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*Causes of youth violence
in post-war societies*

Content

- 1) Background of the project and its main hypothesis.
- 2) Conceptual considerations on continuity and change of postwar violence.
- 3) Some results and findings on youth violence in postwar settings.

The Project

- * Research project on „Social and political fractures after war: Youth violence in Cambodia and Guatemala” financed by the German Foundation for Peace Research.
- * Point of departure was the observation that although youths seemed to be perceived as troublemakers in many postwar settings, youth violence was neither an issue in all postwar societies nor omnipresent in the societies where it was a problem.
 - ▶ How can this differences been explained?
 - ▶ What are the main causes for youth violence in postwar societies?

The Case Studies

Cambodia and Guatemala - two countries with

- * grave war-related fractures and legacies;
- * „successful“ peace processes and no backslide into war;
- * with deficits in the different transformation processes;
- * different levels of postwar violence – Cambodia low, Guatemala high.

Four Hypotheses

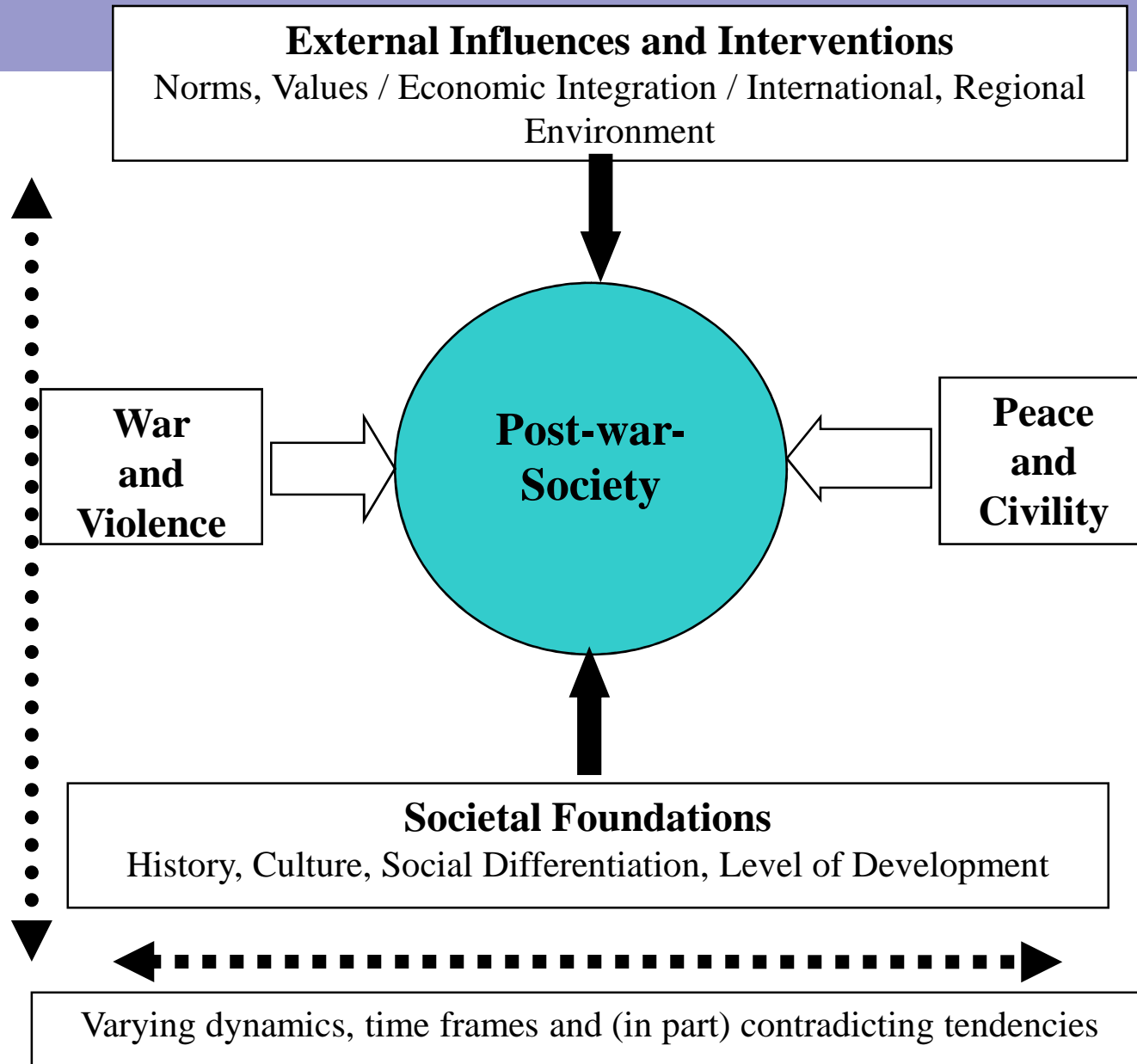
with a focus on the contextualisation of youth and youth violence

- a) the levels of social differentiation;
 - b) the relationship between political and economic power;
 - c) normative frameworks and symbolical orders;
 - d) sequencing of post-war developments (namely between liberalisation and stabilisation).
- the perspective of the actors themselves was beyond our approach.

Postwar Societies as a Specific Social Space

- * The transformation out of war is a non linear process
- * Development in postwar contexts today is influenced by a variety of factors and the interrelation between different (in part even contradictory) dynamics
- ▶ Construction of postwar societies in a double area of tension.

Postwar Societies in the Double Area of Tension



Postwar Societies as a Breeding Ground for Youth Violence

structural risk factors due to war and violence

- * rapid social change
- * forced displacement, urbanisation
- * poverty

individual risk factors due to war and violence

- * personal experience of violence
- * peer groups as substitute for destroyed families and other primary social networks
- * uncertain perspectives for the future

Postwar Societies as a Breeding Ground for Youth Violence

context factors change due to liberal peacebuilding

- * political regime → democratisation
- * economic order → from war to market economy
- * symbolical order → changing norms and growing external influences

→ fragile or hybrid forms of stateness with low capacities for integration and control of youths

→ these contexts influence and shape the life-worlds of youth in postwar societies

Postwar Societies as a Breeding Ground for Youth Violence

but: youth violence is neither omnipresent nor always the same

- ▶ necessity to disaggregate youth violence according to goals, levels of organisation and time horizons
- Situational violence
- Ritualised violence
- Violence for personal enrichment
- Social violence
- Political violence

Postwar Contexts in Guatemala and Cambodia: Consequences of War

Guatemala:

- * “ethnocide” in the Maya Highlands
 - reinforcement of the cleavages between indigenous and Ladino population

- * migration mostly to the capital
 - fragmentation, destruction of primary social networks
 - resettlement under military control (so called development poles)

Cambodia:

- * “politicide” against the opposition and everybody knowing to read and write
 - indiscriminate destruction of human capital

- * migration to the rural areas
 - early reconstruction of primary social networks around the pagodas under control of the CPP

Postwar Contexts in Guatemala and Cambodia: State and Society

Guatemala:

- * debilitation of the state as a result of democratisation and war termination
 - power struggle inside the state
 - inhibits integration and control of violence
- * high level of fragmentation (in relation to social cohesion as well as to symbolic orders)

Cambodia:

- * reconstruction of an authoritarian system based on clientelistic patrimonial networks
 - hegemony of the CPP
 - high level of control
- * stability of symbols of national unity and social cohesion (kingdom, Buddhism)

Patterns of Youth Violence

Guatemala:

concentrated in Guatemala City, incipient in the border region to Mexico, but despite the discourse constitutes only a minor part (~14%) of the generalized violence

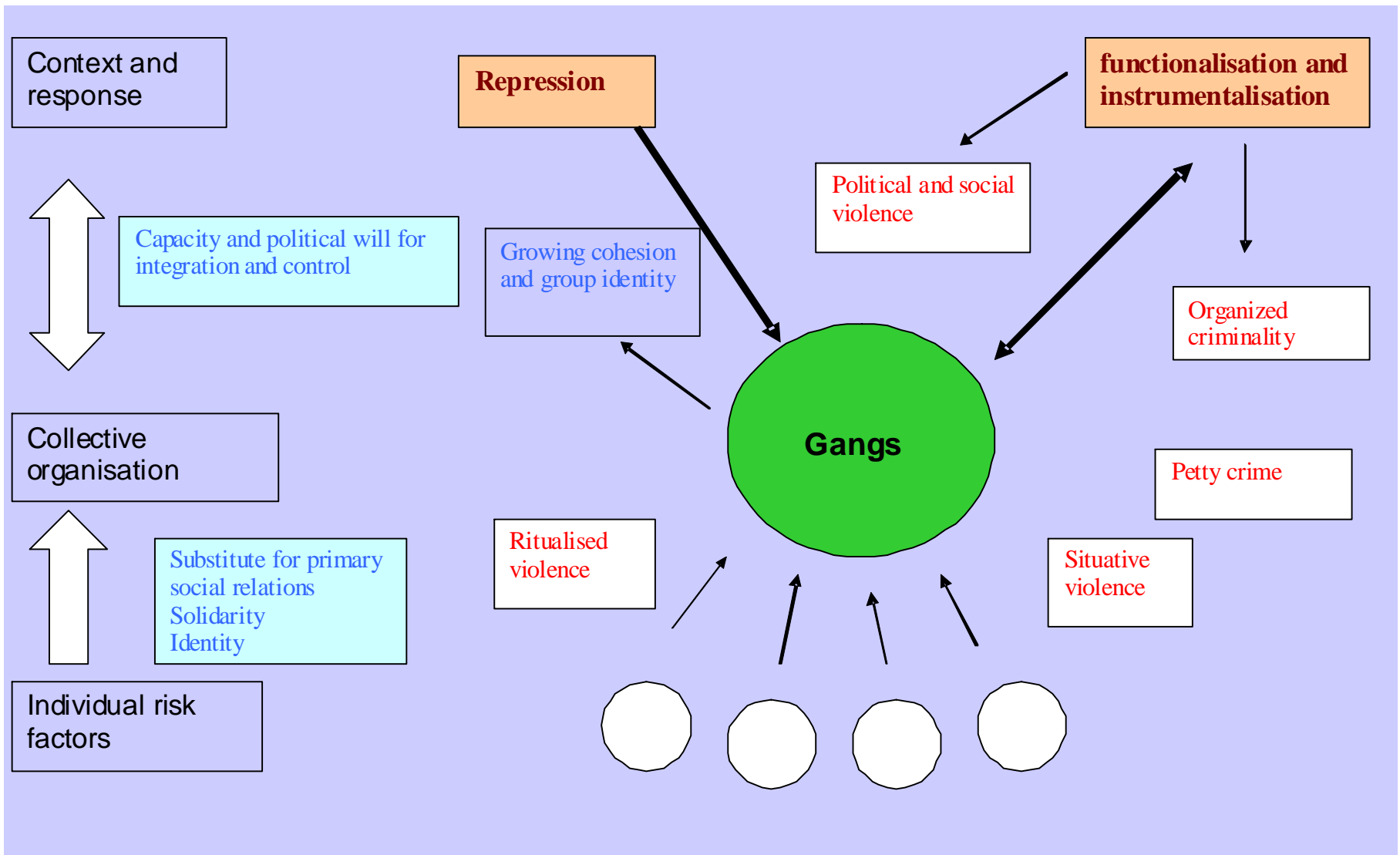
- used as a scapegoat due to a lack of political will to prevent or to control generalized violence
- controlled in areas where traditional or authoritarian mechanisms prevail (e.g. Quiché and in the county's east where the levels of violence are highest)

Cambodia:

a problem in Phnom Penh and incipient in the region bordering Thailand

- partly functionalized by the authoritarian regime (e.g. Thai riots 2003 or against the political opposition)
- controlled by the repressive state apparatus (Hun Sen speech)
- accepted as situational behaviour (impunity for youth from high hierarchy backgrounds)

Forms and Levels of Youth Violence and Postwar Contexts



Postwar Youth Violence and the Four Hypotheses

- a) level of social differentiation – important for the possibilities or difficulties to (re-)construct primary social networks;
- b) relationship between political and economic power – important for state capabilities to integrate and/or control youth violence;
- c) normative frameworks – important for the integration as well as the handling of youths;
- d) sequencing of post-war developments (namely between liberalisation and stabilisation) – influence the capacity of state and society to integrate and/or control

Postwar Youth Violence

Causes of youth violence in Cambodia and Guatemala do not differ from societies ^having to cope with rapid social change – differences in the level of violence can be explained due to the approaches towards youth.

* Cambodia → pacification strategy via selective repression as well as integration into patrimonial networks

* Guatemala → repression (social cleansing reflecting war strategies) and neglect

→ handling of youth violence is a mirror of a society's capabilities to prevent and control violence

Some Considerations beyond the Case Studies

- 1) Violence in postwar contexts is important beyond “political” or directly war related forms
 - legitimate forms of violence control under compliance of the rule of law are an important contribution to the transformation process
- 2) Youths are important for the perspectives as well as for the viability of transformation processes in postwar societies
 - development strategies need to include youth specific peacebuilding needs as a foundation for change.
- 3) In the short term youth (violence) can be controlled via the reconstruction of traditional (mostly authoritarian) systems of social control.
 - necessary are forms of stabilisation and integration that are at least open for social change.

Some Questions for Future Research

- * What are the basic mechanisms and processes for the integration of youths in and out of different violent contexts?
- * How are different forms of violence (political, economic, social, situational, ritualized) linked to each other?
- * How do different forms of control adapt to specific contexts and how open are they for social change?
- * What are the perceptions of youths themselves towards the main challenges of postwar transformation, path dependency and change?

Thanks for your attention!