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Beyond the Liberal Peace: Latin American inspirations for post-liberal peacebuilding

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Abstract

Critics of liberal peacebuilding have started to move beyond mere criticism and think about what hybrid or post-liberal peacebuilding might mean. This article aims at contributing to this debate by bringing contemporary experiences in that are usually not reflected in the peacebuilding literature. Since the turn of the century, political changes in a series of South American countries, including most notably in the case of Bolivia, have led scholars to identify trends towards post-liberal ways of organizing and exercising political rule. The context in which these processes occur is, of course, very different from the so-called post-conflict societies usually studied by peacebuilding scholars. Yet, precisely because of these differences, conditions for a locally driven search for post-liberal democracy are much better in Latin America. In this sense, while the attempt to move beyond liberal peacebuilding does certainly not need yet another template to be implemented worldwide, these experiences might well serve as important inspirations in the ongoing search for locally grown, hybrid variants of a post-liberal peace.

Keywords: Post-liberalism; liberal peace; democracy; Bolivia; post-liberal peacebuilding

Introduction

The spread of international peacebuilding missions around the world has not only produced sobering results. It has also led to a rich academic debate that, from different perspectives and with different aims, criticizes the practices and premises of liberal peacebuilding.¹ Scholars working with a problem-solving approach, right from the start, translated their criticism into proposals for improving peacebuilding. In contrast, those that have, on a more fundamental level, challenged the project of liberal peacebuilding “on the basis of its assumptions, epistemological and conceptual foundations”, were usually hesitant to engage with the question of alternatives to the liberal peace.² In recent years, however, these “critical” scholars started to move beyond mere criticism and have set out to think about what a hybrid or post-liberal peace might mean.³ This endeavor is not about proposing an alternative model but about studying empirically the hybrid variants of peace that develop out of the encounter between external and local efforts at building peace. Starting from the observation “that liberal peace is already modified when it meets the local context”,⁴ the focus of analysis is on local resistance to and “the ongoing renegotiation of the liberal peace via local agency”.⁵ The “inevitable outcome” of these processes is, then, some form of “hybridity”, but it is an open question – and depends on the specific circumstances – *whether and which kind of* peace will eventually emerge.⁶

While the critical peacebuilding literature has started to embrace the notion of a “post-liberal peace”, a series of scholars working on Latin American politics, in recent years, has become interested in “post-neoliberal” and “post-liberal” trends in that region. On the one hand, the so-called left turn, i.e. the election and reelection of a series of left-of-center governments across the region, has been accompanied by attempts to turn away from neoliberal economic

¹ For an overview, see Roger Mac Ginty, ed., *Routledge Handbook of Peacebuilding* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2013); Roger Mac Ginty and Oliver P. Richmond, ‘The Local Turn in Peace Building: A critical agenda for peace’, *Third World Quarterly* 34, no. 5 (2013): 763–83; Edward Newman, Roland Paris, and Oliver P. Richmond, eds., *New perspectives on liberal peacebuilding* (Tokyo: United Nations University Press, 2009); Shahrbanou Tadjbakhsh, ed., *Rethinking the Liberal Peace. External models and local alternatives* (London: Routledge, 2011).

² Shahrbanou Tadjbakhsh, ‘Introduction: Liberal peace in dispute’, in Tadjbakhsh, *Rethinking the Liberal Peace*, 2. Tadjbakhsh’s distinction between “problem-solving” and “critical” theories is, of course, taken from Robert W. Cox. See also Michael Pugh, ‘The problem-solving and critical paradigms’, in *Routledge Handbook of Peacebuilding*, ed. Roger Mac Ginty (Abingdon: Routledge, 2013), 11–24.

³ This, most notably, includes the contributions to Tadjbakhsh, *Rethinking the Liberal Peace*, as well as Roger Mac Ginty, *International Peacebuilding and Local Resistance: Hybrid Forms of Peace* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), and Oliver P. Richmond, *A Post-Liberal Peace* (London: Routledge, 2011).

⁴ Tadjbakhsh, ‘Introduction’, 4.

⁵ Oliver P. Richmond, ‘Resistance and the Post-liberal Peace’, *Millennium* 38, no. 3 (2010): 670.

⁶ Richmond, *A Post-Liberal Peace*, 17.

policies.⁷ On the other, with diverse experiences of participatory democracy at the local level and, in the Andean region, the adoption of new constitutions that partially deviate from the mainstream model of liberal democracy, contours of a possible post-liberal democracy have begun to take shape.⁸ To the best of my knowledge, however, these developments have not yet been taken up by peacebuilding scholars.⁹ This article therefore reviews contemporary Latin American experiences with post-liberalism in order to identify insights for the discussion about post-liberal peacebuilding. This said, I will not deal with those Central American post-conflict countries that have experienced processes of liberal peacebuilding and are, therefore, already reflected in the peacebuilding literature.¹⁰ Instead, I deliberately focus on South American experiments with post-liberal politics that are *not* shaped by war-to-peace transitions – and, hence, usually not included in debates about (post-) liberal peacebuilding. A particular focus is on contemporary Bolivia because here the attempt to establish – by peaceful and basically democratic means – a hybrid, post-liberal order is most advanced (even if still ongoing, unsettled and contested).¹¹

But why should peacebuilding scholars care about post-liberalism in South America? With good reasons, existing research on emerging variants of post-liberal peace has focused on so-called post-conflict countries and, in particular, on those with international peacebuilding missions.¹² Even if still in an incipient stage, these studies, however, demonstrate that the search for viable, locally grown versions of a post-liberal peace is particularly difficult in countries that have experienced civil war and/or international military intervention. Hence there is still

⁷ Cf. John Burdick, Philip Oxhorn, and Kenneth M. Roberts, eds., *Beyond Neoliberalism in Latin America? Societies and Politics at the Crossroads* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009); Laura Macdonald and Arne Ruckert, eds., *Post-Neoliberalism in the Americas* (Houndmills: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009); Cristóbal Rovira Kaltwasser, 'Toward Post-Neoliberalism in Latin America?', *Latin American Research Review* 46, no. 2 (2011): 225–34.

⁸ Cf. Benjamin Arditi, 'Arguments About the Left Turns in Latin America. A Post-Liberal Politics?', *Latin American Research Review* 43, no. 3 (2008): 59–81; Arturo Escobar, 'Latin America at a Crossroads. Alternative modernizations, post-liberalism, or post-development?', *Cultural Studies* 24, no. 1 (2010): 1–65; Detlef Nolte and Almut Schilling-Vacaflor, eds., *New Constitutionalism in Latin America: Promises and Practices* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2012); Jonas Wolff, 'Towards Post-Liberal Democracy in Latin America? A Conceptual Framework Applied to Bolivia', *Journal of Latin American Studies* 45, no. 1 (2013): 31–59.

⁹ An exception is Wenche Hauge, 'A Latin American Agenda for Peace', *International Peacekeeping* 16, no. 5 (2009): 685–698. Richmond has noted, if only in passing, that the dynamics initiated by indigenous movements in Latin America directly relate to his notion of a post-liberal peace. Cf. Richmond, *A Post-Liberal Peace*, 182.

¹⁰ See, for instance, Roddy Brett, 'Peace stillborn? Guatemala's liberal peace and the indigenous movement', *Peacebuilding* 1, no. 2 (2013): 222–38; Sabine Kurtenbach, 'Why is Liberal Peace-building so Difficult? Some Lessons from Central America', *European Review of Latin American and Caribbean Studies*, no. 88 (2010): 95–110; Jenny Pearce, 'Peace-building in the periphery: Lessons from Central America', *Third World Quarterly* 20, no. 1 (1999): 51–68.

¹¹ Nancy Postero, 'The Struggle to Create a Radical Democracy in Bolivia', *Latin American Research Review* 45, special issue (2010): 59–78; Wolff, 'Towards Post-Liberal Democracy', 33.

¹² Case studies include the "usual suspects" Bosnia and Herzegovina, Cambodia, Kosovo and Timor Leste, but also Afghanistan and the Solomon Islands. See, for instance, the contributions to Tadjbakhsh, *Rethinking the Liberal Peace*.

limited empirical evidence and rather abstract theoretical ideas about how post-liberal forms of peace could look like. At the same time, critics of liberal peacebuilding are regularly confronted with the charge that there are just “no real alternatives to the liberal peace”.¹³ Most prominently, Roland Paris has explicitly argued that “there is no realistic alternative to *some form* of liberal peacebuilding strategy”.¹⁴ In this sense, bringing in contemporary experiences with post-liberalism in South America serves two purposes. On a general level, it clearly shows that there *are* actual alternatives to liberal mainstream conceptions of political and economic order – even if post-liberal experiments in South America are still limited and uncertain, diverse and contradictory. Second, and more specifically, these experiences – and the Bolivian example in particular – offer tangible insights into potential features and tensions of post-liberalism in the Global South.

To be sure, the conditions for the locally driven emergence of post-liberal politics are certainly much better in contemporary South America than in post-conflict countries, and the case of Bolivia is very particular even within this region. Still, it is precisely these relatively benign conditions that have arguably enabled significant post-liberal experiments. In this sense, while the attempt to move beyond liberal peacebuilding does certainly not need yet another template to be transplanted worldwide, my much more modest argument is that contemporary experiences in South America, and most notably in Bolivia, can serve as important inspirations for the academic and political search for locally grown, hybrid variants of a post-liberal peace. In this, I follow up on Wenche Hauge’s contention “that the Latin American model provides alternatives to the hegemonic peacebuilding discourse”.¹⁵ In contrast to Hauge, who focuses on Latin American leaders’ discourses on peacebuilding and international activities at the regional level, this article however takes a different approach: It focuses on recent domestic political changes in selected South American countries.

In what follows, I, firstly, sketch the contemporary debate about “post-(neo-)liberalism” in Latin America. The main section then reviews core elements of post-liberal trends in the region and, particularly, in Bolivia with a view to analyzing how liberal and non-liberal conceptions of political order coalesce in this specific context. In the third and final section, I discuss how this analysis of post-liberal trends in Latin America/Bolivia might enrich the debate about post-liberal peacebuilding.

¹³ Tadjbakhsh, ‘Introduction’, 4.

¹⁴ Roland Paris, ‘Saving liberal peacebuilding’, *Review of International Studies* 36, no. 2 (2010): 340 (emphasis in the original).

¹⁵ Hauge, ‘A Latin American Agenda for Peace’, 685.

The debate about post-(neo-)liberalism in Latin America

As far as the template of liberal peacebuilding is concerned, there is broad consensus that it aims at establishing a lasting peace by promoting “liberalization” in both the political and the economic realm, i.e. “democratization” and “marketization”, as Roland Paris put it.¹⁶ This agenda, however, was not limited to countries emerging from civil war. In fact, Latin America is the region in the Global South where, during the 1980s and 1990s, both liberal democracy and neoliberal “structural adjustment” were implemented most comprehensively. While the overall results of this double transformation in Latin America are heavily contested,¹⁷ the “recipe” proved relatively successful in terms of enabling a liberal peace at the intra-state level¹⁸ – in contrast to the experiences of liberal peacebuilding missions.¹⁹

Since the late 1990s, however, the combination of democracy and neoliberalism has met with increasing resistance from within a series of Latin American countries. Mass protests and social movements primarily attacked economic and social policies that responded to the demands by “the market” and international creditors and investors rather than by the poor majorities of the population. But, from the beginning, this political struggle was also “over possible alternative blueprints for democracy”.²⁰ Particularly the indigenous movements and their call for redefining the nation-state, citizenship and democracy have been identified as a “post-liberal challenge”.²¹ At the same time, also an “experimentation with post-liberal formats of political participation”²² emerged, important examples being the spread of participatory budgeting, the creation of autonomous municipalities and the recognition of customary (indigenous) law. In a few South American countries such as Bolivia, Ecuador and Venezuela, these

¹⁶ Roland Paris, *At War's End. Building Peace After Civil Conflict* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 5. On the introduction of democracy as a standard practice of international peacebuilding missions since 1990, see Anna K. Jarstad and Timothy D. Sisk, eds., *From War to Democracy: Dilemmas of Peacebuilding* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008); on neoliberal economic transformation as the counterpart to democratization, see Michael Pugh, ‘Curing strangeness in the political economy of peacebuilding. Traces of liberalism and resistance’, in Tadjbakhsh, *Rethinking the Liberal Peace*, 147–63.

¹⁷ Cf. Kurt Weyland, ‘Neoliberalism and Democracy in Latin America: A Mixed Record’, *Latin American Politics and Society* 46, no. 1 (2004): 135–57.

¹⁸ Cf. Jonas Wolff, ‘De-Idealizing the Democratic Civil Peace: On the Political Economy of Democratic Stabilisation and Pacification in Argentina and Ecuador’, *Democratization* 16, no. 5 (2009): 998–1026.

¹⁹ Tadjbakhsh, ‘Introduction’, 1. See also Paris, *At War's End*; Pugh, ‘Curing strangeness’.

²⁰ Sonia E. Alvarez, Evelina Dagnino, and Arturo Escobar, ‘Introduction: The Cultural and the Political in Latin American Social Movements’, in *Cultures of Politics/Politics of Cultures. Re-Visioning Latin American Social Movements*, ed. Sonia E. Alvarez, Evelina Dagnino, and Arturo Escobar (Boulder: Westview Press, 1998): 1.

²¹ Deborah J. Yashar, *Contesting Citizenship in Latin America. The Rise of Indigenous Movements and the Post-liberal Challenge* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005): 30.

²² Arditi, ‘Arguments About the Left Turns in Latin America’, 67.

bottom-up challenges have culminated in profound transformations of the existing political regimes via constituent assemblies.²³

What does it mean to characterize these processes of change as “post-liberal”? As Benjamin Arditi has argued, these instances of an emerging post-liberal politics in Latin America do “not suggest the end of liberal politics and its replacement with something else, yet it is clear that the *post* of *post-liberal* designates something outside liberalism or at least something that takes place at the edges of liberalism”.²⁴ Post-liberal democracy, in this sense, is about questioning the substantial liberal “qualifiers” usually implied by the marker “liberal democracy” without breaking with basic standards of representative democracy in the Dahlian sense.²⁵ Correspondingly, the new constitutions in Bolivia, Ecuador and Venezuela maintain all the well-known institutions of representative democracy and the usual series of political and civil rights but add or strengthen mechanisms of direct democracy and societal participation, expand the notion of human rights in areas of economic, social and cultural rights and include collective indigenous rights.²⁶ Studies on the “post-neoliberal” policies implemented by the diverse left-to-center governments in South America reach a similar conclusion: Contemporary attempts to strengthen the economic role of the state and expand social policies, to deepen the domestic market and implement some kind of redistributive policies differ from country to country, but in general do not break with the entire neoliberal model.²⁷ For instance, while the Morales government in Bolivia has abandoned privatization by enacting the “nationalization” of the gas sector it has stuck to a quite conservative stance in terms of fiscal responsibility and macroeconomic stability (see below).

This idea of Latin American post-(neo-)liberalism as something partially replacing, partially modifying and partially maintaining liberal principles constitutes a first general similarity to the notion of post-liberal peacebuilding as introduced by Oliver Richmond. Post-liberal forms of peace, there, are conceptualized as the “local-liberal hybrids” that emerge when the liberal peace is modified by its contact with, and appropriation by, local actors.²⁸ Without breaking

²³ Cf. Maxwell A. Cameron and Kenneth E. Sharpe, ‘Andean Left Turns: Constituent Power and Constitution Making’, in *Latin America’s Left Turns: Politics, Policies, and Trajectories of Change*, ed. Maxwell A. Cameron and Eric Hershberg (Boulder: Lynne Rienner, 2010), 61–78; Escobar, ‘Latin America’.

²⁴ Arditi, ‘Arguments About the Left Turns in Latin America’, 73.

²⁵ Philippe C. Schmitter, ‘A Sketch of What A “Post-Liberal” Democracy Might Look Like’ (February 27, 2006) <http://www.talaljuk-ki.hu/index.php/article/articleprint/502/-/1/21> (accessed March 5, 2009).

²⁶ Cf. Fidel Pérez Flores, Clayton Mendonça Cunha Filho, and André Luiz Coelho, ‘Mecanismos de democracia participativa: o que há comum nas constituições da Bolívia, Equador e Venezuela?’, *Observador On-Line* 4, no. 7 (2009), http://observatorio.iuperj.br/pdfs/56_observador_topico_Observador_v_4_n_07.pdf (accessed September 17, 2009); Jonas Wolff, ‘New Constitutions and the Transformation of Democracy in Ecuador and Bolivia’, in Nolte and Schilling-Vacaflor, *New Constitutionalism in Latin America*, 183–202.

²⁷ Cf. Rovira Kaltwasser, ‘Toward Post-Neoliberalism in Latin America?’, 231–3.

²⁸ Richmond, *A Post-Liberal Peace*, 18. Cf. Tadjbakhsh, ‘Introduction’, 4.

with liberal principles as such, these are combined and partially replaced by “ways of knowing relating to peace” that deviate from Liberalism’s “Enlightenment, rational, and individualistic biases”.²⁹ An analysis of the elements of post-liberal democracy in contemporary Latin America gives us an idea about what this might mean.

Elements of post-liberalism in South America

In this section, I briefly summarize six important features that characterize the ongoing search for post-liberal politics and post-neoliberal economic policies in South America: the redefinition of the nation-state; the (territorial) reorganization of the state; the redefinition of the rule of law; the broadening of democratic participation; the broadening of the human rights agenda; and the transformation of the economy and the state-economy relationship. As will be seen, all these six elements directly relate to crucial problems discussed in the peacebuilding literature.

Throughout the section, my main point of reference will be Bolivia, a country in which the different changes have been particularly pronounced. Bolivia’s ongoing transformation process is very much associated with the name of Evo Morales, a union leader, coca grower and head of the political Movement toward Socialism (*Movimiento al Socialismo*, MAS), who in 2006 became the country’s first indigenous president. Since taking office, Morales has led a process of profound political change that included, as a core element, the restructuring of the political system via a constituent assembly. Yet, the adoption of the draft constitution by a two-thirds majority of the assembly’s present members, in the absence of the most important opposition groups, was heavily disputed and led to nine months of fierce political struggle. In the end, however, the governing MAS and parts of the opposition agreed on a detailed revision of the constitutional draft which was approved by a two-thirds majority in Congress.³⁰ In January 2009, the new Constitution was approved in a referendum by more than 60 percent of the population, paving the way for Morales’s reelection in late 2009 (and, most recently, again in 2014).

²⁹ Richmond, *A Post-Liberal Peace*, 190.

³⁰ Cf. Carlos Romero, Carlos Böhr, and Raúl Peñaranda, *Del conflicto al diálogo. Memorias del acuerdo constitucional* (Quito, fBDM and FES-ILDIS, 2009).

Redefining the nation-state

A core question for international peace- and statebuilding concerns the related task of nation-building.³¹ For obvious reasons, post-conflict societies are generally characterized by a lack of a common national identity. An innovative response that has emerged from Latin America, and particularly from the indigenous movements in the Andean countries of Bolivia and Ecuador, is the notion of a “plurinational state”. While the term seems to suggest an open break with the unitary conception of the nation-state, the concept as used and constitutionally recognized in Bolivia (and also in Ecuador) is rather a hybrid: It combines an overarching national identity with an acknowledgment of particular indigenous identities. In this sense, the new Bolivian constitution refers to the “Bolivian people” or the “Bolivian nation” (Article 3) and, at the same time, to indigenous “nations and peoples” (Article 2); the “the unity and integrity of the country” (Preamble), thus, coexists with “plurinational diversity” (Article 9).³² In fact, actual identities of the indigenous population in Bolivia (and beyond) very much correspond to this notion of dual identification. By and large, indigenous persons consider themselves to be Bolivians while at the same time identifying themselves as members of a specific indigenous people.³³

The interesting thing about the plurinational state is that it recognizes (even constitutionally) that multiple national identities exist and that acknowledging, in this case, indigenous nations and peoples does not necessarily call into question an overarching national identity. On the contrary, the Bolivian case suggests that it can even strengthen indigenous peoples’ identification with the now “plurinational” state. Yet, the indigenous claim for recognizing the plurinational nature of the Bolivian state has been very much contested.³⁴ Specifically, non-indigenous Bolivians feared a kind of reverse discrimination and, in fact, in the draft constitu-

³¹ Cf. Thorsten Gromes, *Ohne Staat und Nation ist keine Demokratie zu machen. Bosnien und Herzegowina, Kosovo und Makedonien nach den Bürgerkriegen* (Baden-Baden: Nomos, 2012).

³² República de Bolivia, Asamblea Constituyente, and Honorable Congreso Nacional, *Constitución Política del Estado. Texto aprobado en el referéndum constituyente de enero de 2009*, http://www.vicpresidencia.gob.bo/Portals/0/documentos/NUEVA_CONSTITUCION_POLITICA_DEL_ESTADO.pdf (accessed August 13, 2009). To be precise, the Bolivian constitution refers to “indigenous native peasant nations and peoples” (“*naciones y pueblos indígena originario campesinos*”) in order to reflect the diversity of indigenous peoples in the country.

³³ For instance, a study on Bolivia’s Constituent Assembly found that 42 percent of the 74 members of the assembly interviewed recognized “at the same time an indigenous identity and a Bolivian identity”. Moira Zuazo, ‘Introducción’, in *Lo que unos no quieren recordar es lo que otros no pueden olvidar. Asamblea Constituyente, descolonización e interculturalidad*, ed. Moira Zuazo and Cecilia Quiroga (La Paz, Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung, 2012): 13. In fact, also the self identification as indigenous – as opposed to “white” or “mestizo” – is rather fluid. For instance, in the 2012 polls of the Latin American Public Opinion Project (LAPOP), 79 percent of the respondents from Bolivia considered themselves “mestizo” (and a mere 15% “indigenous-native”) – and yet, 68 percent also considered themselves belonging to one of the country’s indigenous or native peoples. Vanderbilt University, ‘The Latin American Public Opinion Project (LAPOP)’, Database: Bolivia 2012, <http://lapop.ccp.ucr.ac.cr/Dummies.html> (accessed February 24, 2014).

³⁴ For these reasons, constitutional changes during the 1990s stopped short of recognizing Bolivia as a plurinational state and only referred to the country as “multiethnic” and “pluricultural”.

tion adopted by the constituent assembly in 2007 any reference to the “Bolivian nation” was missing and critics noted that formulations privileged the indigenous population. This was, however, changed when Bolivia’s parliament revised the draft constitution in October 2008. In general, the constituent assembly has been marked, *inter alia*, by the multifold clash between contradictory identity claims – triggered, in particular, by the unprecedented presence *within such a state institution* of representatives of the indigenous population, which is diverse but united by centuries of discrimination and a corresponding demand for a new phase of decolonization.³⁵

To be sure, disputes about the meaning and significance of the recognition of plurinationality in Bolivia persist until today, and are not likely to be resolved soon (just as entrenched patterns of discrimination exist to this day). Since 2010, some of Bolivia’s most important indigenous organizations also have increasingly questioned whether the Morales government was still committed to the promises implied by the notion of a plurinational state, most notably collective indigenous rights.³⁶ Yet, at least at a general and symbolic level, constitutional change in this dimension has led to a new kind of identification with the state among those parts of the Bolivian population that did not really feel represented by previous state institutions – no matter that these, too, had been democratically legitimated.³⁷

This debate about, and movement towards, a plurinational state is clearly most advanced in Bolivia, which is the only country in the region that features both an indigenous majority *and* strong indigenous movements.³⁸ But, in general, recent changes in Bolivia are part of a region-wide trend, which, since the 1980s, has seen an increasing recognition of indigenous identities, peoples and rights across Latin America (and is also connected to broader international trends). The other country in which a new constitution refers to the plurinational state is Ecuador, where the indigenous population represents a minority, but a period of exceptional indigenous mobilization still paved the way for a remarkable recognition of indigenous rights. Yet, the gap between constitutional promises and the reality of a government which, by now, explicitly defies many of the indigenous collective rights is much wider in Ecuador than in the case of Bolivia.³⁹

³⁵ See, for instance, the contributions to Zuazo and Quiroga, *Lo que unos no quieren recordar*.

³⁶ Cf. Dunia Mokrani Chávez and Marxa Nadia Chávez León, ‘Perspectivas del proceso de cambio tras la última victoria electoral del Movimiento al Socialismo’, in *El primer gobierno de Evo Morales: Un balance retrospectivo*, ed. Tanja Ernst and Stefan Schmalz (La Paz: Plural, 2012), 375–95.

³⁷ Cf. Programa de Naciones Unidas para el Desarrollo (PNUD), *Los cambios detrás del cambio. Informe Nacional sobre Desarrollo Humano en Bolivia* (La Paz: PNUD Bolivia, 2010).

³⁸ Cf. Donna Lee Van Cott, *From Movements to Parties in Latin America. The Evolution of Ethnic Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005); Yashar, *Contesting Citizenship in Latin America*.

³⁹ Cf. Marc Becker, ‘The Stormy Relations between Rafael Correa and Social Movements in Ecuador’, *Latin American Perspectives* 40, no. 3 (2013), 43–62.

Reorganizing the state

If recognizing the plurinational state is to be more than a symbolical act, it also requires redistributing political power and reorganizing the state. In Bolivia, this can be directly seen in the changing territorial structure of the state: The new plurinational state, *inter alia*, acknowledges spheres of indigenous self-government (“indigenous autonomies”) which add to – and partially cut across – the usual levels of the state (from the central to the municipal level).⁴⁰ Again, this clearly deviates from liberal notions of the state: Indigenous autonomies in Bolivia are to be governed not by unitary liberal principles, but in accordance with their customary “norms, institutions, authorities and procedures” (Article 290). This, however, does not imply an open rupture with the liberal state either. First, as the first attempts to construct indigenous autonomies clearly show, the internal political practices used within these “self-governed” areas are hybrids that include quite a few liberal mechanisms of constituting and controlling political authority.⁴¹ Second, these indigenous forms of self-governance do indeed exist in the overall framework of a unitary state that is basically liberal in its overall setup. Still, the functional and territorial reach of the state is clearly limited by the establishment of non-electoral, communal forms of indigenous self-government. Hence there have been concerns – if clearly exaggerated – that indigenous autonomies could lead to “a gradual construction of political, parastatal and independent entities within the Bolivian state”.⁴²

The same tension – and difficult balancing – between the authority of the state (in representation of the Bolivian people) and indigenous collective rights (expressing the self-government of the indigenous peoples) can also be seen with a view to a particularly contested issue: territorial rights and the exploitation of non-renewable resources. According to the new Bolivian constitution, the collective land rights held by indigenous peoples are inalienable, indivisible and unseizable (Article 384). With a view to the exploitation of non-renewable resources in such territories, indigenous communities have a “right to mandatory prior consultation by the state, in good faith and in a concerted fashion” (Article 30). At the same time, however, natural resources are owned by the “Bolivian people” and administered by the state on behalf of

⁴⁰ But this reorganization of the state has, of course, not only a territorial dimension. For instance, Bolivia’s new constitution also recognizes indigenous languages as “official languages of the state” on an equal footing with Spanish (Article 5) and, correspondingly, obliges every civil servant at the central and the departmental level of government to speak at least two such languages (Article 234).

⁴¹ Cf. Franz Barrios, ‘The Bolivian Invention. Plurinationality and indigenous people within an unusual composite state structure’, in *Federalism, Plurinationality and Democratic Constitutionalism. Theory and cases*, ed. Ferran Requejo and Miquel Caminal (Abingdon: Routledge, 2012): 266-294; María Tereza Zegada et al., *La democracia desde los márgenes. Transformaciones en el campo político boliviano* (La Paz: CLACSO and Muela del Diablo Editores, 2011), 175–98.

⁴² Carlos Cordero Carraffa, ‘La Asamblea Legislativa: Plurinacional Estructura y Organización’, in *Reflexión Crítica a la nueva Constitución Política del Estado*, ed. Susanne Käss and Iván Velásquez Castellanos (La Paz: Konrad Adenauer Stiftung, 2009): 166.

“the collective interest” (Article 349) – and this collective interest is still very much understood, also by the Morales government, in terms of a maximum exploitation of extractive resources. As a consequence, the government’s claim to represent the people frequently clashes with claims made in the name of collective indigenous rights. To the extent that this conflict involves incompatible conceptions of development, it cannot be solved by the norms of prior consultation. But the related procedures, if respected, do at least offer mechanisms for handling such conflicts in a peaceful manner, including by reducing socio-environmental damages and guaranteeing some kind of compensation.⁴³

Further examples of the contentious reorganization of the state concern the recognition of indigenous justice systems discussed below, but also the introduction of special electoral districts for indigenous people that live in rural areas and represent a minority in their respective department. In order to guarantee the representation of such indigenous minorities in parliament, the constitution provides for special seats that are to be elected alongside the general elections and are, thus, exempt from the principle of proportional representation. Yet, while candidates for these special districts can be selected based on indigenous customs and practices, the election itself follows the liberal-democratic voting mechanism. Furthermore, in the implementation of the constitutional provision, the number of special seats in parliament was restricted to seven out of 130, way below the 18 or even 36 demanded by indigenous movements. While a crucial mechanism for guaranteeing some representation of indigenous minorities in parliament, this innovation therefore, again, does only marginally modify the individualist logic of liberal-democratic representation.

Redefining the rule of law

Another crucial issue in the peace- and statebuilding debate is the rule of law – and, more specifically, the tension between the liberal state law that is to be implemented “from above” (but usually does not work very well) and local forms of community justice that exist at the grassroots level (and frequently work much better but exhibit non- or illiberal features).⁴⁴ The same kind of tension exists in a series of Latin American countries and concerns the existence of indigenous or community justice at the local level – also not least a result of the factual lack of reach and accessibility of the state’s judicial institutions especially in rural areas. Re-

⁴³ Cf. Iván Bascopé Sanjinés, ‘Consulta previa: reto de democracia comunitaria’, in Santos and Exeni, *Justicia indígena, plurinacionalidad y interculturalidad en Bolivia*, 381–406; Almut Schilling-Vacaflor and David Vollrath, ‘Indigenous and peasant participation in resource governance in Bolivia and Peru’, in *Civil Society and the State in Left-Led Latin America. Challenges and Limitations to Democratization*, ed. Barry Cannon and Peadar Kirby (London: Zed Books, 2012): 126–40.

⁴⁴ Cf. Michael Schoiswohl, ‘What’s law got to do with it? The role of law in post-conflict democratization and its (flawed) assumptions’, in Tadjbakhsh, *Rethinking the Liberal Peace*, 110–27.

sponding to this reality and to increasing claims by indigenous movements, several Latin American countries since the 1990s have increasingly recognized indigenous customs and practices or indigenous community justice.⁴⁵

Bolivia, again, represents the most far-reaching experience, at least as far as the constitutional situation is concerned. The new Bolivian constitution goes so far as to place ordinary and indigenous legal jurisdiction on an equal footing (Article 179). The main instruments through which the tensions between liberal state and indigenous community justice are to be handled are the new Plurinational Constitutional Court, which includes representatives of both justice systems, and a Law on Jurisdictional Delimitation. This latter law, adopted in 2010, explicitly limits “the scope of applicability of indigenous law to cases where personal, territorial and material indigenous jurisdictions are simultaneously at work” and includes a “long list of legal areas over which indigenous authorities have no jurisdiction”, including corruption, rape and homicide.⁴⁶ While thereby solving the most pressing concerns over community justice that have been voiced from liberal perspectives, these restrictions tend to contradict the basic notion of “judicial pluralism and equal ranking of the different justice systems”.⁴⁷ Still, tensions with liberal civil rights norms persist, for example with a view to principles of due process, norms of gender equality or the issue of physical punishment.⁴⁸ In this sense, the debate about how to deal with legal pluralism in Bolivia persists – as does the politico-judicial process of finding norms and mechanisms that may best realize the constitutional recognition of both ordinary and indigenous justice.⁴⁹

In general, the research on indigenous community justice in the Andean region shows that it works relative well: When compared to the state’s justice system, which is often hardly present in rural areas and frequently perceived as alien, community justice provides an important mechanism for resolving a broad range of conflicts in ways that local populations generally regard as much more efficient and legitimate.⁵⁰ While research shows that indigenous com-

⁴⁵ Cf. Idón Moisés Chivi Vargas, ‘El largo camino de la jurisdicción indígena’, in Santos and Exeni, *Justicia indígena, plurinacionalidad y interculturalidad en Bolivia*, 275–379.

⁴⁶ Anna Barrera, ‘Turning Legal Pluralism into State-Sanctioned Law: Assessing the Implications of the New Constitutions and Laws in Bolivia and Ecuador’, in Nolte and Schilling-Vacaflor, *New Constitutionalism in Latin America*, 371–90.

⁴⁷ Agustín Grijalva Jiménez and José Luis Exeni Rodríguez, ‘Coordinación entre justicias, ese desafío’, in Santos and Exeni, *Justicia indígena, plurinacionalidad y interculturalidad en Bolivia*, 703.

⁴⁸ Cf. John L. Hammond, ‘Indigenous Community Justice in the Bolivian Constitution of 2009’, *Human Rights Quarterly* 33, no. 3 (2011), 677–80.

⁴⁹ Grijalva and Exeni, ‘Coordinación entre justicias’, 729; PROJURIDE, *Sistemas jurídicos indígena originario campesinos en Bolivia. Tres aproximaciones: Curahuara de Carangas (Oruro), Sacaca (Potosí) y Charagua Norte (Santa Cruz)* (La Paz: GIZ, 2012), 174.

⁵⁰ See Hans-Jürgen Brandt and Rocío Franco Valdivia, eds., *El tratamiento de conflictos. Un estudio de actas en 133 comunidades* (Lima: Instituto de Defensa Legal, 2006); and Hans-Jürgen Brandt and Rocío Franco Valdivia,

munity justice is not at all arbitrary, but follows specific rationalities, its logic is clearly different from the rationality guiding ordinary (liberal, state) justice: The overall aim is to preserve the social harmony of a given community; its main strategy is some kind of (re-)conciliation.⁵¹ From this perspective, for instance, long-term imprisonment is irrational, while what is regarded as physical punishment from a liberal perspective (e.g., whipping with nettles, ice water baths) is considered rather symbolic acts of purification and/or reconciliation. Yet, research also clearly shows that the practice of lynching – a serious problem in Bolivia and often misleadingly related to indigenous justice – is, in fact, not a part of indigenous norms of community justice.⁵²

Just as in quite a few post-conflict societies legal pluralism in the Andean region is, thus, both an empirical reality and a normative challenge – and research on the experiences in Bolivia, Colombia, Ecuador and Peru offers a series of crucial insights about both the diverse practices of indigenous/community justice and about different ways of dealing with legal pluralism in more or less pluralist ways.

Broadening democratic participation

In the mainstream model of liberal democracy, the people does not in fact govern but through elected representatives. In debates about peace- and statebuilding, a common criticism has precisely been directed against an overly focus on (early) elections.⁵³ In South America, disenchantment with the ways in which real-existing representative democracy worked made the call for a turn to “participatory democracy” so attractive. In the case of Bolivia, this broadening of political participation includes five elements.⁵⁴ First, in terms of direct democracy, the new constitution offers expanded opportunities for referenda and citizens’ legislative initiatives, including the need for the popular ratification of constitutional changes and international treaties that affect national sovereignty. Second, the introduction of recall referenda, by giving voters the opportunity to revoke the mandate of elected office holders in the executive and the legislature, establishes a new kind of popular checks on representatives. Third, the

eds., *Normas, valores y procedimientos en la justicia comunitaria. Estudio Cualitativo en Comunidades Indígenas y Campesinas de Ecuador y Perú* (Lima: Instituto de Defensa Legal, 2007).

⁵¹ Cf. Xavier Albó, ‘Justicia indígena en la Bolivia plurinacional’, in Santos and Exeni, *Justicia indígena, plurinacionalidad y interculturalidad en Bolivia*, 207–13; Martín Bazurco Osorio and José Luis Exeni Rodríguez, ‘Bolivia: Justicia indígena en tiempos de plurinacionalidad’, in Santos and Exeni, *Justicia indígena, plurinacionalidad y interculturalidad en Bolivia*, 129–31; Brandt and Franco, *El tratamiento de conflictos*, 195–206; Brandt and Franco, *Normas, valores y procedimientos en la justicia comunitaria*, 165; Hammond, ‘Indigenous Community Justice’, 660, 680.

⁵² Hammond, 672. The Bolivian Law on Jurisdictional Delimitation explicitly prohibits lynching (and, in line with constitution, any kind of death penalty).

⁵³ Edward Newman, ‘The international architecture of peacebuilding’, in Mac Ginty, *Routledge Handbook of Peacebuilding*, 318–9.

⁵⁴ Cf. Wolff, ‘Towards Post-Liberal Democracy’, 41–52.

reach of popular elections is expanded to include the top echelons of the judiciary (which are elected in direct elections, based on a pre-selection effected by parliament). Fourth, the new constitution entitles indigenous organizations and citizens' groups to compete for elected public office, thereby ending the monopoly on representation traditionally held by political parties. Finally, "organized civil society" gains rights to participate "in the design of public policies" as well as to exercise "social control" over state administration, public enterprises and institutions (Article 241).⁵⁵

As a result, the new constitutional setup increases the possibilities of the population to shape and control political institutions and decisions. In contrast to the liberal mainstream model, it is rather vertical accountability to the people than horizontal accountability exercised by parliament or a supposedly apolitical judiciary that is privileged.⁵⁶ At the same time, and in line with the notion of post-liberal democracy outlined above, this broadened range of channels and mechanisms of political participation remains embedded in a predominantly representative political system. In the end, it is parliament that regulates most non-conventional forms of political participation (through so-called organic laws). Given the presidentialist nature of the political regime, the executive also retains quite a lot of power to use and possibly also misuse plebiscitary instruments.

Broadening human rights

A related criticism of liberal peacebuilding concerns its focus on a relatively narrow, and specifically liberal, set of political and civil rights. Especially when combined with neoliberal recipes of economic reform, this frequently implies a disregard for economic, social and cultural rights, which are equally established as human rights at the international level.⁵⁷ Yet, given the existing socioeconomic conditions in the Global South, liberal democracy's emphasis on formal political equality rings quite hollow to most people. This is, at least, the experience from Latin America where two decades of formal democracy that have not been accompanied by a significant reduction in the dramatic socioeconomic inequalities have led, since

⁵⁵ According to the 2013 Law of Participation and Social Control (*Ley de Participación y Control Social*), the right to participation and social control is exercised by either individuals, which may register in an issue-specific way, or by social organizations that represent either social sectors, neighborhood associations, trade-union organizations, indigenous peoples, or intercultural or Afro-Bolivian communities. Their rights include, *inter alia*, to participate in the design of public policies and planning processes at all levels of the state as well as to exercise social control with a view to the execution of public policies (plans, programs and projects).

⁵⁶ In the actual practice of Bolivian politics, this vertical accountability, however, is still largely exercised in informal ways, i.e., through the mobilization "on the street" and following negotiations between protestors and state representatives. Cf. Wolff, 'Towards Post-Liberal Democracy', 45–6.

⁵⁷ Cf. Kristoffer Lidén, 'Building Peace between Global and Local Politics: The Cosmopolitical Ethics of Liberal Peacebuilding', *International Peacekeeping* 16, no. 5 (2009), 616–34; Richmond, *A Post-Liberal Peace*, 25–43.

the turn of the century, to a reemergence of the “social question” and the “left turn” discussed above.

In the case of Bolivia, the “fundamental rights” recognized by the new constitution clearly go beyond the usual series of political and civil rights and strengthen both socioeconomic and collective (cultural) rights. The latter specifically concern the rights of indigenous peoples and have already been discussed above. The former include universal entitlements to free education and health care, access to drinking water and sewerage, electricity, cooking gas, and basic postal and telecommunication services as well as social security and retirement (Articles 16–20, 45). The flip side of such socioeconomic rights is constituted by restrictions on property rights and of private economic activities: Economic activities are required to play a positive social, economic and environmental role (Article 312); the right to private property is conditional on its performing a “social function” (Article 56), land rights are limited by a ban on the *latifundio*, an upper limit of 5,000 hectares and the requirement of land to fulfill a “social-economic function” (Article 398); and the privatization of basic public services – water/sewage, public health, social security – is prohibited (Articles 20, 38, 45).

In response to this emphasis on socioeconomic rights, the Morales government has indeed significantly expanded social policies, rates of poverty and inequality have fallen, and the provision with basic public services has improved.⁵⁸ Yet, Bolivia is of course still far from realizing universal socioeconomic rights. The broad catalog of human rights contained in the new constitution, in this sense, is rather a promise of progressive change than an immediately effective guarantee. As such, the socioeconomic rights also constitute an important normative reference point for social mobilization.

Transforming the economy and the state-economy relationship

A common feature of the region-wide turn to the left has been the critique of, and partial shift away from, “neoliberalism”, the agenda of liberalization, privatization and deregulation that characterized economic reforms in Latin American throughout the 1980s and 1990s. In the comparative literature on the left turn, Bolivia is usually discussed as one of the countries in

⁵⁸ Cf. Comisión Económica para América Latina y el Caribe (CEPAL), *Panorama Social de América Latina 2013* (Santiago de Chile: CEPAL, 2013). See also Fernando Mayorga, ‘La democracia boliviana: Avances y desafíos’, in *Democracias en Transformación: ¿Qué hay de nuevo en los Estados andinos?*, ed. Anja Dargatz and Moira Zuazo (La Paz: Friedrich Ebert Stiftung, 2012), 70–5; Fernando Molina, ‘¿Por qué Evo Morales sigue siendo popular? Las fortalezas del MAS en la construcción de un nuevo orden’, *Nueva Sociedad*, no. 245 (2013), 6–10.

which this turning away from neoliberal policies has been relatively pronounced, if not as radical as in Venezuela.⁵⁹

In line with his promise to break with “neoliberalism”, the Morales government has significantly increased the role of the state in the economy. This increase includes efforts to expand regulation of the private sector, to raise the fiscal share of economic profits, and to expand the active economic role of the state via public investment and public enterprises. These changes particularly concerned the country’s most important export sector, namely gas. Following Morales’ declaration of a “nationalization” of the country’s gas resources in May 2006, international companies were forced into new contractual relationships; the control of the state, and of the state-owned gas company YPFB, in the hydrocarbon sector was strengthened; and taxes on gas companies were increased. At the same time, the government used rising revenues from hydrocarbon and mineral resources to expand social spending and public investment.⁶⁰ Overall, Morales’ economic policies are best called “heterodox”: In the sense of a gradual shift away from neoliberal recipes, they are characterized by “selective, rather than comprehensive, forms of state intervention that challenge orthodox principles without fully abandoning the market-led model or making the state the primary engine of development” as well as by “redistributive social policies” that include “increased expenditure, extended coverage of existing social programs, and redistribution through labor market policies”.⁶¹ While generally committed to property rights, in some areas the Bolivian government has taken “bolder measures to redistribute assets and wealth”.⁶² This, specifically, concerns land reform as well as the policy of nationalization that has mainly affected the gas sector. But even in these areas, agrarian reform has mainly consisted of the redistribution of public land to poor peasants and indigenous communities, and nationalization has usually involved compensation.

⁵⁹ Cf. Steven Levitsky and Kenneth M. Roberts, eds., *The Resurgence of the Latin American Left* (Baltimore, MD: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2011); Macdonald and Ruckert, *Post-Neoliberalism in the Americas*; Pablo Stefanoni, ‘Posneoliberalismo cuesta arriba. Los modelos de Venezuela, Bolivia y Ecuador en debate’, *Nueva Sociedad* no. 239 (2012), 51–64; Weyland et al., *Leftist Governments in Latin America*.

⁶⁰ Cf. George Gray Molina, ‘The Challenge of Progressive Change under Evo Morales’, in *Leftist Governments in Latin America: Successes and Shortcomings*, ed. Kurt Weyland, Raúl L. Madrid, and Wendy Hunter (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 57–76; Jeffery R. Webber, ‘From Naked Barbarism to Barbarism with Benefits: Neoliberal Capitalism, Natural Gas Policy, and the Evo Morales Government in Bolivia’, in Macdonald and Ruckert, *Post-Neoliberalism in the Americas*, 105–19; Mark Weisbrot, Rebecca Ray, and Jake Johnston, ‘Bolivia: The Economy During the Morales Administration’ (Washington, DC: Center for Economic and Policy Research, 2009), <http://www.cepr.net/documents/publications/bolivia-2009-12.pdf> (accessed April 15, 2010).

⁶¹ Steven Levitsky and Kenneth M. Roberts, ‘Introduction: Latin America’s “Left Turn”: A Framework for Analysis’, in Levitsky and Roberts, *The Resurgence of the Latin American Left*, 22–3.

⁶² *Ibid.*, 23.

Implications for the debate about post-liberal peacebuilding

There are interesting trends in Latin America, and most notably in Bolivia, that point towards the possible emergence of post-liberalism in the sense discussed by Richmond.⁶³ At least, there are features of political change that go beyond mainstream templates of liberal democracy and (neo-)liberal market economy. In this final section, I summarize the ways in which these experiences might serve as inspirations for the academic debate about peacebuilding and discuss insights into the contradictions and risks involved in the search for post-liberal ways of organizing political rule.

Inspirations

In a very basic way, recent political changes in Latin America may inspire researchers as well as peacebuilders – whether internationals or locals or something in between. Of course, everyone knows that democracy is an essentially contested concept,⁶⁴ but it is contemporary Latin America where (a) actual contestation of democracy is combined with attempts to change the parameters of democratic order in ways that are also, if differently, democratic. Another dimension (b) concerns the (post-neoliberal) recuperation of the state as an active agent of social change and development. In this regard, there are also important contemporary experiences elsewhere, but what appears to be specific about South America's left turn – and justifies the qualifier “left”, in contrast, for instance, to contemporary China – is the combination of poverty reduction with (c) a significant decline in inequalities. This is all the more notable because Latin America has traditionally been the most unequal region of the Global South. Furthermore, the (gradual) reduction in socioeconomic inequalities is accompanied by (d) an increasing political participation of marginalized sectors of society. If certainly not in all countries of the region, there is at least a general trend in this direction and remarkable experiences in some individual countries (like Bolivia). In fact, the so-called left turn is, in many ways, the result of the mobilization of different kinds of disadvantaged sectors of society: the unemployed movements in Argentina, Brazil's landless movement, indigenous movements in Bolivia and Ecuador etc.⁶⁵ The relationships between these social movements and the left or center-left governments they helped to bring to political power have been contradictory and

⁶³ To be sure, David Chandler uses the concept of post-liberalism in a very different way. See David Chandler and Oliver Richmond, ‘Contesting postliberalism: governmentality or emancipation?’ *Journal of International Relations and Development* 18, no. 1 (2015): 1–24.

⁶⁴ W. B. Gallie, ‘Essentially Contested Concepts’, *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society* 56 (1956): 167–98.

⁶⁵ Cf. Susan Eva Eckstein and Timothy P. Wickham-Crowley, eds., *Struggles for Social Rights in Latin America* (New York, NY: Routledge, 2003); Hank Johnston and Paul Almeida, eds., *Latin American Social Movements. Globalization, Democratization, and Transnational Networks* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2006); Eduardo Silva, *Challenging Neoliberalism in Latin America* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009).

conflict-ridden.⁶⁶ Still, it might serve as an inspiration that it was resistance and mobilization “from below” that created the political opportunities for progressive change and, thereby, also increased the avenues for political participation of marginalized sectors.

Across the four dimensions mentioned, Latin American experiments with post-liberal politics also includes more specific experiences that may be useful to consider as inspiration for re-thinking politico-economic order beyond the liberal template: participatory budgeting, recall referenda or the electoral participation of indigenous and citizens’ groups, the nationalization of extractive industries and different (targeted versus universal, conditional or unconditional) kinds of social programs, or indigenous justice systems and the coordination and delimitation of state and community justice.

Furthermore, political changes in Latin America have led to conceptual innovation which might be useful for academic and political debates also outside this specific region. This concerns, for instance, the debates about the plurinational state and the notion of post-liberal democracy.

Caveats

Latin America also offers insights into the contradictions and risks involved in the search for post-liberal ways of organizing political rule. This concerns, again, the four dimensions discussed above. Contestation of democracy is (a) not simply nice and democratic, but also potentially conflict-ridden. If the very fundamentals of political order are up for discussion, this plausibly increases the risk of violent conflict. In fact, the process of constitutional change in Bolivia was characterized by an open clash between different conceptions of democracy – and by mutual allegations that what was presented as democratic by the opponent was precisely the opposite (colonial or imperialist, exclusive or secessionist, autocratic or totalitarian).

The Bolivian attempt to construct some kind of post-liberal democracy also brought about more specific risks. On the one hand, the transition process as such meant dismantling an existing structure of democratic institutions and, thus, led to a certain, if temporary, institutional vacuum during which the democratic shape of the future political order was uncertain (at least from the perspective of the opposition). On the other hand, features of Bolivia’s new political order such as the emphasis on direct (or plebiscitary) democracy do not only increase the power of the people, but more specifically the power of the majority; at the same time, a pop-

⁶⁶ Cf. Ulrich Brand and Nicola Sekler, ‘Struggling between Autonomy and Institutional Transformations: Social Movements in Latin America and the Move toward Post-Neoliberalism’, in Macdonald and Ruckert, *Post-Neoliberalism in the Americas*, 54–70; Jonas Wolff, ‘(De-)Mobilising the Marginalised. A Comparison of the Argentine Piqueteros and Ecuador’s Indigenous Movement’, *Journal of Latin American Studies* 39, no. 1 (2007), 1–29.

ular president can use plebiscitary mechanisms to further increase and consolidate his/her power vis-à-vis the opposition, minorities or other powers and levels of the state.

This already points to the ambivalences in the dimension of (b) the recuperation of the state. Strengthening the role of the state, in the context of Latin America's presidentialist regimes, has meant strengthening the executive level of the state. In this sense, it is specifically the governments (in Bolivia, Ecuador and Venezuela) that claim to promote "participatory democracy" that are criticized, as much by the right-wing opposition as by critics from the left, for concentrating power in the hands of the incumbent presidents.⁶⁷ In general, strengthening the state in the name of democracy is an ambivalent agenda: On the one hand, state institutions that are relatively autonomous from the social forces and economic powers that be are necessary if the state's democratic setup is to have any meaning; on the other, a strong and relatively autonomous state tends to undermine society's capacity to democratically control its affairs. A similar ambivalence applies to the notion of participatory democracy: It requires institutionalizing social participation, which at the same time threatens to undermine the very autonomy of those groups that are supposed to control the state.⁶⁸

Furthermore, critical studies on the different left and center-left governments have also shown that (c) the reduction in inequalities is still gradual at best, and that Latin American governments have generally not been able to tackle the structural causes of the deeply rooted and multiple social inequalities that persist in all countries of the region.⁶⁹ In the same vein, even in the case of Bolivia, which has seen a really remarkable improvement in the representation and participation of the indigenous majority of the population, important parts of the indigenous and poor population still (and again increasingly so) consider themselves as fairly excluded from national politics. In general, many of the successes in the increased political participation of marginalized sectors of society have tended to be rather temporal, depending less on a new institutional framework of participation than on continued political mobilization. This is the case of the indigenous movements in Bolivia or Ecuador, but also of the unemployed movements in Argentina.⁷⁰

⁶⁷ See, for example, the discussion in Dargatz and Moira Zuazo, *Democracias en Transformación*.

⁶⁸ Cf. Ulrich Brand, 'El papel del Estado y de las políticas públicas en los procesos de transformación', in *Más allá del desarrollo*, ed. Grupo Permanente de Trabajo sobre Alternativas al Desarrollo (Quito: Abya Yala, 2011), 145–57; Benjamin Goldfrank, 'The Left and Participatory Democracy: Brazil, Uruguay, and Venezuela', in Levitsky and Roberts, *The Resurgence of the Latin American Left*, 162–83; Moira Zuazo, '¿Los movimientos sociales en el poder? El gobierno del MAS en Bolivia', *Nueva Sociedad*, no. 227 (2010), 120–35.

⁶⁹ See, for example, the contributions to the journal *Nueva Sociedad*, no. 239 (2012).

⁷⁰ Cf. Jonas Wolff, 'Movimientos sociales y la lucha por la democratización de la democracia: Experiencias recientes en América del Sur', in *Democracia y reconfiguraciones contemporáneas del derecho en América Latina*, ed. Stefanie Kron, Sérgio Costa and Marianne Braig (Frankfurt: Vervuert, 2012), 297–322.

What is crucial for the issue of peacebuilding is the recognition that the search for (some kind of) post-liberal political order – and, thus, also for post-liberal peace – is itself a conflict-ridden process. While “localizing” peacebuilding may plausibly reduce conflicts between external and local actors, it may well increase intra-local struggle – precisely because local-local interactions then become decisive. As seen, the transformation initiated by the Morales government in Bolivian provoked the fierce resistance from formerly privileged sectors of society, which happened to be concentrated in the south-eastern lowlands and organized around autonomy movements; in 2008, conflict escalation brought the country to the brink of civil war. Important motives behind this resistance and conflict escalation included the rejection of the (post-liberal) model of democracy, the (plurinational) notion of the state and the (post-neoliberal) changes in economic policies promoted by the Morales government. Furthermore, while the construction of a post-liberal democracy promises a locally appropriate and appropriated political system, there is not necessarily a positive correlation between legitimacy (in terms of local perceptions) and effectiveness (in terms of conflict resolution). In fact, since 2010, sociopolitical conflicts have again been on the rise in Bolivia – and the capacity of the new political system to deal with them in a constructive way has so far been limited.⁷¹

Finally, when trying to draw lessons from contemporary Latin American politics for the debate about peacebuilding, there is also one crucial limitation, which concerns the issue of sequencing. In Bolivia (as in other countries of the region), the contemporary attempt to move towards some kind of post-liberal democracy followed two decades of democratic rule and economic reform that were basically guided by (neo-)liberal templates. This sequence is, in fact, at the heart of notions of *post*-liberalism and *post*-neoliberalism. The same holds true for the struggle to create a plurinational state, which follows, in this case, almost two centuries of independent statehood organized around the idea of the nation-state. Arguably, the political success of the Morales government as well as the relative peacefulness of the whole process of change in Bolivia depended, *inter alia*, on this strong (liberal) legacy. This led to the mentioned persistence of basic features of the pre-existing politico-economic order which was not, in fact, openly challenged: “Participatory democracy” was never to replace representative democracy (in fact, representative institutions continue to dominate the Bolivian polity); “nationalizations” and redistributive measures were accompanied by a basic continuity in the economic order (in fact, macroeconomic policies of the Morales government have been fairly

⁷¹ This remains true even if this limited capacity in terms of conflict resolution is arguably less due to the institutions of post-liberal democracy as such, but rather related to the specific ways in which the Morales government is dealing with protest and opposition (which, at times, includes the deliberate ignorance of existing mechanisms of conflict resolution).

conservative); the recognition of indigenous nations and peoples never meant the rejection of Bolivia as a unitary state (in fact, the Morales government has always combined an emphasis on indigenous rights with a basically national-popular discourse). In imposing limitations on the self-declared “revolutionary” process of change, these postcolonial legacies of the previous liberal order created important continuities that have rendered the emerging order much more acceptable to the political opposition, the regional autonomy movements and the (old) economic elites. These continuities – although certainly problematic in terms of the far-reaching promises of “re-founding” and “decolonizing” Bolivia – have been crucial in facilitating a largely peaceful process of change.

Conclusion

The most important feature of the debates about both post-liberal peace, post-neoliberal economics and post-liberal democracy is, arguably, that they are not aimed at identifying yet another universal template. If anything, the main academic and political purpose is to open up discussions that have been too narrow and closed for too long. Thinking about alternatives, however, still requires also concrete ideas about elements and characteristics, dynamics and paths that may characterize (different) post-liberal configurations. And while theoretical reflections are certainly needed, the very idea of post-liberalism as something arising “bottom up” from dynamics at least partially driven by local knowledge and local agency points to the need to empirically study developments that point in some post-liberal direction. In this sense, this article has argued, recent experiences from Latin America do offer political inspirations as well as important caveats which might be of interest for both scholars of peacebuilding and for those engaged in building whatever kind of hybrid peace in their country.