Why is Liberal Peacebuilding so Difficult? Some Lessons from Central America

Kurtenbach, Sabine

Exploraciones/Explorations

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Some Lessons from Central America

Sabine Kurtenbach

Abstract: According to the liberal peacebuilding paradigm the termination of war is a window of opportunity for fundamental change. Central America has been one of the first laboratories of international policies promoting the threefold transformation process of pacification, democratization and economic liberalization. Although none of the post-war countries (Nicaragua, El Salvador, Guatemala) slipped back into war, serious deficits abound that can neither be explained as mere consequences of war nor as 'normal' developmental problems. The paper introduces an analytical framework locating these problems at the intersection between external influences, societal foundations, consequences of war and violence as well as peacebuilding. The comparative analysis of the three transformation processes – democratization, market economy and pacification – shows how path dependent patterns remain dominant while reform processes are fragile. This allows for an explanation of common features as well as differences inside the region.
Keywords: peacebuilding, transformation, path-dependency, Central America.

More than twenty-two years ago on 7 August 1987, the Central American presidents signed a comprehensive peace treaty (Esquipulas-II), which was a first step to end the internal wars in Nicaragua (1990), El Salvador (1992) and Guatemala (1996).[1] War and violence had taken over 300,000 lives, caused the displacement of two million Central Americans from their homes and destroyed a significant portion of the already weak social and economic infrastructure. The formal ending of the wars was seen as a basis not just for recovery but for a fundamental transformation of the region towards peace, stability and development. From a global perspective, Central America was one of the first laboratories for the liberal peacebuilding paradigm, a label attached to the increasingly comprehensive external interventions in post-war and post-conflict societies.[2] This paradigm assumes that the threefold transformation to peace, democracy and market economy is a self-strengthening process leading to sustainable development (see Paris 2004).

In the meantime the problems of implementation have become obvious in many post-war countries, with Afghanistan being the most recent example. At least at a first glance Central America remains one of the few successful cases as none of the three countries has slipped back into war. Nevertheless serious deficits in the transformation processes are obvious: democratization is fragile, development patterns are unequal and the levels of violence high. These problems can be analysed as symptoms for the difficult interaction between historically ingrained development paths, the legacy of war and violence and the liberal peacebuilding agenda.

A contextual framework for the analysis of post-war societies

The liberal paradigm in international politics promotes a threefold transformation process of democratization, economic liberalization, and pacification as the foundation for peacebuilding. The underlying assumption is that the transformation

processes will cause positive feedbacks on each other. The theoretical framework is rooted in the historical experiences of Western Europe and the body of socio-logical, political and economic research developed in this context.[3] While this approach was relatively successful in Europe and Japan after World War II, today it has fallen short for two reasons. First, the international context has changed dramatically from a state-centred system to a globalized system resulting in a series of fractures for the post-war societies. Second, peacebuilding strategies systematically underestimate the influence of local or national development features as well as the competing dynamics favouring violence or peace in post-war societies. Hence the reality of today's post-war countries is quite different from historical examples, showing a wide range from a direct backslide into war or armed conflict to the development of hybrid regimes that use formal democracy as a façade or renew traditional patterns of 'mal-development' and violence. The main body of the existing literature analyses these processes from the perspective of external actors (mandate, duration, funding), in specific sectors (elections, aid, reconstruction) or in the form of case studies. Comparative and integrated approaches are nearly non-existent.[4]

The contextual framework developed here aims to open a new perspective for the comparative analysis of post-war societies from different historical, cultural and regional areas. Its starting point is the fact that conflict is inherent to processes of social change and development. Both processes lead to fundamental changes of the structures of society and provoke realignments of the relations and the power distribution between central actors. In the twenty-first century these processes are influenced by the growing interdependence and the various influences the international system and the multitude of actors have all over the world. International norms and treaties, global economic trends, etc. have a growing impact that goes far beyond the actions of peacebuilding missions or international aid agencies. At the same time, the degree and level of their influence is not unidirectional but depends on the historical, cultural and social structure of a given society. From this perspective, the main focus of analysis of post-war societies should be the double intersection between the external requirements (supporting or blocking transformation) and the societal basis (enabling or hindering transformation) on the one hand, and the changes in society caused by the war and the details of the process of its termination on the other. Peacebuilding is thus understood as an intermestic issue that must be analysed as the outcome of the complex relationship between these four variables. While the interaction between the process of globalization and the historical and cultural foundations of a society is most relevant at the level of structures (institutions, models of development, among others), the intersection between war and peace is highly relevant for the behaviour of the central actors (e.g. perceptions, options for action, strategies, alliances). The framework thus enables us to integrate the analysis of structures and actors in the process of change. This is a challenging as well as an innovative endeavour; nonetheless it is necessary to handle the growing complexity that comparative research has to address (see Schmitter 2009).

Compared to other approaches to post-war societies, this research perspective has the advantage of opening up the analysis beyond the direct actors and consequences of war and put society at the centre. This is important as success and failure of the larger process of peacebuilding can only be understood and explained when we look at and analyse the interplay between society, war and transformation

process. Here the former war actors are important but not necessarily the most decisive players. This 'societal perspective' enables us to analyse long-term processes beyond current developments and events by placing them in perspective. The analysis therefore needs to follow a double tracked approach looking at longitudinal developments and at fractures caused either by war and violence or by the requirements of the transformation process.

Methodologically this concept relies on studies of path dependency that emphasize the importance of time and process.[5] In our context the liberal peace hypothesis assumes that war termination can be a 'critical juncture' for pacification, democratization and development. The crucial question is then whether – and under what conditions – peacebuilding can activate key variables in favour of the self-reinforcing process, and under which circumstances it triggers factors causing blockades, turns into hybrid forms or even setbacks. So what are the key variables for the threefold transformation process and how are they shaped by the double intersection?

Democratization

The authoritarian and exclusionary nature of the political regime has been an important cause of the Central American wars (and elsewhere). Hence regime change and democratization after the war's end are seen both as a mechanism to address structural causes of war as well as a tool for the prevention of renewed violence. The underlying assumption of modernization and civilization theory (Elias 1976, among others) is that social change (differentiation, urbanization, education, etc.) leads to the extension of internal and external controls for interpersonal violence, thus establishing a positive relationship between social change, democracy and violence control.[6] As a result democratization of the political system has become the central demand of the various external actors in post-war countries. The third wave of democratization and the end of the cold war seemed to make democratization possible all over the world. But while the transition to electoral democracy is quite simple (although the standards of free, fair and universal elections are not met everywhere), the consolidation and persistence of democratic regimes are related to the substance and quality of the regime change.[7]

Democratization is a very complex and conflictive process because it restructures the traditional power system. Even under a limited polyarchy concept of democracy, democratization in post-war contexts is a highly conflictive process for ex-combatants as well as for society overall (see Mansfield and Snyder 1995). Macro quantitative studies on the correlation between political regimes and violence find evidence for the democratic peace/civilization theory approach but also for high levels of conflict and violence during democratization. Hegre (2004) describes the development as an inverted U, where violence is less likely either in stable authoritarian regimes or in consolidated democracies, while it first increases and then decreases in the transformation process from one into the other. As most post-war countries are at the beginning of this process, they are rather unlikely candidates for successful transition and consolidation to democracy.

Focussing on the double intersection, democratization is influenced by external demands for – at least formal – democratization, by the existence or absence of an

internal, societal foundation as well as the power relations between different actors shaped by war and its termination. Under this perspective two issues are of major importance for post-war democratization:

o   The existence of a societal basis: the transformation theory formulates a series of conditions that are important for the transition and the consolidation of democracy like a majority of actors favouring democracy, a lack of viable alternatives and historic experiences or traditions of democratic participation (see Merkel 1999, Merkel and Puhle 1999). Tilly's (2007) concept of democratization and de-democratization is a useful tool to identify some factors that might also be important for post-war contexts. He distinguishes three clusters of processes, each of which can show an increasing or decreasing tendency (pp. 23-24): integration between interpersonal networks of trust and public policies; insulation of public policies from existing forms of inequality influencing everyday life (ethnicity, gender, etc); autonomy of major power centres (with most of all those commanding means of coercion like warlords, clientele networks, armies, religious communities) from public policies. These processes are highly related to the broader changes that war and violence have on the structure and the different actors of society.

o   Effects and consequences of war and violence: war and widespread violence influence the character of a political regime or may even lead to a change or transformation of existing regimes. This happens either through processes of militarization and the strengthening of vertical hierarchies due to real or supposed necessities of the 'war effort' or through a rupture of the existing regime. Being at war, even liberal democracies limit existing civil rights and liberties. Post-war societies thus face the challenge of liberalization and inclusion of marginalized sectors and the mitigation of polarized environments. The transformation of armed actors into political actors is just one important issue for successful democratization. Equally eminent under a broader perspective is that institutional arrangements are open for the inclusion of other political forces and the change in power relationships and help the various parts of society to overcome fear and develop civic trust.[8]

Thus most post-war situations are characterized by hybrid regimes and by the conflict between actors in favour of or against transformation. They mostly still rely on their war-time constituencies but need to renew and to adjust their social base to the new context.

Central American democracy

Developments in Central America illustrate the related problems. Democratization began in the midst of war in all three countries as a result of international – mostly US – pressure. The societal basis for this process was historically small and highly shaped by violence.[9] Although external pressure led to an opening of the former authoritarian systems and to an expansion of options for the non-armed opposition, it also implied a series of restrictions as a consequence of war and violence:

o   authoritarian enclaves were institutionalized;
o   the military remained in charge of internal 'security'; and
o   participation remained restricted as long as the wars were ongoing.

Only in Nicaragua was the end of war the result of a lost election of the Sandinista regime, while in El Salvador and Guatemala the comprehensive peace accords were the basis for general elections with the participation of all political forces.

The various peace treaties all contained regulations on the consolidation and deepening of democracy and the civilian control over the armed forces. The three democracies are characterized by structural defects that are a result of the interactions at the double intersection. While the traditional authoritarian systems were replaced, change was mostly restricted to form and did not include a change of attitudes or substance nor a solution of the structural problems that caused the wars. The – successful – transformation of the armed actors into political actors did not result in the establishment of viable reform alternatives beyond the political system. Democratization has helped to address one side of the region's grievances but – at least up to the moment – it has failed to give a perspective for social change and inclusion (see Córdoba, Maihold and Kurtenbach 2001).

Whether the FMLN-based government (*Frente Farabundo Martí de Liberación Nacional*) elected in 2009 in El Salvador will be able to make a difference remains to be seen. In Guatemala the former guerrilla is politically marginalized, and the political system is highly fragmented and organized along personal clientele networks. In Nicaragua the re-election of Daniel Ortega and the FSLN (*Frente Sandinista de Liberación Nacional*) has combined war-time political and traditional family-based power structures. Thus up to today, the development of the political system in all three societies resembles the structure and the relations of power shaped by war, violence and international interventions.

Market economy

The order of economic reproduction of a society has always been recognized as a prominent factor in the discussion of the causes and the resolution of wars. Historically the debate focused on the importance of inequality and maldevelopment as motivations for armed actors; whereas during the last decade the debate has shifted towards an analysis of the economies of war and greed as the main driving force of conflict. There was some discussion on the importance of globalization for war economies and their persistence because war economies – independent of the legal or illegal character of their products – could not be maintained or would be less significant without international markets and their demand. There is an increasing awareness that external interventions can influence peacebuilding negatively. Besides globalization, liberalization of economies as promoted by the international financial institutions is an important factor reducing options at the societal level in post-war countries. While under a classical modernization perspective the introduction of market mechanisms is supposed to promote economic growth and thus development, evidence for this is scarce even in non-war societies. In war-torn societies the effects of this approach have even been harmful, as some authors have shown early on for El Salvador.[10] Neoliberal economic policies weaken the state's capacities to offer employment in the formal sector, which they need for the integration of ex-combatants, migrants and displaced people. Privatization of state enterprises favours mostly traditional elites and actors who gained fortunes during and through violence.

While awareness of the importance of economic developments and globalization for armed conflicts and their dynamic has grown, the debate about the implications of these factors for peacebuilding is just beginning.[11] Most peace accords do not address economic concerns directly but treat them 'with little or vague discussion' (Woodward 2002, 184). Policy approaches to economic issues in post-war countries are mostly directed towards three goals: first, the replacement of illicit resources like drugs, or a change in their merchandizing (certification of diamonds, e.g.); second, the recovery of basic economic infrastructure as a basis for development and growth (Boyce 2008); and third, the strengthening of the state's capacity to obtain resources (Boyce and O'Donnell 2007). While all these factors are important, they are highly related to the fact that war economies do not rest on income alone. They build political and social power structures through violence, intimidation or clientelistic, patrimonial or personalistic mechanisms of domination and dependence. These structures limit overall peacebuilding efforts as well as economic and political transformation.

In relation to economic transformation, external influences and the legacies of war economies are a central obstacle for development beyond macroeconomic growth. The key variable for sustainable peacebuilding is a development model promoting social inclusion and overcoming at least extreme forms of inequality. Even if the termination of war and violent conflict do not necessitate the immediate resolution of the underlying structural causes, the success or failure of liberal peacebuilding depends on the ability of the post-war society to address economic and developmental problems. So what are the main variables that need to be analysed under a societal perspective at the double intersection?

o   The modes of economic and social reproduction in relation to demands of the international market: a country's economic structure, its dependence on resources and/or labour, as well as its relations with the global and/or regional markets. The analysis of these issues helps to identify dependence and resilience of overall economic development prospects. While the dependence on 'lootable' resources seems to make violent conflict more likely, successful peacebuilding depends on the (re-)orientation of access to and use of material resources for the public good and welfare. This may not be guaranteed in a classical scheme to open the market.

o   War and violence influence the economic order in different ways, and have severe consequences for long-term development perspectives: changes in the distribution of and the access to economic resources are a result of displacement and ethnic or political 'cleansing' leading up to long-term shifts in demography (either rural-urban or across borders). The establishment of war economies provides a basis for the direct (territorial) control of resources and products serving as a financial basis for war. War economies do not automatically disintegrate after the war's end.

Thus under a peacebuilding perspective, the central aim in post-war economies is not just reconstruction of the economic and social infrastructure, but a fundamental transformation of the access to and allocation of economic resources favouring at least a minimum of the public good and not just personal or group interests. This process is closely linked to existing power structures and the political regime.

Structural inequality in Central America

Central America's economic and social development is highly influenced by external dynamics. During the 1980s and 1990s a process of transnationalization has been an economic as well as a demographic phenomenon favouring and reinforcing existing structures of economic reproduction. The economic elites in the three countries were able to diversify their economic basis from the traditional agro-export development model (coffee, bananas, sugar) by opening up to new agricultural products (e.g. fruit and flowers) as well as to investment into the financial sector.[12] Although the traditional oligarchies of the region were somewhat debilitated by war (and the Sandinista revolution in the case of Nicaragua), this did not weaken them substantially. Externally promoted privatization of state enterprises did not establish market-based mechanisms but created new monopolies partly based on criminal or violent networks. The differences between the three countries reflect the specific relations of power between status-quo-oriented and change-oriented actors. In Nicaragua the revolution restricted the influence of the oligarchy and allowed for some upward mobility of new social forces around Sandinista networks. In El Salvador the oligarchic unity partly dissolved, but in Guatemala the power of the oligarchy remained largely untouched.[13]

Developments in Central America have rarely been analysed under a perspective of resource use and war economy because they were mostly perceived as results of the cold war. The wars in El Salvador and Nicaragua were externally funded; in the case of Nicaragua limitations set by the US-Congress on aid to the *contras* even led to the establishment of criminal networks to circumvent this.[14] As Guatemala's military regime did not receive foreign aid due to its gross human rights violations that not even the Reagan administration could ignore, the establishment of a war economy served as a substitute. The control of the country's borders gave the military the control of different forms of smuggling (such as drugs and humans). These structures have not been dismantled or destroyed after the war ended.

War termination did lead to impressive growth rates and macroeconomic stability in the whole region but not – or only marginally – to a decrease in social exclusion and inequality.[15] Traditional economic elites and international enterprises favour the modernization of the exclusionary model of development. Most investment in the region goes to so-called *'megaproyectos'* in mining or energy offering only few jobs while profit is made by a small group of local or international entrepreneurs paying minimal royalties and taxes. Thus natural resources are not used for the public good but for private enrichment, which is another process that can be interpreted as path dependency modernization instead of changing existing forms of exploitation and exclusion.

This process is reinforced by demographic transnationalization that was a result of war and violence leading to the displacement and migration of nearly two million Central Americans inside and out of the region. At the same time the lack of social and economic mobility and the high levels of poverty constituted another push factor for mostly illegal migration to the United States (or Costa Rica in the case of Nicaragua). The so called *remesas* or remittances – money migrants send home to support their families – is the most important income in foreign exchange for the national accounts and has surpassed the traditional export earnings. While

this is an important basis for survival for the most marginalized groups in the three Central American countries, it also leads to a significant brain drain as the most educated and able people go north, thus weakening the human resources for sustainable development inside the region (see Orozco 2003, IAD 2004, Mahler 2000).

In short, there has been little or no transformation of the underlying development patterns in Central America except for a modernization of deeply engrained inequality and exclusion. External influences and the consequences of war and violence have reinforced historic patterns while reform-oriented, internal actors remain weak.

Pacification

Under the perspective of the liberal peacebuilding paradigm, democratization and development of market economies lead to positive feedbacks and pacification. An external intervention or support to end wars is a first important step in this direction. But what happens when peacekeeping missions or interim administrations leave the country? The lack of security is a fundamental problem in post-war contexts beyond the demobilizations of former combatants and the 'civilization' of their behaviour. Yet academic and policy debates as well as external interventions tend to focus on these war-related problems.[16] Peace accords aim to end violence; the first step in this direction is a ceasefire followed by the demobilization and reintegration of former combatants. International actors focus on promoting demobilization and demilitarization of combatants. The key variable for transformation is the establishment of democratically controlled forms of violence control. The internal societal basis for non-violent forms of conflict regulation, however, is either very fragile or non-existing in most post-war countries. While the necessity for rule of law provisions is obvious, another question is whether these forms have to comply with so-called international (or western) standards or if indigenous forms of customary law might be more suitable.

Violence after war is neither identical with the violence in war nor does it always occur in the same geographical areas.[17] It takes place in a grey area where different forms of violence coalesce while mechanisms to provide security are fragile or do not exist. The establishment of at least rudimentary forms of public security thus hinges on more than just the reform or reestablishment of the state's security forces. Thus, it is important not only to look at the continuity between war-related and post-war violence, but at the same time to identify the specifics and the new elements of this violence, its actors and functions. Under the societal perspective of the double intersection we can identify different influences on violence and pacification or violence control:

o   Societies develop certain forms of control, handling, acceptance or legitimization of violent behaviour that are highly influenced by the existing symbolical order (religion, belief systems etc.). These features will change over time but are rather path-dependent.[18]

o   Consequences of war and widespread violence on post-war pacification are twofold. First, even in war, violence is not just instrumental for the 'master cleavage' (that is the conflict patterns at the macro level) but resembles a mix-

ture of privatized, economic and political forms of violence at the micro level (Kalyvas 2006). Hence, many forms of violence do not automatically end with a ceasefire and the end of war. Second, there is a line of research arguing that violence reproduces itself. Writing on Colombia, Waldmann (2002, 2001ff) described this as a process of everyday violence institutionalization, and others have labelled this process the establishment of 'cultures of violence' (Rupesinghe 1994).

Under the perspective of the double intersection, pacification or violence control will depend less on external interventions and more on existing relations of power. Traditional forms of violence control – e.g., the legitimization or de-legitimization by existing symbolical or religious orders – are one important factor. The persisting influence and societal control by violent actors either of important economic resources or state institutions is another factor.

Post-war violence in Central America

In Central America the initiatives to restructure public security met a history and culture where the security forces were the central pillar of a repressive state and where war and violence reinforced the traditional role of the military. Different interactions and features of these processes explain the varying degrees of success and failure in the Central American countries. External actors supported the demobilization of the ex-combatants and the reduction of the armed forces. This was the most successful part in the implementation of the Central American peace accords although experiences differ: in the case of Nicaragua it took President Violeta Chamorro over 40 accords to satisfy the – overwhelmingly economic – demands of rearmed *contras* and *compas* (demobilized soldiers of the army). In the second half of the 1990s, the remaining ex-combatants were reduced to rural banditry acting mostly in the northern regions of the country. In El Salvador the most serious incident was the detection of arms the FMLN had kept hidden in Nicaragua. But the UN mission was able to solve this problem rapidly enough so that it did not lead to a rupture of the whole process. In Guatemala demobilizations of the former guerrilla members was completed by 1998. These variations reflect the differences in the structure and power relations showing influences of the experience of war as well as specific outcomes of the overall transformation. While the Salvadoran guerrilla was a homogenous and structured organization with a shared ideology, the *contras* in Nicaragua were a wild mixture of groups opposing the Sandinista government for very different reasons and were held together mostly by financial support and pressure from the US. The Guatemalan guerrilla was the weakest of the insurgent forces as it lacked a substantial number of combatants as well as external support.[19]

Concerning the reduction of the military, differences reflecting variations in the degree of the military's historical and war-related autonomy from the government are even more pronounced. Central Americas' armed forces traditionally have been the central pillar of the state as – side by side with the Catholic Church – they used to be the only national institution with a presence in most of the territory and control of the rural areas. Only in the case of Nicaragua was the traditional repressive state apparatus destroyed by the Sandinista revolution and substituted by a totally

new force of former FSLN combatants. After the FSLN lost the elections in 1990, professionalization and depolitization were the central mechanisms for the institutional survival of the armed forces. If they had tried to take sides in the political struggle between the Sandinistas and the new government, they most probably would have faced abolishment following the examples of Costa Rica and Panama. In El Salvador the war led to a process of militarization of the society under a civilian-military coalition, but the military stayed dependent on foreign support (mostly US) as well as subordinated to the traditional oligarchy which was organized in the right wing ARENA party (*Alianza Republicana Nacional*). In contrast the Guatemalan military not only had sole control of the state until 1985, it also retained its independence and autonomy from the oligarchy even after the democratic opening. In 1986, the first elected president, Vinicio Cerezo, admitted that he had not more than 30 per cent of the power – a feature that did not change till the end of the war in 1996. Only the government of Oscar Berger (2004-2008) was able implement a substantial reduction of the military.

While demobilization was quite successful, reintegration of former ex-combatants faced serious limits. Due to the lack of job opportunities in the formal economy, many former combatants joined either delinquent groups or private security companies. The lack of control over a diversity of armed actors is one of the central problems of public (in-)security in the region. It is a combined result of the deficits of the peace processes and the lack of opportunities in the formal economy (see Pérez Saínz 2000). Demobilization should have included the paramilitary forces in all three countries, too. But although they were declared illegal or the decrees establishing them were revoked, they were not disarmed. In all three countries this deficit is reflected in the extremely high numbers of small arms in the hands of society. A recent UNODC study (2007, 16) cites reputable sources from the region, which assume that there are about 500,000 fire arms that are legally registered and 800,000 that remain unregistered. The high level of violent crime all over the region is another legacy of the wars.[20] But there are some differences as well. Although the paramilitary structures of the war did not survive in El Salvador or Nicaragua, in the case of Guatemala they have persisted and are still a factor of repression, political pressure and, in some regions, social control (see Peacock and Beltrán 2003; Kurtenbach 2006).

Within this context three interrelated issues dominate the public security agenda: organized crime (drug trafficking, and other illicit activities), delinquency and youth gangs. The high levels of poverty and exclusion as well as the everyday experience of violence explain the high levels of delinquency and youth gangs. The fact that the dimensions of these problems are lower in Nicaragua than in the other two countries may also be a result of the different character of the Nicaraguan police, which (at least compared to the other countries) is more professional, emphasizes prevention and follows a community-oriented approach (see Rocha 2005, Bautista Lara 2006).

As to organized crime, there are differences, too. Only in Guatemala has organized crime permeated the structures of the state as well as the political system. This is a result of two processes that are related to the historical fragmentation of Guatemala's society and to the lack of control of the civilian forces over the armed forces and their allies (Kurtenbach 2008). The reduction of the armed forces has

not led to their disempowerment as an organized actor as it has in El Salvador and Nicaragua; instead it has served to heighten their autonomy and has led to the formation of criminal networks (the so-called parallel or obscure powers). Allegations that youth gangs are involved in drug trafficking can neither be substantiated nor proven, nor are they responsible for the high homicide rates in the region. UNODC (2007, 16ff) cites a study of the Salvadoran Forensic Institute and a Guatemalan police study that hold youth gangs responsible for 8 per cent and 14 per cent of homicides respectively. This contradicts the common discourse of the Central American media and politicians.

In summary, we can state that the establishment of a legitimate and democratically controlled public security sector as a central condition for pacification was most successful in Nicaragua and shows serious deficits in the case of El Salvador and even more so in Guatemala. This can be explained due to the impact that, first of all, the Nicaraguan revolution and, secondly, the election of the opposition had on the public security apparatus. At the same time exclusion and poverty all over the region remained the main structural causes at work responsible for the increase of violence and crime The response to these problems shows a high level of continuity, too, as the social practices of selective political violence and repression still exist, although at a lower level than before and during the war. Nevertheless this leads to a self-enforcing cycle of repression, rising crime and exclusion.

Peacebuilding beyond Central America

The comparison of the Central American case studies under the perspective of the double intersection shows that path dependency seems to be strongest in relation to the political system and to the development model. Changes have been mostly superficial and due to international pressure (for democratization and elections as well as for market liberalization) and globalization. This has led to a mere modernization of the traditional status quo where the majority of the population is marginalized and excluded, while a few are able to accumulate wealth. Thus the structural causes of violence have remained while the expressions of violence have changed.

Developments in the Central American post-war societies do not provide proof for the self-enforcing positive cycle of liberal peacebuilding, but rather appear to show elements of a negative cycle. The lack of social inclusion produces high levels of informality and crime. This has negative consequences for the necessary social foundation as well as for the legitimacy of the political systems. In this context spoilers or adversaries to reform are able to use corruption and (mostly selective) violence to impede fundamental changes. This limits the capacity of reform-oriented actors (inside and outside of the state) to establish inclusive forms of development and government.

As Central America was one of the first laboratories for liberal peacebuilding, the question remains what can be learned at a more general level for the analysis of the problems of post-war societies as well as for the work of internal and external actors 'on the ground'. First of all, fundamental changes in path dependent developments are only possible if these changes have an indigenous basis inside society. Otherwise external interventions might strengthen internal actors in favour of

transformation without the possibility of overcoming structural or historical blockades. Elections are a case in point. Without a reform-oriented basis they will only lead to a formal legitimization of the existing status quo. A strategy of empowerment of and alignment with reform-oriented actors or 'drivers of change' can only be successful in the medium or long term. Short term strategies – favoured by most external actors looking for exit options and needing to adjust their resources to global necessities or political priorities – are rarely sustainable and are endangered by spoiler action. Hence peacebuilding strategies need to be aware of the fact that peacebuilding is an intermestic issue that can only partly be influenced by external actors. Secondly, stabilization and transformation of post-war societies and post-war states are important. But unlike some critics of the liberal peacebuilding paradigm suggest, stabilization does not need to rely mostly on the repressive capacity of the state (police, military), but should be based on inclusion and participation. Otherwise, stabilization might either be a short interlude or lead to renewed conflict and violence. At the same time, the credibility of international conventions and institutions is dependent on the universality of fundamental human rights. Opting for a peacebuilding sequence of 'stabilization first, democratization later' is not viable in the global context of the twenty-first century. It would be a relapse to colonial paternalism where the 'developed' countries of the North decide which post-war countries are ripe for democracy. This should not be a serious alternative. Thirdly, peacebuilding is just one set of the policies that influence the developments in post-war countries. The impact of economic or financial globalization usually outweighs the possibilities of peacebuilding programmes by far. Thus external and internal actors have to set out priorities as well as integrated peacebuilding approaches. The United Nations Peacebuilding Commission is a first small step in this direction.

More research is necessary to enhance and systematize knowledge on the intersections relevant for peacebuilding by linking it to social change and broader processes of transformation. This is no easy task. But as Philipp Schmitter (2009:59) states: 'Comparativists – whether of ruly or unruly politics – should be equipping themselves to conceptualize, measure and understand the great increase of complexity of the relations of power, influence, and authority in the world that surrounds them'.

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Sabine Kurtenbach is Senior Researcher at the GIGA (German Institute of Global and Area Studies) ILAS Institute of Latin American Studies, Hamburg, Germany. Her major research interests cover peace processes, post-war developments, youth, and societal fragility. Among her recent publications are 'Europe and the Complex Transformation of the Colombian Conflict', in Virginia M. Bouvier (ed.) (2009) *Colombia: Building Peace in a Time of War,* Washington USIP, pp. 385-397; and 'Guatemala: A Dependent and Fragmented Civil Society', in Thania Paffenholz (ed.) (2010) *Civil Society and Peacebuilding: Concepts, Cases and Lessons*, Lynne Rienner Publishers, pp. 79-104. <kurtenbach@giga-hamburg.de>

Notes

1. For the peace processes at the regional and the national levels see Arnson (1999), Child (1992), Dunkerley (1994), Isacson (1997), Rouquié (1992) among others.
2. During the last two decades, external actors have broadened their scope of activities due to the multitude of challenges and problems. In the beginning the main focus was to prevent a relapse into war or armed conflict as expressed in the Agenda for Peace of UN Secretary General Boutros Boutros-Ghali in 1992 (p. 11). This concept was extended in a supplement in 1995, through the Millennium Development Goals (MDG), the task force report 'Our Shared Responsibilities' (UN 2004) and the establishment of the UN Peacebuilding Commission.
3. Most of all, the theories on civilization and modernization by Max Weber, Joseph Schumpeter and Norbert Elias, among others.
4. Paris 2004 is an exception. On the problems in post-war societies see Pugh (2000) and Licklider (2001); on international peace-operations Doyle and Sambanis (2006); on war termination Steadman, Rothchild, and Cousens (2002), Walter (2002); on development Junne and Verkoren (2005).
5. See Pierson (2004) and Mahoney and Rueschemeyer (2003) among others.
6. Criticism is directed at the euro-centric bias of this approach and doubts that the European 'Sonderweg' could or should be generalised, and serves as a reference point for other world regions namely the countries of the global south (e.g. Richmond 2005). Others argue that even in democratic regimes violence is not overcome but that democracy allows for the mobilization along ethnic lines which has led to the severest acts of collective violence during the twentieth century such as the Holocaust and the Rwandan genocide (see Mann 2005).
7. On elections in post-war societies see Kumar (1998). For a more comprehensive focus see Barnes (2001), Call and Cook (2003), Call (2007), Burnell (2007), Jarstad and Sisk (2008); on the relationship between democratization and peacebuilding De Zeeuw (2005), De Zeeuw and Kumar (2006).
8. In many post-war contexts institutionalized power sharing is established in peace accords (see Bastian and Luckham 2003). But while this may serve as a mechanism of short-term stabilization, it may lead to the systematic exclusion of other actors. This can cause renewed conflict and violence as can historically be observed in Colombia's National Front experience as well as recently in Lebanon.
9. El Salvador and Guatemala experienced phases of political opening that ended in repression and violence (1932 and 1944-1954); in Nicaragua various US interventions undermined indigenous processes and ended in the installation of the Somoza dictatorship (see Dunkerley 1988).
10. See de Soto and del Castillo (1994) and Boyce et al. (1995), for a more general argument in the same direction Kamphuis (2004).
11. On the economy of wars, war-economies and peacebuilding see Keen (1998, 2000), Jean and Rufin (1999), Berdal and Malone (2000), Collier et al. (2003), Ballentine and Nitschke (2005); on economic consequences of war see Lake (1990), Stewart and Valpy (2001), Collier (2001).
12. A first wave of fundamental change began during 1950s and 1960s when these exportable commodities displaced subsistence economy, education levels increased and state institutions reached rural areas (see Williams 1994). On transnationalization see Robinson (2003); for changes in the agrarian sector see Paige (1998) and Vilas (1995).
13. On related data see UNDP (2006), CEPAL (2005), Sojo (1999), Vilas (1999), PNUD (2003).
14. The illegal supply of the Contra with weapons was financed with the trading of drugs and weapons leading to the so-called Iran-Contra scandal when it became public (see Scott and Marshall 1991).
15. For development in Central America see PNUD (2003) and Robinson (2003).
16. On different „markets of security in post-war societies see Lambach (2008); on transformation processes and security sector reform see Cawthra and Luckham (2003); on post-war contexts Holm and Espen (2000), Call and Cook (2003), Call (2007), Muggah (2009).
17. On the discussion of violence and peace processes and post-war violence see Darby (2001, 2006); on the security gap for ex-combatants Walter (1999, 2002).
18. The United States and its discourse on the right of self-defence is an interesting example as this can

be backtracked to the early years of settlement and the frontier mentality. Even today initiatives to restrict the availability of guns are knocked down with this argument. In Latin America an interesting example is the change in Catholicism when liberation theology was interpreted as a legitimization for changing the existing social order by force. See Levine (1986) and Löwy (1996).

19. For a discussion on civil-military relations and demobilization see Isacson (1997), Brenes and Casas (1998); for Guatemala see Schirmer (1998, 2002) and Keen (2003); for El Salvador Stanley (1994); for Nicaragua Horton (1998), Lincoln and Sereseres (2000).

20. On post-war violence in Central America see Call (2000), Moser and Winton (2002), UNODC (2007), PNUD (2009).

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