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Emancipating Transitional Justice from the Bonds of the Paradigmatic Transition FREE

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ABSTRACT¹

If transitional justice initially emerged as handmaiden to liberal political transitions, it has increasingly become associated with postconflict peacebuilding more generally. While this may suggest a significant moment in the evolution of the field's foundational paradigm, it remains unclear what any emerging 'transitional justice as peacebuilding' narrative might mean in practice and how, if at all, it might differ from what came before. I argue that the particular conceptions of 'transition,' 'justice' and 'peacebuilding' that come to undergird any such emerging narrative matter a great deal. This article seeks to deconstruct each component of that narrative based on historically dominant and narrow assumptions about what they can and should mean in the aftermath of mass atrocity. I look to concepts from critical peacebuilding theory – including 'positive peace,' 'popular peace,' 'the everyday' and 'hybridity' – that might serve as useful correctives to these narrow assumptions, bridging the way to a more emancipatory 'transitional justice as peacebuilding' narrative.

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