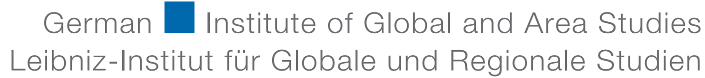

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Postwar Youth Violence: A Mirror of the Relationship between Youth and Adult Society

Sabine Kurtenbach

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GIGA German Institute of Global and Area Studies

Leibniz-Institut für Globale und Regionale Studien

Neuer Jungfernstieg 21

20354 Hamburg

Germany
E-mail: <info@giga-hamburg.de>

Website: <www.giga-hamburg.de>

Postwar Youth Violence: A Mirror of the Relationship between Youth and Adult Society

Abstract

Postwar societies are high-risk contexts for youth violence. Nevertheless, not all postwar societies are equally violent. This article explores how these variations can be explained by focusing on the interaction between youths and adult society in a comparison of Guatemala and Cambodia. Starting from the concept of socialization and the possibilities of performing status passages to adulthood, it analyzes not only the different risk factors but also the agency of young people and society in trying to cope with and overcome obstacles on the pathway to adulthood. Different patterns of war termination and of reconstruction after war's end are identified as major intervening variables that explain the variations in youth violence in as well as across the case studies.

Keywords: violence, youth, status passages, Guatemala, Cambodia

Dr. Sabine Kurtenbach

is a political scientist and senior research fellow at the GIGA Institute of Latin American Studies.

Contact: <sabine.kurtenbach@giga-hamburg.de>

Website: <http://staff.en.giga-hamburg.de/kurtenbach>

Postwar Youth Violence: A Mirror of the Relationship between Youth and Adult Society

Sabine Kurtenbach

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1 Introduction

Youth violence is mostly interpreted as deviant behavior and an individual or collective response to marginalization and discrimination (Heitmeyer and Legge 2008).[1] Nevertheless, most young people do not turn to violent behavior, even in high-risk contexts, a fact that has only recently obtained more attention (Christiansen et al. 2006). [2] Postwar societies are high-

1 This paper and earlier drafts and versions have profited substantially from collaboration and discussions with many people: Its roots are a project at the Institute for Development and Peace at the University Duisburg-Essen in cooperation with the GIGA Institute of Latin American Studies between 2006 and 2008 in which Oliver Hensengerth and I explored the differences in youth violence in Cambodia and Guatemala. The German Technical Cooperation funded two expert workshops (in Loccum in 2007 and Hamburg in 2009), and the BMZ made possible the collaboration with the World Bank's Social Development Department's flagship report (2010). All these projects and the many discussions were important in the development of the broader conceptual and regional perspective of the topic of this article. My thanks go to all involved in these projects, while any shortcomings and faults are my responsibility.

2 The different risk factors for youth becoming violent have been discussed in different strands of literature. On gangs see Hagedorn (2007, 2008); on youth in armed groups Dowdney (2005); on youth in armed conflict see Brett and Specht (2004) among others.

risk contexts for youth violence as most war-torn societies are demographically very young or even have a youth bulge.[3] At the same time, youth issues do not figure prominently on national and international agendas for postwar or postconflict contexts. While there are programs that target former child soldiers, most policies do not have specifically youth-oriented interventions.[4] On the contrary, in many postwar societies youths are perceived as "troublemakers" (McEvoy-Levy 2006) or a security problem (Oettler 2011).

Most of the existing research on youth violence focuses either on young people's motivation to commit violence, on society's response to violent behavior or on the neglect of youth-specific needs in postwar contexts.[5] What remains under-researched is the interaction between youth and society and the specific mechanisms influencing youth behavior. This article addresses some of the related issues and attempts to explain the variation in youth violence across different contexts of high structural risk. It therefore analyzes the transitions of young people into adult society, identifying not only the different risk factors but also the agency of young people and society in trying to cope with and overcome obstacles on the pathway to adulthood. Socialization is the main starting point as it is the central interface between youth and adult society across the globe, producing expectations (for young people and adult society) about necessary status passages. In postwar contexts young people have grown up with and are socialized through various experiences of war and violence. At the individual as well as at the collective level this is one of the major risk factors for violent behavior (Brett and Specht 2004; Dowdney 2005). At the same time, the transition into adulthood in postwar contexts is shaped by conditions of rapid social change (for example, urbanization) after the formal end of war. Transitions to adulthood in these contexts pose challenges for young people as well as for adult society and mirror society's capacity or inability to manage change. Transitions into adulthood are thus an interesting indicator for more general developments in postwar societies.

In order to develop this argument, the first section of this paper introduces the concept of socialization as the main interface between youth and adult society.[6] Socialization sources in-

3 A youth bulge is a product of demographic change with decreasing mortality and fertility rates; it exists when the age group between age 15 and 24 represents more than 20 percent of the population, with the current global average being 17 percent. The writings of Cincotta et al. (2003), Fuller (1995), and Huntington (1997), among others, have made popular the "youth bulge thesis" in security studies, which claims that youth bulges increase the risk of violent conflict. Regarding conflict, there is no linear relationship, but there is some evidence that an excess of young males without prospects for the future might increase violence or at least lead to conflict-prone environments. Urdal (2006) explains that youth bulges do not seem to be related to large-scale wars but rather to less organized forms of low-intensity political and intrastate violence. See also Barakat and Urdal (2009).

4 See Kemper (2005), McEvoy-Levy (2008), Schwartz (2010).

5 On motivation see literature in FN 1; on response see Cunningham et al. (2008), Hagedorn (2007), Klein and Maxson (2006), Peetz (2010); on youth needs see FN 4.

6 On socialization see Arnett and Galambos (2003), Arnett and Taber (1994), Arnett (1995), Berger and Luckmann (2009), Hurrelmann (2010); on political socialization see Dawson et al. (1973).

clude family and other primary social networks (clan, kinship), schools, peers, media, and state and nonstate institutions, all embedded in a specific set of values and norms. Under conditions of war and violence these socialization sources are changed or even destroyed, thereby impacting the possibilities for youths to perform traditional status passages into adulthood. The second section discusses the problems and difficulties in making the relevant transitions – to economic independence and political participation – in postwar societies. The third section analyzes how the specific patterns of war termination and reconstruction and their impact on youth–society relations help to explain variations in postwar youth violence. The empirical evidence relies on two case studies carried out in Guatemala and Cambodia, two postwar societies with similar risk factors but different levels of youth violence.[7] The conclusion identifies two different patterns of youth–society relations based on the modes of war termination and reconstruction and identifies important questions for future research.

2 Socialization – The Main Interface between Youth and Adult Society

While the concept of youth is highly context specific, there are universal patterns too.[8] Across the globe, youths' transition to adulthood is marked by three interrelated status passages: family formation, economic independence and political citizenship. While these transitions are quite universal, their specific form and the overall relationship between youth and adult society varies according to the cultural, temporal and historical context. Youth is different (generally shorter) for young women than for their male peers given that their status as youth comes to an end with the first pregnancy as in most societies motherhood remains the most important marker of female adulthood. Urban youth confront different challenges than those growing up in rural settings; access to resources is different according to social status; and the possibilities for political participation vary across regimes or juridical codes.[9]

The central interface for youths' transition into adulthood is socialization: introducing and familiarizing children and youth with existing rules, values and norms (Arnett 1995;

7 On the conceptual framework on socialization and status passages see Kurtenbach (2012). On the case studies see Hensengerth (2008a, 2008b), Kurtenbach and Hensengerth (2010), Kurtenbach (2008a, 2008b, 2008c).

8 The beginning of youth is mostly characterized by the end of primary education, the physical process of maturing to woman or man (puberty), and growing independence from the family. This concerns mostly the age cohorts between childhood and the age of 18, the international threshold for the implementation of child-protection norms. The end of youth and the beginning of adulthood is more difficult to determine. A general definition of youth does not exist as youth is a highly context-specific concept and not just an age cohort. The United Nations World Youth Report (UN-DESA 2007) includes the cohort aged 15 to 25, the World Health Organization that from 15 to 29, and the World Bank's World Development Report youth between 12 and 24 (World Bank 2006).

9 Most research on these transitions focuses on young people in the industrialized countries of the North, while information on young people in the global South has only emerged recently. See Brown et al. (2002), Larsen et al. (2002), Lloyd (2005).

Berger and Luckmann 2009). The primary sources of socialization are family and kinship networks. Formal and informal institutions outside these primary networks are important for secondary socialization. Depending on the organization of education, school becomes the first important institution for socialization outside the private and domestic sphere. During adolescence the spectrum of relevant sources and institutions becomes broader, including peer groups, media and neighborhoods. These different institutions are interrelated and interact with existing institutional and political processes, which are an important part of the (re)production of social and cultural patterns of socialization. Existing rules and arrangements need continuous support, which is provided by political socialization as "the way in which youths are brought into a political society established by preceding generations" (Dawson et al. 1973: 27). As a consequence, socialization has a certain conservative bias. However, young people are not just passive objects; socialization is an active process grounded in social practices "that may be habitual insofar as they are long lasting and become integral to one's identity" (Youniss and Yates 1999: 8). With regard to the use of violence, socialization sources can either of legitimize or denounce the use of violence.[10]

Socialization sources differ according to the structure of the relationship between adults and youth, which can be either asymmetrical or more egalitarian. In primary socialization relations are asymmetrical as parents, teachers or other elders are clearly dominant. Adults guiding, or even controlling, youth activities is a common pattern in other institutions too – for example, in the youth wings of political parties, labor unions or religious groups. Other contexts can have more horizontal and autonomous relations, for example, peer groups or the new social networks on the Internet. Here young people may develop their own ideas and act according to a specific set of rules. Peer socialization can either reinforce socialization from other sources or conflict with it (Arnett 1995: 620–621). Autonomous peer groups lacking supervision or control by elders often provoke adults' skepticism, criticism or even rejection of youth. Claims that (mostly male) youth misbehave and are "out of control" have been made in different historical contexts and all over the world:

> In many cities throughout the world, there is a growing intolerance of young people in the public arena. They are widely viewed as undesirable in the streets and shops, particularly when they are in groups. Public spaces are seen to be "owned" by adults, with young people's presence representing an unwanted intrusion.
>
> (WYR 2003: 274)

Independently of their specific structure, socialization processes produce expectations regarding the status passages into adulthood. There is an intimate relationship between the socialization of youth and the social and political context, with the latter affecting processes as well as opportunities for the transition into adulthood. Socialization processes can provide

10 On violence and education see for example Davies (2004); on violence and religion see Hasenclever and Rittberger (2000).

the ability to manage social change through flexibility and adaptation, or they can insist rigidly on the performance of established pathways to adulthood, thereby exacerbating the problem of blocked transitions for youth. This is highly important in postwar contexts shaped by the experience of war and the transition out of it.[11]

In postwar societies socialization is greatly influenced by personal experiences of violence.[12] If someone is a victim of, a witness to or a perpetrator of violence in childhood and adolescence, this has consequences at the individual as well as at the collective level; it will influence status passages, the development of identity patterns, and forms of social organization with peers. For a youth whose identity has been shaped by the experience of violence and a lack of even rudimentary forms of security, the development of a stable personality will be much more difficult than it would be in a nonviolent environment. [13] The necessities of day-to-day survival create a permanent situation of uncertainty for adults as well as for youths, with few or no models for nonviolent problem solving and other constructive behavior. As Mamphela Ramphele (2002: 28) notes, "The demands of survival limit people to basic functions of existence that permit little scope for imagining a different future. It is when the conditions of life are seen to be amenable to human control and influence that risk management takes over fatalism."[14]

The experience of violence impacts heavily on primary socialization institutions (family, kin, neighborhoods). While the experience of violence might come to an end with the termination of war, the legacy of war and violence may persist for much longer. At the individual level traumatization is a case in point; at the collective level group solidarities and identities may be shaped through the experience of war (veterans are an example here); and last not least, formal and informal institutions of secondary socialization may have survived but can also be destroyed or changed. As a consequence, established transitions into adulthood in postwar societies will be difficult to make and new rites of passage will still need to be developed or accepted. Seen from a conflict perspective, these contexts provide ample room for intergenerational conflict as well as for the use of violence in the performance of transitions. The following section analyzes the challenges of the transitions from school to work and into political citizenship, focusing on similarities and differences in postwar Guatemala and Cambodia.

11 On postwar contexts and youth see Kurtenbach (2008a, 2008d).

12 For the impact of armed conflict on children and youth see Blattman (2009), Hart (2008), Machel (1996, 2001).

13 In different contexts research has emphasized the importance of weapons use or gang membership for getting approval and respect, as well as for the construction of subcultural identities and/or masculine identities (Barker 2005; Hagedorn 2008; Keen 2002).

14 That this is a factor of major importance can be seen in the differences in the perception of the future among postwar youth in Burundi and Rwanda (Sommers and Uvin 2011; Sommers 2012; Uvin 2009).

3 Transitions into Adulthood and the Accumulation of Risks

The debate on children and youth in war has long been dominated by the notion of children's victimization. Violence, displacement and forced migration destroy primary family networks and leave older children and youth in charge of younger siblings as the number of youth-led households increases. Examples abound in many interstate and internal wars (Gates and Reich 2010; Hart 2008). Hence violence can, out of necessity, accelerate or transform status passages. However, various case studies have also shown that youth are active agents, even in highly violent contexts.[15] The use of violence can serve as a means to become adult by providing opportunities for social mobility and economic independence, or for political participation through a regime change. These functions of violence have only recently received attention in relation to youth in different contexts across the globe.[16]

Two main status passages – towards economic independence and towards political citizenship – are important across different contexts and highly interrelated. While family formation is a third global status passage, in most societies economic independence or at least the acquisition of a certain level of economic resources (to establish an independent household or to pay for a dowry or marriage) is a precondition for family formation (Mensch et al. 2005). At the same time, economic opportunities and the legal frameworks for family formation depend on patterns of political citizenship and the possibilities for participation. The following analysis thus focuses on economic independence and political citizenship, identifying the specific challenges of achieving such status in postwar contexts and the role of violence in doing so.[17] Although the empirical evidence used here comes from Guatemala and Cambodia, a variety of case studies also point in a similar direction.

3.1 Economic Independence

While the formal termination of war is mostly seen to result in an increase in opportunities, young people on the ground often face extreme problems in their transitions to economic independence due to the long-term impacts of war and violence. A recent UNESCO report[18] refers to the destruction of schools and attacks on teachers as direct negative impacts of war on education, along with displacement and forced migration. Armed conflicts also reduce general public funding for education as military expenditures are given priority. As a result there is a significant loss in years of schooling and a reversal (or at least reduced progress) in literacy and other skills necessary for the school-to-work transition.

15 See Brett and Specht (2004), Hart (2008), McEvoy-Levy (2006), Hauswedell and Kurtenbach (2008), Kurtenbach (2010, 2006, 2007).

16 See Brett and Specht (2004), Coulter et al. (2008), Peters et al. (2003), Richards (1996).

17 Although violence can play a role in family formation, this would have to be conceptualized as domestic violence, which is not included here.

18 UNESCO 2011.

Cambodia and Guatemala provide evidence of such developments. Teachers and literate adults were an explicit target of the Khmer Rouge regime (1975–1979), and the urban population was forced to resettle in the rural areas. Cambodians lost 2.3 years from the average duration of schooling between 1965 and 1978, and this average had only been 3.3 years at the start of the conflict (UNESCO 2011: 136). While the public education system was reconstructed after the Vietnamese invasion in 1979, its territorial coverage and quality were low due to Cambodia's international isolation. Low levels of adult literacy even today are a mirror of educational loss due to violence. In 2000 the average number of years of schooling in Cambodia had increased just one year over that at the start of conflict (ILO 2009: 23). In Guatemala the war increased disparities in education between the indigenous and the nonindigenous populations, as well as between the indigenous populations in war-affected and non-war-affected areas (UNESCO 2011: 136). As a consequence, youth in both societies lack the educational skills essential for a successful school-to-work transition and economic independence.

The related problems are obvious in the data on youth participation in the labor market. An ILO report on the effects of the financial crisis on Cambodia (ILO 2009: 23) illustrates the dimensions of the problem:

> Since 1999, between 200,000 to 250,000 youth have entered the job market each year, but only 67,000 new jobs were created yearly from 1999 to 2004, absorbing only 27% of new job market entrants. According to a recent survey by the Cambodia Federation of Employers and Business Associations (CAMFEBA), the low absorption rate is due to a mismatch between the supply and demand in skills because of the lack of data and information on the labour market. The education attainment of the youth population is low for both male and female, with less than 5% having completed secondary education … Combining low education with low skills and little experience, they are likely to face difficulties in finding off-farm jobs and will typically be the first group of workers retrenched during economic hard time *[sic]*.

The situation for most Guatemalan youth is not much better. Thirty-five percent of 15-year-olds were illiterate when the war ended in 1995 (Walter 2000: 17); 44.5 percent have just three years of schooling. The deficit in public schooling is a result not only of the war but also of political priorities. Poitevín and Pape (2003: 94) point out that education has not been a priority for any government during recent decades because it was unimportant (or even counterproductive) for the agro-export economy, which is based on cheap labor. Currently, young people between the ages of 15 and 29 constitute 38 percent of the economically active population; more than half of them work in the agricultural sector. In urban centers economically active youth work either in microenterprises or as independents without access to the social security system (OIT 2010: 220–221). The National Youth Survey from Guatemala (SESC 2011) provides additional information: Youth with only basic school education show the lowest participation in the job market (26.5 percent), while those with a university degree

perform best (83.5 percent). Family members or other social networks are the most important factor for entering the job market (74.7 percent). Approximately two-thirds of working youth give more than half their wages to the families they live with; at the same time, wages are the prime source of income for only 36 percent of youths, while 56 percent depend on transfers from parents or spouses and are thus in a situation of economic dependency.

In both countries we can observe that achieving economic independence is difficult due to a combination of the negative consequences of war for education and the lack of a political focus on youth-related issues after war termination. So how do young people cope? Can violence be a way to perform the status passage to economic independence? The argument in different debates on youth and violence is twofold:

a) violence provides opportunities for personal and/or collective enrichment and
b) a large number of unemployed ("idle") young men lower the opportunity costs for armed actors because they are easy prey.

These assumptions stand at the core of the "youth bulge" hypothesis, which portrays young men as the perpetrators of violence and a security risk and represents part of the discussion on gangs.[19]

In the case of Guatemala crime seems to play a smaller role for youth than politicians and media assume. The only quantitative study on gangs finds that 57 percent of Guatemala's gang members work in the noncriminal economy and 45 percent support their families financially. On the other hand, they supplement low incomes with criminal activities like theft and drug dealing (Demoscopía 2007: 47–60). In Cambodia gangs are a means of social mobility and survival too.[20] While gangs there are increasingly seen as a problem, their violence is less lethal than in Guatemala.

In both contexts difficult transitions into economic independence seem to trigger youth participation in crime, but they do not explain variations in the level of violence. The following section on youth political citizenship and participation presents some of the factors that explain these differences.

3.2 Political Citizenship and Participation

Patterns of political citizenship, political participation and civic engagement are highly dependent on the characteristics of the political regime young people grow up in. Experiences of repression, marginalization or participation have long-enduring consequences. Youniss and Hart (2005: 76) emphasize the point that "political participation is a potent and lasting form of political socialization." Longitudinal research shows that political engagement dur-

19 See Barakat and Urdal (2009), Cincotta et al. (2003), Urdal (2006). On gangs see Hagedorn (2007).

20 On Cambodia see Czymoniewicz-Klippel (2011), Gender and Development for Cambodia (2003), Hensengerth (2008b).

ing one's youth has lasting effects on norms and values and is the most important predictor of the political attitudes of adults.[21] Most contemporary postwar societies experience dramatic changes in the political regime due to external and internal demands for democratization, at least at the formal level (Jarstad and Sisk 2008). This has important implications for transitions into adulthood, as young people acquire a set of rights (for example, the right to vote and to be elected) and formal equality with their elders. As the political sphere continues to be dominated by adults, the existing patterns of young people's integration or exclusion can be an important factor in tension (or even violence).

In terms of their political regimes, Cambodia and Guatemala demonstrated quite different developments during and after the wars.[22] Guatemala experienced a process of political opening in the middle of war (though after the most violent years). In 1985 the military government held elections for a constitutional assembly first – safeguarding many of the military's prerogatives – and for president and congress a year later. The civilian government negotiated the end of the war, and the peace accords included significant provisions to strengthen civilian power over the military. Nevertheless, Guatemala's transition did not go much further but instead remained stuck at the level of electoral democracy, with high levels of political volatility and populism. While Cambodia also obtained a new constitution and held elections before the end of the war, the civil–military coalition around the Cambodian People's Party (CPP) managed to stay in control and to establish an authoritarian regime. In more general terms, Cambodia reconstructed or modernized the traditional system of patronage networks so that they centered around the CPP and Prime Minister Hun Sen and not around the king as they had before the war.

How do young people view these developments? Analyzing their perceptions of democracy and government provides at least an idea about their ability and willingness to participate. Young people's views on state and society and the challenges they confront on their paths to adulthood have been documented in two recent youth surveys in Guatemala and Cambodia (SESC 2011; UNDP 2011). Although the surveys did not ask the same questions, the results show some interesting similarities (see Table 1 below): In both countries young people with a higher level of education and a better economic background have more confidence in their personal future and in the government. At the same time, in both countries confidence in or knowledge about the democratic system is limited. This is reflected in a highly critical view of the democratic political system and its institutions and translates into low levels of political participation: In Guatemala 60 percent of youths do not vote, although the age cohort of those between 18 and 29 constitutes 25 percent of the electorate (PDH 2004).

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21 For a similar argument see the special issue of *New Directions for Child and Adolescent Development* by Flanagan and Christens (2011), especially Flanagan et al. (2011) with evidence from developing countries.

22 On war termination and political change in Guatemala see CEH (1999), Jonas (2000), Kurtenbach (2008b), Schirmer (1998). On postwar developments in Cambodia see Doyle (2001), Gottesman (2002), Hensengerth (2008a), Peou (2002), Roberts (2001).

This low degree of political participation is reflected in the political parties as well as at the local level, where youths rarely participate in the development councils. On the other hand, Cambodian youths exhibit a relatively high level of trust in the national government, and the authoritarian leadership of the Cambodian regime remains rather uncontested. However, Cambodian youth seem to be ready to contest age-based hierarchies, at least in the immediate social environment at the local and private level. This could lead to increasing intergenerational conflicts in the future.

Table 1: Young People's Perceptions of the Political Regimes in Guatemala and Cambodia

Guatemala	
Confidence in the political system and state institutions	Armed forces 22% Police 16% Local governments 14% Justice system 13% Government 10% Parliament 9% Political parties 8%
Patterns of participation	Around 49% of young people participate in youth organizations, males mostly in sport clubs, females in religious groups; only 8% participate in political parties
Cambodia	
Is Cambodia going in the right direction?	Completely right 16%; More right than wrong 65%
Young people should not question any decision made by parents	Disagree 51% Agree 33% Neutral 11%
Ordinary people should not question leaders' decisions	Disagree 58% Agree 22% Neutral 10%
The leader of the government is like the head of the family and should be followed	Disagree 16% Agree 61% Neutral 15%
Meaning of democracy	Don't know 72% Put people's opinion first 9% Humans have all kinds of rights equally 4%

Sources: Guatemala SESC (2011), Cambodia UNDP (2011).

This short summary shows that at the formal level youth political participation is limited in both countries. Nevertheless, the new opportunities provided by – at least formal – democratization could offer possibilities for change if youth were to organize around youth-specific issues and agendas. Interestingly, the quest for political citizenship or political participation has not featured very prominently on the agendas of politicians and researchers in both countries. While transitions into adult society are difficult in both countries, violence plays some role in the transition to economic independence but does not have a political youth agenda.[23] The next section turns to the specific patterns and levels of youth interaction with adult society, identifying similarities and differences.

23 A different trend can currently be observed in the countries of the "Arab Spring," where youth are seen as promoting and fighting for a liberal political agenda. See Al-Momani (2011).

4 Postwar Youth Violence as a Mirror of Youth–Society Relations

Young people carry out different forms of violence in postwar societies (Kurtenbach 2010). While violence organized within peer groups and gangs is framed as youth violence, youth can also participate in adult-controlled state or nonstate armed groups. The response to youth violence differs accordingly. Violence under adult control is seen as a problem either when it reaches specific levels (for example, youth participation in Rio de Janeiro's drug crime) or from a human rights perspective (child soldiers). However, even in other contexts uncontrolled youth violence provokes harsh reactions and is answered with repression (prevention programs are generally the exception in developing countries). This section highlights the different forms of youth violence in postwar Guatemala and Cambodia.

First of all, patterns and levels of postwar violence seem to be very different in Guatemala and Cambodia. Postwar Guatemala is one of the most violent countries worldwide, although the amount of violence varies significantly at the subnational level (CIEN 2002; PNUD 2007). Although Cambodia is more violent than other Southeast Asian countries, compared to Guatemala its levels of violence are low (Hensengerth 2008a; UNODC 2011). Despite these differences in extent, youth violence in both countries shows some interesting similarities:[24]

— It is an urban phenomenon: in both countries the capitals (Guatemala City and Phnom Penh) are the main centers of youth violence, but frontier cities or regions are also important (Battambang in Cambodia, Petén in Guatemala) in relation to legal and illegal migration as well as the drug trade.
— The structural context is shaped by exclusion and marginalization.
— The organizational form is that of gangs, which provide youth with a feeling of belonging and solidarity as well as identity; youth gangs are a rather new phenomenon in Cambodia but have a longer history in Guatemala (Gender and Development for Cambodia 2003; Levenson-Estrada 1998).
— Alcohol and drugs are related closely to acts of violence.[25]

Between the two countries, however, youth violence and gangs differ significantly in terms of their relationship with society. In Guatemala neither the state nor civil society has prioritized youth-specific problems such as education and unemployment. At the same time, youths do not seem to be able to articulate their discontent via political channels; they are

24 There is a huge amount of research on youth violence and gangs in Central America that focuses mostly on the causes, dynamics at the micro level, and policy responses. See, among others, ERIC, UCA et al. (2001 ff.), Peetz (2004), Rodgers et al. (2009). The first and only comparative quantitative study is Demoscopía (2007). On violence in Cambodia see Czymoniewicz-Klippel (2011), Gender and Development for Cambodia (2003), Hensengerth (2008b).

25 Regarding Guatemala, Moser (2001: 104) compiled a (nonrepresentative but quite plausible) timeline showing a significant increase in violence from Friday to Sunday and a strong correlation to the consumption of alcohol and other drugs. On the relation between drugs and violence on a more general basis see Eisner (2002).

mostly apolitical due to their experience that political engagement is dangerous and is responded to with repression. High levels of abstention are common in Guatemala (FUNDAJU 2011). In contrast, the Cambodian government offers marginalized youth the possibility of social mobility if they belong to the CPP-dominated patron–client networks. While these networks provide opportunities, they are also a means of controlling and functionalizing youth. The so-called Pagoda Boys – a youth association affiliated with the CPP – illustrate this. In 2003 they were responsible for the violent looting of the Thai embassy; later they served as government thugs against the opposition during election campaigns (Hensengerth 2008b).[26]

The differences between Guatemalan and Cambodian youth violence are not just a question of scale (high in Guatemala, low in Cambodia) but also of the specific structure of violence. Most of Cambodia's youth violence is embedded within adult-controlled networks that enable traditional forms of (dependent) political participation. Hence the question is how we can explain these differences. Two factors seem to be important: the patterns of war termination and the forms of social control, both of which shape the postwar orders in different ways. Patterns of war termination are an important indicator of existing formal power relations, while patterns of social control provide hints as to the informal power relations.

4.1 Patterns of War Termination

Until 1989 military victories were the most frequent pattern of war termination. Since then the number of negotiated war terminations has increased significantly (Kreutz 2010). This has important implications for postwar societies. The argument for peace agreements is that they help to end war-related violence and save human lives. At the same time, the resulting orders are shaped by divergent (sometimes contradictory) political, social and economic agendas. The related fragility has even provoked calls to "give war a chance" (Luttwak 1999). Despite some similarities – for example, the presence of the United Nations – in the two cases, power relations in the political and military spheres differed significantly between Guatemala and Cambodia after the wars ended.

In Guatemala the army was ousted from the core state institutions due to the democratization process and the peace accords but remained an important veto player (Kurtenbach 2008b; Schirmer 1998). As a consequence, important provisions of the peace accords were not implemented and the neoliberal economic model – which deprived most young people of pathways to adulthood – increased existing social inequalities (PNUD 2010). At the same time, the increasing number of homicides allowed for the survival of authoritarian prerogatives and populist politics (Pearce 2010).

26 The government appears to recognize the dangers of a high number of unemployed youth without any prospects of accomplishing important status passages, as indicated by the introduction of a compulsory military service (24 months) in 2006. Across the globe the armed forces have served as one of the most important institutions for socializing, disciplining and controlling young men.

The situation was quite different in Cambodia. A Vietnamese intervention ended the Khmer Rouge's rule and resulted in the installation of a new government in 1979, but armed conflict went on even after the signing of a peace agreement in 1991 (Doyle 2001; Gottesman 2002). The United Nations installed a transitional government (UNTAC), and a new constitution that introduced a power-sharing system (the government had to have a two-thirds majority in parliament) was drafted. UNTAC left after the first postwar election, even though the remnants of the Khmer Rouge had not been defeated. However, the ruling alliance between FUNCINPEC (Front Uni National pour un Cambodge Indépendant, Neutre, Pacifique, et Coopératif) and the CPP was quite unstable (Croissant 2008). The struggle for power went on between FUNCINPEC, organized around Prince Sihanouk and holding a significant level of symbolic legitimacy, and the CPP, led by Prime Minister Hun Sen and firmly rooted in the rural communities due to its role in the reconstruction process after the ousting of the Khmer Rouge regime. When FUNCINPEC won the second postwar elections, Hun Sen carried out a coup and secured government for the CPP in 1997. A year later the remnants of the Khmer Rouge's armed opposition were defeated and demobilized, further stabilizing the CPP's power (Kheang 2005).

Hence there are important differences in the stability of the postwar orders in Guatemala and Cambodia. In Cambodia a stable – though authoritarian – order has emerged around the patronage networks of the CPP and Hun Sen, while in Guatemala power struggles between very different actors remain largely unresolved despite (or due to) the formally democratic political system. An analysis of the levels of postwar violence supports this finding: in Guatemala levels of violence increased after the failed referendum in 1999, while levels of violence and crime decreased in Cambodia after 1998 (Kurtenbach and Hensengerth 2010: 28).

4.2 Patterns of Reconstruction

The form of war termination influences not only the capacities of formal state institutions to control violence but also the reconstruction, reform or establishment of the broader set of secondary socialization institutions (neighborhoods, communities, religious organizations). In Cambodia after the Vietnamese invasion the CPP began the reconstruction of social relations around the local Pagoda system, which is still important for social relations at the local as well as at the national level (Hensengerth 2008a). Although the Pagoda system was emptied of its religious content, it provides important resources for day-to-day survival and youth integration (Kent 2006). Men between the ages of 16 and 18 have the opportunity to study and serve the community for a year as an important pathway to adulthood. At the national level, Buddhism, the king and the royal family have provided a framework for social integration and national unity beyond the CPP. Despite these changes, socialization and status passages for youth in the overwhelmingly rural spaces of Cambodia have followed traditional patterns and expectations.

Differently from the case in Cambodia, institutions of secondary socialization, status passages and traditional patterns of social control have changed profoundly in Guatemala. First of all, Catholicism has lost its religious monopoly due to the increasing influence of Protestant sects from the United States, which emphasize extreme forms of individualism and thus undermine existing forms of social control and solidarity (Gros 1999; LeBot 1999). Secondly, patterns of social control differ between indigenous and nonindigenous communities. Although the indigenous Western Highlands were the main theater of war during the 1980s, the experience of repression was an important driver for the resurgence or rather the establishment of a common Mayan or indigenous identity.[27] The Guatemalan state did not make any significant effort to reconstruct society beyond the militarization of the rural areas. After the war had come to an end international aid organizations stepped in, concentrating most of their efforts in the indigenous (and poorest) regions. Complementing international support for the comprehensive peace accords, development aid made a significant contribution to the empowerment of indigenous communities. At the same time – and surely as an unintended consequence – this aid and the increase of other external influences further weakened the traditional relationships between indigenous and nonindigenous groups as well as those inside Mayan communities (Little and Smith 2009).

Religious groups as well as communities are important socialization sources, providing mechanisms of integration or exclusion for youth. Depending on their structure (hierarchical or horizontal), they are important modes of social control for young people's behavior. Important differences can be observed between Cambodia and Guatemala as well as inside Guatemala in this respect. In Cambodia young people are integrated into (adult-controlled) and hierarchical patronage systems that enable important status passages into adulthood. While there have been changes, the main patterns have survived (at least until now). In Guatemala, to the contrary, young people are mostly disregarded by state and society. The situation appears to differ between indigenous and nonindigenous youth, but this important topic still has to be investigated.[28] In the following section the focus is on the relevance of these differences to the variations in the level of violence.

4.3 State, Society and Youth Violence

Although levels of direct physical violence differ significantly in Cambodia and Guatemala, in both countries marginalized and poor youth are perceived as the main perpetrators of violence (Hensengerth 2008b; Kurtenbach 2008c; Peetz 2010). The specific features of postwar

27 Guatemala's indigenous population consists mostly of Mayan descendants, who are divided into 24 language groups, plus numerically small groups of Xinca and Garífuna. See Carmack (1988), CEH (1999), Kurtenbach (2008b).

28 As indigenous identities in Guatemala depend mostly on self-identification, the border between indigenous and nonindigenous is rather fluid. While indigenous people tried to hide their "ethnic" identity during the war due to state repression, in recent years there has been a strong revival of indigenous identities (Bastos and Cumes 2007).

order and reconstruction have led to different capacities and policy approaches with respect to youth and their violent behavior. At the same time, these policies seem to resemble wartime strategies towards the armed opposition.

In Cambodia the CPP government has been able to curb and exploit youth violence for its own political goals with only a minimum of repression. When the youth seemed to be getting out of hand, the prime minister held a speech and instructed police forces to act. The introduction of a compulsory military service (24 months) is another mechanism to control young men. It resembles the policy mix of cooptation and limited repression used to end the Khmer Rouge insurgency in the late 1990s (Hensengerth 2008b). While Guatemala does not appear at the center stage of the debate on Central American youth violence, it is nevertheless part of the region's violent northern triangle, exhibiting high levels of youth gang violence. Like other governments, Guatemala's presidents have introduced the strategies of zero-tolerance politics and criminalizing gangs. However, gang members are only rarely put into jail; instead they are the preferred victims of "social cleansing" policies (PDH 2004). These policies are not officially carried out under the auspices of the state but rather resemble the counter-insurgency strategies of the war, when the military did not take prisoners but murdered anybody suspected of collaborating with the insurgency (Kurtenbach 2008c).

In both countries, though, the main sources of disconnect between youth and adult society are closely related to processes of agency, subordination and control. Similarly to other places with high levels of youth violence,[29] urbanization and migration are important factors influencing the relationship between state, society and youth. While in Cambodia these dynamics have altered the relationship between adult society and the country's youth, they have not changed it fundamentally. Postwar reconstruction in Cambodia has reproduced traditional institutions for the control of deviant youth behavior (pagodas, police, conscription). In contrast, Guatemala's postwar development has been shaped by high levels of fragmentation and centrifugal tendencies. State and society have been unable (and/or unwilling) to replace the traditional patterns of youth integration and to empower youth to accomplish the transition into adulthood without violence. The situation, at least up until now, has been different in the indigenous highlands, where decentralization policies and indigenous empowerment seem to have provided young people with more options for the future. At the national level repression stands at the core of the state's youth-related policies.

5 Conclusion and Challenges for Future Research

Socialization patterns and status passages are influenced by war and patterns of war termination. While the debate on risk factors for youth violence focuses on the influences of war and violence, the impact of different forms of war termination and reconstruction for youths'

29 See Heitmeyer and Legge (2008), Marks (2001), Rodgers (1999).

socialization and status passages remains under-researched. However, postwar societies are a specific social space for youths' transitions into adulthood, differing in their approaches to blocked transitions. The case studies on Guatemala and Cambodia provide evidence of two different patterns important in explaining variations in youth violence:

a) Reconstruction of traditional forms of social integration and control (though with some variations) supporting youth subordination to and control through elders
b) High levels of fragmentation and change, leading to low capacities for social integration and control and increasing the disconnect between youth and adult society.

While the former seems to be feasible in rural contexts with relatively low levels of social differentiation, the latter is a product of rapid social change and urbanization. The spatial concentration of youth violence in the urban centers and at the frontiers supports this view. Whereas youth violence can be controlled (and instrumentalized) by elders in the first pattern, it is more autonomous and peer-group based (for example, gangs) in the second. These different patterns mirror the broader relationship between youth and adult society. While the reconstruction of traditional patterns of power and social cohesion seems to provide an important basis for the integration and control of young people, youth–society relations become difficult where this does not occur.

The broader relationship between youth and adult society might thus be a much more important explanatory factor for the variation in youth violence than the mere existence of risk factors at the individual and collective levels. Experiences in other postwar societies seem to support this perspective. Nicaragua, for example, is a deviant case in Central America. Although it too is mostly discussed from the gang perspective,[30] the relationship between youth and society is quite different there. Government and state institutions such as the police have pursued inclusive, rather than mainly repressive, policies (Rocha 2008). South Africa, on the other hand, is an example of a country where youth–society relations have been strained in the postwar context, thus leading to a high level of youth violence (Marks 2001). Comparing Burundi and Rwanda, Sommers and Uvin observe significant differences in the societal responses to the problem of performing traditional status passages into adulthood. In both countries the most important prerequisite for marriage is to build a house, something which is made difficult by high levels of unemployment and a lack of access to resources. Yet while Burundian society interprets existing norms in a rather flexible way, Rwanda's government policies on housing aggravate young people's problems. Although (at least until now) this has not led to mounting levels of violence, it is an important cause of young people's frustration about their future prospects (Sommers and Uvin 2011; Sommers 2012; Uvin 2009).

While the examples provided in this paper offer only preliminary evidence, they illustrate the necessity of shifting the focus on youth in postwar contexts from a perspective of deviant behavior or youth policies towards the interface of youth–society relations. We need

30 See Jensen and Rodgers (2009), Rodgers (2003).

to understand the different patterns of youth economic and civic participation beyond the use of violence. This is essential not only to understanding the challenges in intergenerational relations as well as the blockades in the transition towards adulthood but also for the formulation of youth policies by governments and NGOs, as well as by external donors.

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