic tensions. However Collier's core analysis is extremely disheartening for the poorest countries. In an effort to end on a positive note, Collier suggest three solutions. Unfortunately all three seem rather speculative. First, he proposes international guarantees to defend governments against coups in countries which hold fair elections. He argues that coups are an even greater threat to most Third World Presidents than elections. I'm sorry, but I can't see a corrupt regime accepting imminent electoral defeat in order to obtain such a future guarantee. Collier also proposes an elaborate scheme for managing government spending, to avoid corruption and redirection. Finally he proposes a complex scheme for collective security. Perhaps all three should be tried, but they seem optimistic at best. Overall, while I found Collier solutions very weak, his statistical crunching and subsequent analysis are extremely useful and provocative. Collier writes well in a very lucid style, and leavens his bad news with occasional rueful wit. We may not like his conclusions, but they are useful to understand, and strongly suggest that the West needs to be much more thoughtful about how and when to force elections on a recalcitrant regime.

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Need to read! By stij n van der krog t Fantastic insight in why the poorest countries have difficulties to get into an accelerated development path. Backed up by solid research and written with humor. Maybe a bit too optimistic about the effectiveness of Western intervention mechanisms. A must for policy makers and advisors on development issues.

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Guns, Wars, and Votes: Thought-provoking By Vi from Colorado I found Guns, Wars, and Votes to be very thought-provoking. As I child I remember the frequency with which the news media joyfully announced a new country being birthed in Africa. As an adult I shake my head in sorrow to see what these countries have become. This author explains why these countries never mature into democracies and offers some ideas how the rest of the world can help these countries grow up.

Collier has made a substantial contribution to current discussions. His evidence-based approach is a worthwhile corrective to the assumptions about democracy that too often tend to dominate when Western policy makers talk about the bottom billion. The New York Times Book Review Before President Obama makes a move he would do well to read Professor Paul Colliers Wars, Guns, and Votes. . . Unlike many academics Collier comes up with very concrete proposals and some ingenious solutions. The Times (London) In Wars, Guns, and Votes, esteemed author Paul Collier offers a groundbreaking, radical look at the worlds most violent, corrupt societies, how they got that way, and what can be done to break the cycle. George Soros calls Paul Collier one of the most original minds in the world today, and Wars, Guns, and Votes, like Colliers previous award-winning book The Bottom Billion, is essential reading for anyone interested in current events, war, poverty, economics, or international business.

From Publishers Weekly In this accessible and very sensible analysis, Collier (The Bottom Billion) argues that the spread of democracy after the end of the Cold War has not actually made the world a safer place, as the West has promoted the wrong features of democracy: the faade rather than the essential infrastructure. The author hypothesizes that an insistence on elections without a system of checks and balances has led to widespread corruption, nations mired in ethnic politics and economic underperformance. Collier examines the effect of civil wars, coups and rebellions on burgeoning democracies, founding all arguments on methodology and data sets that provide a hard,

quantitative view of political violence. While many of his observations are insightful and occasionally prescient, his analysis weakens when it strays from the data and enters more theoretical territory. However, the author maintains an approachable style and reaches beyond jargon to provide a highly readable account of the complex realities facing the developing world. Collier's suggestions are pragmatic, and although they may incense ideologues, most readers will connect with this common sense approach matched with obvious expertise. (Feb.) Copyright Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved. "Very important ideas based on extremely thorough empirical research...put him in the same camp as real heavyweights such as the Nobel laureate Joseph Stiglitz" -- Misha Glenny * Guardian * "Collier comes up with very concrete proposals and some ingenious solutions" * The Times * "Collier knows Africa intimately... It is hard to be unmoved by his anger about the world's blindness to realities, and his passion to do things better" -- Max Hastings * Sunday Times * "With its verve, wit and lateral thinking, this is a book that changes its readers' horizons" * Observer * "It is always a pleasure to discover Paul Collier's latest thoughts...always illuminating and grounded in rigorous social science...it's gripping stuff" -- Allister Heath * Literary * From the Back Cover In Wars, Guns, and Votes, Paul Collier investigates the violence and poverty in the small, remote countries at the lowest level of the global economy and argues that the spread of elections and peace settlements may lead to a brave new democratic world. For now and into the foreseeable future, however, nasty and long civil wars, military coups, and failing economies are the order of the day. An esteemed economist and a foremost authority on developing countries, Collier gives an eye-opening assessment of the ethnic divisions and insecurities in the developing countries of Africa, Latin America, and Asia, where corruption is often firmly rooted in the body politic, and persuasively outlines what must be done to bring peace and stability. Groundbreaking and provocative, Wars, Guns, and Votes is a passionate and convincing argument for the peaceful development of the most volatile places on earth.