



Complex Emergencies

David J. Keen

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If you thought the point of war was to win, this book will make you think again.

David Keen questions the model of war as a contest between two sides aiming at political and military victory, and he also rejects the contrasting view that war represents a collapse into anarchy, mindless violence and ethnic hatred. Rather than a contest or a collapse, war is analysed as a system that has significant functions and that yields complex economic, political and psychological benefits. Some may be more interested in prolonging a war than in ending it. War may help elites to derail democracy and suppress dissent; it may be profitable for government and rebel actors; and it may allow armed groups to enjoy a sense of power over unarmed civilians.

This book argues that understanding the complex functions of wars alongside other forms of human disaster, such as famine and ethnic strife, is essential if we are to reduce suffering and move towards lasting peace agreements.

Complex Emergencies will be essential reading for students of development, political economy, political science and international relations.

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