Exit from War:
The Transformation of Rebels into Post-war Political Elites

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Rebels fight for political power and rebel victories or negotiated settlements of civil wars open up political opportunities for the insurgents. In most post-war contexts, former rebels continue to pursue political careers. The advancement of rebels in the political field is, thus, part of the formation of new elites in the post-war society. Yet rebel careers exhibit strong variance. While some rise to senior political positions, others have to be content with lower level positions or are even completely marginalized. Starting from the theoretical notion of the post-war social space, this paper develops a conceptual framework to explain this variance, focusing on the political career trajectories of former insurgents. The central hypothesis is that their political careers are formed by the individual capital endowment (in Bourdieu’s sense) and the opportunity structure of the post-war social space. Case studies of Liberia and Kosovo, which are based on field work in both countries, serve as a first test of the hypothesis and explain the post-war political careers of former rebels in the two cases with the help of the theoretical conception.

Introduction

The integration of rebels, warlords and militias is one of the central post-war challenges. Armed groups have to be integrated into the social, political and economic life of post-war society in order to prevent them from resuming their fight. An initial wave of research has analyzed this integration process with a focus on disarming and demobilizing former combatants (Schnabel 2005; Muggah 2009; Dodouet et al. 2012). However, the literature with its emphasis on technical-practical problems and questions of implementation remains largely descriptive and policy-oriented (Berdal/Ucko 2009: 2). The process of political transformation, in contrast, has rather been neglected. “Despite the importance of the political transformation of non-state armed movements in the settlement of civil wars and in postwar democratization, surprisingly little is known about this process” (de Zeeuw 2008b: 2). Thus, a second wave of research began to focus on the dynamics of transforming armed groups into political parties (Allison 2006; Söderberg Kovacs 2007; Manning 2004, 2008; de Zeeuw 2008a). At the heart of this debate are problems of establishing viable parties, mobilizing party followers and building a voter base, inner-party democracy as well as the effects of democratization on the political parties. Although this approach is an important expansion compared to the earlier security-related discussion, it is also characterized by a particular emphasis. It deals exclusively with the question of how to transform rebel groups into organizations. This focus reduces the political transformation of rebel groups to the dimension of party politics and assumes that democratic parties will be decisive actors. However, there are also other ways of reintegration of violent actors. As Mats Berdal and David Ucko note “Specifically, limiting the meaning of political reintegration to the formal creation of political parties for the
purpose of partaking in democratic political processes may be overly restrictive” (Berdal/Ucko 2009: 6). Indeed, former rebels may be represented in the political establishment of a post-war society as president, parliamentarian, minister or high government official without necessarily belonging to a political party that has developed from a rebel group. The diverse career paths of former rebels after the war are only partially captured by the focus on political parties.

Therefore, we are emphasizing an actor-centered perspective by analyzing the transformation of rebels into political elites. An elite theoretical perspective allows us to consider other ways of reintegrating former rebels in the post-war context without assuming a pre-determined organizational goal, such as a political party. Moreover, it allows us to examine whether former rebels are successful in joining the political class to forge an elite settlement, which is the base for stable and democratic post-war regimes (Burton/Higley 1987). Much is expected of the political elites in post-war societies. Among their tasks, according to Daniel Serwer and Patricia Thompson (2007: 381-386), are the development of sociopolitical goals, the implementation of peace agreements, the management of resources, the involvement of international actors, as well as conflict management with potential “spoilers”. However, we still know very little about the formation of these elites.

The goal of this text is to throw somewhat more light on this formation and to analyze the transformation of rebel groups as a process of becoming political elites. We have the following research questions: Why are the post-war political careers of violent actors so different? Why are some rebels able to move up to the highest state offices after the war, while others reach only subaltern positions? What determines their success or failure in the political system of the post-war society?

To answer these questions, we fall back on a theory of social mobility of violent actors, which allows us to explain the genesis and reproduction of elite power. Theories of political elites have been applied primarily in the context of modern and functionally differentiated OECD societies, in which political career paths are institutionally predetermined and civil wars and violent regime change are rather exceptions. For an analysis of elites in post-war societies where the institutions are weak and the polarization is strong, these approaches are of only limited use. Thus, we are aiming for a theoretical concept which can claim validity for all those post-war societies in which intrastate wars were ended with negotiated solutions or rebel
victories and, as a result, rebels have been able to take over elite positions. World-wide, from 1945 to 2011, 90 wars have been ended in this way.¹

The goal of this text is to outline and empirically plausibilize a theory of elite formation in post-war societies which focuses on the political careers of armed groups. We define elites as “persons who are able, by virtue of their strategic positions in powerful organizations, to affect national political outcomes regularly and substantially” (Field et al. 1990: 152). An appropriate starting point for our approach is Pierre Bourdieu’s theory of practice, with the central categories of field, capital and habitus. The sociologist, Pierre Bourdieu, is one of the classics of elite sociology such as Gaetano Mosca, Vilfredo Pareto and Robert Michels. However, in contrast to these founding fathers, Bourdieu’s theory has extensively and consistently dealt with elites and, thus, represents a more systematic and theoretically consistent approach (Hartmann 2007: 18-21, 46-60). For our explanatory framework, Bourdieu’s notion of capital is most important. Moreover, Robert Merton’s concept of opportunity structure, which highlights the structural constraints of actors, will play a central role.

In the first chapter we outline the essential elements of the theoretical framework. These are the social space of the post-war society, the capital of the elites and the opportunity structure. From the theoretical assumptions we derive our central hypothesis, according to which the careers of rebels are due to actor capacities and available opportunities. In the second chapter, the variation of post-war careers of rebels in two cases, Liberia and Kosovo, will be analyzed and explained with the help of the theory. Here, we present empirical evidence which has been gathered during field research in both countries. The case studies serve as a first plausibility test of our central hypothesis and are meant to demonstrate the fruitfulness of the theoretical approach. The last chapter discusses and compares the empirical findings and draws a short conclusion.

1) From Rebels to Elites in the Post-War Society

Post-war societies are shaped by the civil wars which preceded them. This is also true for the political elites. Shifts in the political leadership after the conflict are directly related to the upheavals brought about by the war. Thus theorizing about the post-war careers of rebels needs, first of all, to take into account the historical context, that is, the civil war, in which

¹ Source: Database of the Working Group on the Causes of War (AKUF) at the University of Hamburg (www.akuf.de).
the rebels emerged as counter-elites in control of political organizations and often territories too. Wars initiate dynamics of social mobility, i.e. the rise and fall of social groups and individuals. Depending on their territorial and temporal extension, they can bring about more or less far-reaching changes in the social stratification of a society and its elite structure, which also affect post-war times. Rebel groups are part of this social dynamic. If they are able to achieve negotiated settlements or even military victory, the shaping of the post-war order also gives them opportunities for political careers. However, these opportunities are not available for the entire rebel group.

The organisational form of armed groups varies tremendously and ranges from loosely organized groups to quasi-states (Bakonyi et al. 2006). As a function of size and institutionalization, armed groups become stratified internally and develop organisational hierarchies. Klaus Schlichte (2009: 32-38) distinguishes between leaders, administrative staff and followers of armed groups. Leaders and staff are often university-educated and have been politically active well before the war, not least as members of the political establishment. Socio-economic disparities between them and the followers are usually large (Malthaner 2007: 17-20; Schlichte 2009: 35, 38). Thus, in intrastate wars, it is typically the leadership and higher ranking officers of armed groups who have the best chances to successfully pursue political careers and occupy high-level positions after the war. However, the question of inclusion and exclusion in the new order is not determined during the war, but is dependent on the specific conditions of the post-war society.

1.1) The social space of the post-war society

As a particular social form, post-war societies are characterized by peculiar conditions and can be conceptualized, following Pierre Bourdieu’s theory of practice, as “social spaces” (Schlichte 2004: 196-198). In Bourdieu’s theory, the concept of social space allows for a comprehensive view of society and its class relations. It proposes to determine objective social (status) positions in the space, based on the criteria of capital endowments, capital structure and career path (Bourdieu 1998: 1-13). Post-war societies constitute such a social space in which the relevant actors – victorious rebel leaders and war economy entrepreneurs but also opposition politicians and diaspora activists – gain opportunities for upward social mobility. Yet they are subject to the dynamics and principles of the political field, which is one field of action within the social space and is characterized by specific forms of practice (Bourdieu

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2 Partly these counter-elites gained prominence already before the civil war.
3 For an early analysis see Sorokin (1927: 466-472). For more recent contribution see Schlichte (2004); Malešević (2010: 237-274).
Following Max Weber, the distinctive character of the political field is epitomized by the professionalization of political careers. The character of politics as an organization engenders the rise of the professional politician, who works exclusively in politics and strives to make it a permanent source of income (Weber 1988: 512-513). Rebels aiming at a career in politics have to adopt the habitus of the professional politician, which Weber described as being characterized by a feeling and an instinct for power, ethics of conviction, and ethics of responsibility (Weber 1988: 545-552). Further, they need to transform their political power into positions of consolidated legitimate authority. Two variables are key for the explanation of the success and failure of rebel careers in post-war situations: first, capital endowments of the competing political actors and second, the opportunity structure.

1.2) The capital of the elite

The success of individual political actors is dependent, first of all, on their endowment with specific means of power or resources. In his theory of practice, Bourdieu conceptualizes these as types of “capital”, which represent stakes that are up for grabs in a competition over their distribution and acquisition (Bourdieu/Wacquant 1992: 97-100). Bourdieu distinguishes four basic forms of capital: The classic economic capital consists in the form of financial means or means of production. It is of key importance in the political field as it enables elites to reward loyalty and confer privileges on their followers. Social capital consists in the form of personal relations, which may have the character of connections in informal networks, but may also be formalized as membership in associations or political parties. The volume of social capital depends on both the number of associates who can be mobilized and their specific capital endowments. Cultural capital is relevant in the political field in the form of education, special training, organisational skills and networking strategies. Finally, symbolic capital designates the collective recognition of all these sorts of capital. Every form of capital recognized as legitimate is, at the same time, symbolic capital, on which the actors in the political field have to rely in order to transform their power into legitimate authority (Bourdieu 1998: 99-112).

All actors in a field have at their disposal different kinds and quantities of capital. The capital endowment of actors can thus be differentiated according to the total amounts and the relative proportion of the different types of capital. Capital needs to be employed to further careers and here we can distinguish three ways: accumulation, conversion of one type into another and institutionalization (e.g. through property rights, formalised memberships or certificates of education). Political actors will try to accumulate the type of capital that is most important. Moreover, they need to convert types of capital with the aim of having an optimal mix at their
disposal and they have to institutionalize capital in order to consolidate gains made and stabilize their positions. However, the relative weighting and combination of the different types of capital for a successful political career varies, as does the way in which capital is used. Moreover, the utilization of these power resources is dependent on further conditions, which determine the accumulation, convertibility and institutionalization of the capital. These structurally shaped conditions are the opportunity structures (Merton 1996: 153-161).

1.3) The opportunity structure

In the theory of action, opportunity structure designates an objective situation for actors, determining whether actions taken are successful or not. More specifically: “Opportunity structure designates the scale and distribution of conditions that provide various probabilities for individuals and groups to achieve specifiable outcomes” (Merton 1996: 153; italics original). Opportunities may thus be understood as options and chances for action that are informed by structures. These opportunity structures are rooms for manoeuvre, which groups and individuals cannot change in the short run. Explanations on the basis of opportunity structures emphasize options and chances of success of action beyond specific actor qualities. Moreover, they account for unsuccessful actions that fail to achieve the intended results because of the structural background against which they are taken. Access to opportunities is not equally distributed but depends on one’s position in the social space and is specific to class or milieu. At the same time, opportunity structures are subject to social change, as a consequence of which, spaces for manoeuvre for actors are broadened or narrowed: “restricted opportunities become constraints; fewer constraints enlarge opportunities” (Blau 1990: 145). Finally, the actions of actors can generate effects which change the structural conditions under which future actions are taken, thus limiting or broadening the room for manoeuvre of other actors and producing new rigidities or flexibilities.

The end of a civil war generally constitutes a turning point or “critical juncture” (Mahoney 2000: 513) that gives access to and opens up opportunities for advancement for hitherto politically excluded groups. Post-war societies are also characterized by an opportunity structure, which shapes the strategies of individual and collective actors to use power resources for obtaining positions of authority. Thus, rebels act in the social space of the post-war society, in which they have to mobilize and invest their capital within a specific opportunity structure in order to succeed with their political careers. This opportunity structure is shaped by internal and external factors, which we cluster into three sets of variables: war termination, democratisation, and internationalization.
First of all, the way of war termination is of major importance for the opportunities rebels have in post-war situations. When political authority is reorganized after war, established power holders and challengers typically compete with each other (Tilly 2006: 19). Military victories allow rebels to replace the elite of the old regime to a greater extent than do negotiated solutions, which give the established power holders greater possibilities to maintain their elite positions. Post-war situations thus oscillate between comprehensive dissolution and a relative continuity of the former political regime, depending on the horizontal range and vertical depth of the elite positions affected. Whether a war ends through rebel victory or negotiated settlements largely determines the extent to which established elites have to leave their power positions and thus open the way for counter-elites and new actors. Yet the empirical evidence suggests that even in the case of rebel victory, internal wars rarely entail a comprehensive elite replacement. While the composition of the political class changes after the war, newcomers are generally situated next to old acquaintances.

The second variable of the opportunity structure is democratization. The extent and form of democratization shapes the rebels’ opportunities for and constraints on gathering political support beyond their original pool of recruits. Mobilization of popular support is necessary, on the one hand, to win competitive elections, but support also needs to be organized in institutions such as political parties, which increase chances of maintaining a position of power in the long term (Putnam 1976: 143-160). We can distinguish relations between rulers and ruled as based on charismatic, clientelistic and programmatic linkages (Kitschelt 2000). The rebuilding of political institutions in the context of democratization is of central importance for the professionalization of political careers, as institutions have socializing effects on the prospective elites and promote the autonomy of the political field. The capacity of an institution is determined by the degree to which it regulates political processes and informs expectations. On the one hand, institutions order political life by imposing rules on political processes and structuring the options from which actors of an institution can choose. On the other hand, they inform a symbolic social order that is “held by at least part of the actors to define a model or to be binding” (Weber 1978: 31).

Finally, the elite opportunity structure is shaped by the internationalization of the political field of the post-war society through the intervention of external powers. No single post-war situation is a purely local affair. Yet, the extent of internationalization differs widely, and ranges from external mediation in peace negotiations to establishing protectorates in which

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4 On the link between political crises and elite change see Dogan and Higley (1998).
international actors take over state powers and decide about the composition of governments (Doyle/Sambanis 2006: 319-332). External actors can restrict opportunities for rebels by means of international prosecution, sanctions or practices of “naming and shaming”. However, as international actors also try to promote an inclusive political order, the internationalization of the political field may also open up opportunities for rebels (Manning 2007). Examples are the external imposition of forms of power-sharing or the support for influential warlords, who promise stability or who identify themselves as democratic reformers (Barnett/Zürcher 2009; Hensell/Gerdes 2012). For rebel leaders, international interventions may, thus, also create opportunities to craft alliances with external actors and partners, which may, in turn, confer international and national legitimacy.

In order to make political careers, rebels in post-war societies need an endowment of economic, social, cultural and symbolic capital. However, the possibilities for accumulating, converting or institutionalizing different types and amounts of capital are dependent on structural conditions. The opportunity structure values some form of capital over others, affects rates at which one type of capital can be converted into another, and shapes conditions for the institutionalization of capital. Thus, it is the structure of opportunities, influenced by war termination, democratization and internationalization, within which political actors employ their resources and to which they have to adapt their strategies. Investigating the interplay of capital and opportunity structure allows analyzing the success and failure of political careers and thus the rise and fall of rebels in the social space of post-war societies.

The political careers of former rebels in the social space of post-war societies can theoretically be explained by the interaction of capital resources and opportunities structure. From this basis, the following hypothesis can be derived: the better the actors’ capital resources and the greater the availability of opportunities, the better chances the former rebels have to hold elite positions long-term. However, which capital resource is principally employed as a power resource in the political field varies as does the concrete expression of the opportunity structure and, thereby, the interaction of these two variables as well. To answer our research question about the post-war success and failure of rebels, the following two case studies on Liberia and Kosovo will explain the different post-war careers of rebels with the help of the theoretical framework outlined. The case studies are understood as an attempt to demonstrate, using the empirical material, the fruitfulness of the theoretical construct and the first plausibility test of the above hypothesis and, at the same time, as a stimulus for the development of further hypotheses. The following, very condensed case studies reconstruct the post-war careers of
former rebels based on the capital resources of the actors and the respective opportunity structures and, thereby, orient themselves roughly to the above differentiation into four strategies of elite reproduction. Insofar as not otherwise indicated, the following accounts are based on the authors’ field research of many months duration in Liberia and Kosovo.

2) The transformation of rebels in Liberia and Kosovo

2.1) Rebel Careers and the politics of co-optation in Liberia

Liberia experienced two civil wars in recent history that spurred a number of armed actors who have to be distinguished. The first civil war (1989-1996) brought Charles Taylor, the leader of the National Patriotic Front of Liberia (NPFL) to power. Taylor was elected president in 1997 and presided over an internationally recognized government dominated by the successor organization to the NPFL, the National Patriotic Party (NPP), until 2003. In the second civil war, the Liberians United for Reconciliation and Democracy (LURD) and the smaller Movement for Democracy in Liberia (MODEL) fought against the Taylor government. LURD and MODEL emerged from groups that had already fought Taylor before, namely the United Liberation Movement (ULIMO) and the Liberian Peace Council (LPC). Neither had been able to obtain positions of power in the Taylor regime after 1997. Ethnically, LURD was dominated by the Mandingo but also integrated many Krahn at senior levels, while MODEL was almost exclusively Krahn. The second civil war eventually forced Taylor into exile and subsequently, a transitional government integrating the warring factions and civilian politicians took over. In late 2005, civilian professional Ellen Johnson Sirleaf was elected president, a position she successfully defended in elections in 2011. Despite their military success, the rebels of LURD and MODEL have not been able to rise to the heights of power in post-war Liberia. While LURD rebels succeeded in obtaining a few elected positions and some senior administrative posts, most of those who were somewhat successful acceded to mid-level positions in the civil service. Since 2006, their share in positions of power has steadily declined. MODEL’s leaders, however, have had even less success in obtaining and retaining elite positions (Gerdes 2011: 48-50).

At the outset, Liberia’s post-war opportunity structure was strongly shaped by the way the war was terminated, namely as a negotiated peace agreement, which entailed the destabiliza-
tion of the government network. Besieged by militarily superior rebels, the president went into exile, but due to the national balance of power and a combination of international pressures and incentives, the terms of peace were negotiated. The post-war interim government then integrated politically all warring parties and a number of civilian political forces. Thus, the rebels were forced to share the positions and spoils in the interim government with former Taylor associates and civilian actors. While the interim period was characterized by massive private appropriation of powers and corresponding chances for the accumulation of economic capital at all levels of the state (cf. ECOWAS 2005), the power-sharing arrangement limited the opportunities for rebels from the outset. Both rebels and former government officials had broadly similar chances for political careers in the form of political positions in the transitional government. The internationalization of the post-war social space in the form of external intervention represented another dimension of the opportunity structure that affected the political success of the rebels. The International Contact Group for Liberia (ICGL)\(^6\) had not only brokered the power-sharing arrangement, but had also insisted on the inclusion of civilians in the interim government and restricted the eligibility of interim government elites (Hayner 2007). The Chairman and Vice-Chairman were civilian politicians and neither they nor senior ministers of the transitional government could stand in the 2005 presidential and legislative elections. External actors tried in other ways to reduce the chances of warring party elites, notably by deciding on a UN assets freeze and travel ban against specific individuals. Thus, the ICGL reduced the opportunities for generating economic and social capital and converting them into electoral success. Taylor government elites were more comprehensively targeted, but still succeeded better than the rebels in remaining in positions of power in the post-war order. While the measures increased transaction costs, effectiveness was limited.

As the peace agreement stipulated democratic elections, the opportunity for future political careers would first of all depend on the ability to attract votes. Contested were the presidency, 30 senate and 73 representative seats. The United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL) peacekeeping force served as guarantor for the peace agreement and thus stabilized the democratic arrangement. The rebels had to build constituencies, which needed to be locally defined for the legislative elections. We can roughly distinguish two strategies, i.e. standing in the elections or affiliating with and campaigning for one of the top presidential contenders. The goal behind standing in the elections was often not so much winning but demonstrating political significance, i.e. generating symbolic social capital that would increase chances for

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\(^6\) The ICGL was the umbrella organisation of external actors engaging Liberia and comprised the UN, ECOWAS, EU, World Bank, the USA, Nigeria and a number of other states.
cooptation by the president. After the first round of presidential and the legislative elections, unsuccessful candidates generally re-evaluated their options and often supported one of the two remaining presidential aspirants.

In the Liberian setting, social capital is the major power resource and the other two pure forms of capital are important primarily to the extent that they can be converted into social capital. It is useful to distinguish two levels at which social capital can be accumulated. The higher one is the elite level. Elite social capital is of great importance for positions which are filled by way of selection by the president, with the assistance of advisors. The lower level is social grassroots capital. It consists of relations to lower-level opinion leaders, authorities and ultimately voters that allow for attracting votes in elections. It is particularly important for elective positions. In Liberia’s clientelistic political setting, both levels of social capital are closely intertwined. The ability to craft a network of elites allows for building a clientelistic network extending to the voter grassroots via intermediaries. In Liberia, elite social capital is accumulated in secretive clubs, in particular the Freemasons and the United Brothers Friendship (UBF). LURD and, in particular, MODEL elites are estimated to be significantly less well positioned in these clubs than their competitors from the Taylor government and civilian opposition parties.

The LURD rebels had noteworthy connections at the elite and grassroots levels but with limited reach: the ethnic Mandingo businesspeople at the higher level and lower status Mandingo of restricted size at the lower one. Mandingo are widely rejected as non-Liberian in the country and constitute a group apart. Crossing ethnic boundaries is more difficult for them than for any other Liberian group, which strongly impedes the accumulation of social capital. Their endowments allow for a relevant position in political society, but opportunities to rise further are severely limited. LURD split into two factions during the transition, but MODEL had accumulated even less internal social capital during the war. Relations between commanders and the leader had been characterized by mistrust and most of MODEL’s interim positions had been given (and allegedly sold by the leader) to non-members (cf. Lidow 2011). Only four, including the leader, obtained the opportunity to further accumulate social capital in senior interim positions.

The rebel elites, as well, were not very successful in institutionalizing social capital in political parties. LURD leader Sekou Conneh, who was suspected of having generated economic

For reasons dating back to the period of military rule (1980-1990), Mandingo and Krahn repeatedly allied in marriages of convenience in the conflicts since 1989. Yet these alliances were unstable and some of the bloodiest battles of the first war were fought between the groups, which continues to impact negatively on relations between both sides.
capital through individuals nominated by LURD to the interim government, but abstained from occupying a post himself, created the Progressive Democratic Party (PRODEM) in 2005. He ran as its presidential candidate in 2005 but obtained only 0.6% of the votes and none of its legislative candidates won a seat. The party did not field a candidate in the 2011 presidential elections. Thomas Yaya Nimely, the MODEL leader who was not eligible as he had been interim Foreign Minister, initially tried to form his own party too but lacked support and quickly gave up on the project. More successful were rebels who campaigned for the future president and affiliated themselves with larger, somewhat established parties, which had institutionalized social capital. Second in relevance to Johnson Sirleaf’s Unity Party (UP) was George Weah’s Congress for Democratic Change (CDC). Johnson Sirleaf, formerly married to a Mandingo, is considered more sympathetic to that ethnic group than most other elites, and was supported by the umbrella group of Mandingo civil society, which was specifically created for the 2005 elections by an important businessman. The larger of the two LURD factions, led by the estranged wife of the leader, threw its support behind the president. A number of political rather than military LURD elites from this faction were allocated positions by the president, though the number of those co-opted decreased as the president consolidated her network of authority. Only one MODEL commander, who had obtained a lucrative position in the interim regime, threw its support behind the president. A number of political rather than military LURD elites from this faction were allocated positions by the president, though the number of those co-opted decreased as the president consolidated her network of authority. Only one MODEL commander, who had obtained a lucrative position in the interim regime, integrated successfully with the largest opposition party, the CDC, and obtained a representative seat in 2005 that he lost in 2011.

Rebel elites were also short of economic capital. They had, by and large, not previously been established as elites in Liberia. Due to the dismal state of the Liberian economy, sanctions, the need to share power, and ineligibility of senior interim elites, the transitional regime had provided only limited opportunities for accumulation. These, however, were able to be accessed to a greater extent by LURD than by MODEL, as described above. LURD elites were thus in a better position to establish constituency-defined patronage networks and obtained four legislative positions in 2005. However, two of the legislators lost their seats in 2011.

It is useful to distinguish two dimensions of cultural capital: that of formal qualifications and that of “soft” social-political skills enabling success in a neo-patrimonial democracy. Formal qualification, in particular Western schooling, has historically been used to legitimize differences in power and wealth in Liberia. As such, it is endowed with prestige and is assumed to put elites in a position to more effectively improve living standards. In this respect, civilian and former government elites were best positioned, followed by the Mandingo, who are disproportionately represented in modern sectors of the economy and the LURD-affiliated Krahn
who had risen during the regime of their compatriot, the military president Samuel Doe (1980-1990), while MODEL’s marginal commanders came last. For local elections, the social soft skills of patrimonial governance were routinely more important than formal qualifications, yet this tended to favour experienced politicians and local activists rather than militarily-oriented rebels. Stronger social capital within LURD and a greater accumulation of expertise explains the relative success of some of LURD’s political leaders in middle-level administrative positions. While these positions were most often obtained through interim LURD ministers, they had sufficient connections and professional competence to survive the government’s initial moves towards reduction of the public sector, which had been bloated during the transition.

In the medium run, rebel elites tended to lose rather than consolidate their elite status. This points to processes of closure favoring those who accumulated capital in the longer run, including (sub-) elites of the former Taylor regime. Part of this involves the rising costs of political success, occasioned by both increasing financial requirements for candidacy and increased costs of patronage as expectations rose and electoral competition increased. An important dimension is that of the consolidation of the presidential network of authority in the Unity Party, and the greater importance of (possibly financial) presidential backing for electoral success and co-optation. “[In 2005,] the real strength of [Johnson Sirleaf’s] campaign was the collection of individuals from other parties, civil society organizations, and elsewhere in Liberian society” (Sawyer 2008: 190). By contrast, only eleven of the (first) 447 individuals nominated by the president after the 2011 elections were not associated with the Unity Party (UN Secretary-General 2012: 2). Furthermore, the presidential project of modernization resulted in the increasing importance of professional cultural capital. As quality education and professional (international) careers have historically been much more easily accessible to more privileged sections of the population, individuals from established families have re-emerged. Yet, Liberia’s elite has undergone significant socio-structural change, as formerly more marginal civil society activists have risen and the ethnic representativeness of the government has increased. Yet, the professionalization of the political field in the wake of political stabilization favored those who more consistently and successfully pursued civilian careers in (international) organizations, business, civil society, and the state than most rebels had done.
2.2) The Rise of the KLA in Kosovo

During the Kosovo war (1998-1999) the Albanian Ushtria Çlirimtare ë Kosovës (Kosovo Liberation Army, KLA) succeeded, with the military intervention of NATO, in overthrowing the Milošević regime in the South Serbian province. The exodus of the Serbian rulers constituted the last stage in a process of largely violent circulation of Albanian and Serbian elites since the independence of Serbia from Ottoman rule in 1913 (Cohen 1989: 335-392). The Kosovo war led to a massive intervention of the UN and the establishment of a transitional administration (UN Interim Administration in Kosovo, UNMIK), which placed Kosovo under international rule, in order to oversee the rebuilding of the state. The war also promoted the leaders of the victorious KLA into positions of state power. Since the end of the war, the members of the former rebel group have succeeded in transforming themselves into new political elites.

For the rise of the rebels, the war termination initially represented the decisive moment of opportunity structure. The fall of the Milošević regime in Kosovo left an institutional power vacuum. Thus, in the immediate aftermath of the war, there were numerous opportunities for the KLA to move into leadership positions. Directly following the peace negotiations, the KLA was able to establish a self-styled transitional government and to take over central positions in the local administrations and in the socially-owned enterprises so that early on, they were able to secure access to economically important areas (Eyre/Wittkowsky 2002: 20). The mayors appointed or sponsored by the KLA began a system of taxing cafés, restaurants, hotels, stores and petrol stations as well as generating other resources through smuggling practices (Yannis 2003; Briscoe/Price 2011: 13). Thus the rebels succeeded in establishing themselves in the political and economic sphere. Although the transitional government was dissolved again after six months, following an agreement with the international actors, it had created strategic advantages for the KLA and allowed the rebels a period of accumulation of economic capital. The internationalization of the social space of the post-war society, characterized by a massive external intervention, scarcely limited the further opportunities of the rebels. The strengthening of the UN presence in Kosovo could hardly change anything in the already-successful power consolidation of the rebel group. Thus the unofficial mayors of the KLA were simply taken over in the context of the new UN-controlled local administration. Moreover, the UN could not rule without the leaders of the KLA. From the beginning, the goal of the international actors was to integrate influential figures such as the former speaker of the rebels, Hashim Thaçi, into the UN controlled administration in order to ensure stability (Narten 2006). Thereby, Thaçi succeeded in obtaining de facto immunity against police inves-
tigations thanks to his cooperation with the UN. The UN protectorate and the politics of elite cooptation rather promoted than hindered the political careers of the former KLA fighters.

The opportunities opened up through democratization were also decisive for the post-war careers of the rebels. Through the establishment of political parties, former members of the KLA succeeded in institutionalizing social capital and moving into stable positions in the political field. Two political parties grew out of the KLA – the Partia Demokratike e Kosovës (Democratic Party of Kosovo, PDK) of Hashim Thaçi and the Aleanca për Ardhmërinyë e Kosovës (Alliance for the Future of Kosovo, AAK), led by the former field commander, Ramush Haradinaj. Since the first parliamentary elections in 2001, both successor parties have succeeded in continually raising their proportion of parliamentary seats so that they were able to acquire about 40 percent of the votes in the last two elections. Members of the KLA have provided four of the five prime ministers and one of the five state presidents. Furthermore, members of the KLA have been represented in numerous positions in the government and administration. The PDK and AAK have also succeeded in building clientelistic networks. The parties have not only connections to diverse commercial business, which act as sponsors and financiers of the parties, but also control positions in the public sector, in the large state enterprises and in the profitable ministries with large budgets (Briscoe/Price 2011: 16-21, 26-32).

The resulting patronage power allows the parties to reach out to new constituencies and, thus, to convert economic into social capital. Both parties practice a policy of cooptation to attract new groups of voters and to shed the image as the KLA successor party. Popular personalities, artists, journalists, professors and young, well-educated people from urban centers are systematically recruited to give the parties a new face. Thus the member profile of the PDK in particular has changed. The party has filled various high-level government posts with people who have no war experience. However, the PDK and the AAK only partly function as channels, which allow outsiders to rise in politics and the possibilities for new party members to exercise influence remain limited, because the former rebels have established mechanisms for closure through selection rules, “gates” and “gatekeepers” to protect their positions. The inner-party democratization is weak while the control of the party leaders is strong. The PDK and AAK are personalized through their respective party chairmen, Hashim Thaçi and Ramush Haradinaj, who have led the parties since their founding. They have been unchallenged internally since then and decide de facto everything. The parties themselves are characterized by a non-transparent structure and there is no open competition for higher party po-
sitions. Of the nine members of the party presidium of the PDK, only two were not members of the KLA. The PDK and, notably, the AKK, have the character of clientelistic parties, which are strongly represented in particular regions of Kosovo where the parties have their voter base (Briscoe/Price 2011: 26). These regions are also original recruitment areas of the KLA and home of their leaders (IKS 2011: 59-62).

The democratization of Kosovo, however, also limited the opportunities of the former rebels, because they were initially confronted with new opponents. From the outset, the guerillas in post-war Kosovo stood in competition with the old Albanian elite which has risen in Tito’s Yugoslavia of the 1970s (Cohen 1989: 335-392). Members of this urban elite had founded the Lidhja Demokratike e Kosovës (Democratic League of Kosovo, LDK), which represented a pacifist position in the so-called Kosovar “shadow state” during the Milošević era. Led by Ibrahim Rugova, the LDK was the main representation of the Albanians until it was challenged by the rising KLA. After the war, the LDK attempted to resume its old hegemonic position. In the course of the first communal and parliamentary elections, the LDK was able to achieve significant successes compared to the two successor parties of the KLA. The consequence was a fierce competition and polarization between the LDK and the PDK and AAK, which was accompanied by a number of violent attacks. However, the competition among the parties led to a slow decline of the previously dominant LDK and the rise of the successor parties of the KLA, in the course of which the conflicts between the actors have increasingly lessened.

Both KLA successor parties have formed coalitions with the LDK and established joint governments. In the context of the UN protectorate, external actors were able to foster this cooperation among the elites. Thus the UN Special Representative was successful in 2002 in pushing through a power-sharing arrangement between the LDK, PDK and AAK. Independent of the respective government coalitions, there are also close interactions and communication relationships within the elite. This can be explained through the social homogeneity of the elites, family relationships and through shared experiences at university, in the underground and in exile as well as through the limited significance of political programs for the differentiation of the actors. Furthermore, the elites share basic political orientations. This applies to central goals such as the liberation from Serbian repression, the independence of Kosovo and the rapprochement to the European Union. The result is a reciprocal assimilation of the political elites and the accumulation of social capital by the leaders of the KLA successor parties.
The success of the former KLA rebels is thanks, not least, to the ability to obtain the symbolic capital of recognition. The opportunities to accumulate this capital have arisen, due to the way in which the war was ended. In Kosovo, the KLA was able to generate considerable prestige from their victorious battle and the overthrow of the Milošević regime. The KLA became a symbol of national liberation. Thus the leaders of the KLA successor parties promote the cult around the KLA and its legendary commander, Adem Jashari, who is remembered every year during the so-called “Epopeja”. Jashari's portrait is embossed on house walls and the international airport is named after him. The war myth and the heroization of the KLA and its martyrs are accompanied by the homogenization of a narrative in the media, the historiography and public ceremonies (di Lellio/Schwandner-Sievers 2006). The cult around the KLA can be interpreted as an attempt to exclude alternative perceptions of the war and, thus, to achieve cultural hegemony (di Lellio and Schwandner-Sievers 2006: 520-524). The hero worship also reflects the efforts to achieve distinction from the charismatic proponent of peaceful resistance and leader of the LDK, Ibrahim Rugova. More than ten years after the end of the war, the myth around the KLA remains a central pillar of the legitimation of the new political elite, who accumulate massive symbolic capital in the field of collective memory.

The political elites have also tried to generate symbolic capital on the international stage to improve the poor image of the country and its leadership. The independence of Kosovo, proclaimed in 2008, has been recognized by only 96 of 193 states. Hence, a normalization of relations with the important states of the international community is still missing. Furthermore, there are the continued violent clashes on the northern border of Kosovo with Serbia, which has also not recognized the independence of Kosovo. Moreover there are investigations by the International Criminal Court for the Former Yugoslavia and by EULEX (European Union Rule of Law Mission) against leading representatives of the political elite for war crimes. In addition, accusations of organ trade have been made by the Council of Europe against the current Prime Minister, Hashim Thaçi. At the same time, Kosovo has a range of foreign policy goals. Among these are, in particular, recognition by an absolute majority of the states in the international community, a strategic partnership with the EU and NATO and membership in a range of international organizations.

The former rebels have, therefore, followed a proactive policy on the international stage. Here, the continued internationalization of the post-war social space represented an opportunity for the political elites to promote a modern image of Kosovo and to present their country to external actors as “European” and “stable”. The Kosovar government entrusted the Israeli
advertising agency, Saatchi & Saatchi, in October 2009 with a public diplomacy campaign worth 5.7 million Euros, to change the negative perception of the country (Wählisch/Xharra 2010). The campaign, “Kosovo – the young Europeans” presented the country as a part of Europe and, at the same time, emphasized the youth of Kosovo and, thus, positive values such as hope, optimism, vitality and change as essential characteristics of the country. Moreover, in numerous public statements, the representatives of the political elite praise values such as multi-ethnicity, rule of law and democracy and highlight post-war Kosovo as a model of stability in the Balkans. The recent dissolution of the International Civilian Office, which had the task of ensuring the implementation of the so-called Ahtisaari Plan for the “supervised independence” of Kosovo, can be seen as a success of these efforts. For the new political elites, this means a further step in the direction of full sovereignty and international recognition of their state.

3) Conclusion

Why are some rebel groups successful after the war in obtaining the highest state offices, while others reach only subaltern positions? In this paper, an explanation was suggested, which highlights the capital endowment of the actors in the context of the opportunity structure of the post-war society. A comparison of the two cases, Liberia and Kosovo, shows the different career success of rebel groups in the respective post-war settings. While the leadership of the former KLA became an established part of the political elite and was able to take over numerous governmental positions, in Liberia, the rebel groups were less successful and had to be satisfied with mid-level leadership positions in the state apparatus. This variance can be explained by different opportunities and capital distributions.

For the diverse positioning of the rebels in Liberia and Kosovo, one can first determine that the different endings of the wars in the two cases also opened up different opportunities for the rebels. Thus in Kosovo, the KLA alone filled the power vacuum immediately after the war, while the LURD and MODEL in Liberia had to come to an arrangement with the old and new civilian leaders right from the start. The phase of the transitional governments was characterized, both in Kosovo and in Liberia, by the accumulation of economic capital through the diverse rebel groups. This supports the hypothesis that rebels in post-war contexts try to achieve early access to economic resources in order to make credible promises of distribution
to their supporters and to ensure a strategic advantage over late-comers (Manning 2008: 145,153).

However, for a further political career, this initial phase of economic accumulation is apparently not essential. In the post-war society, the opportunity structure of rebels is determined above all by the democratization. For the professional competition for votes, rebels must accumulate social capital beyond old comradeship relationships from war times. Moreover, they must also institutionalize social capital in parties in order to continually mobilize political support. Nevertheless, the two cases show that the founding of political parties is not always the first option. While the leading members of the KLA in Kosovo founded two successor parties, the rebels in Liberia primarily affiliated themselves with existing parties or other networks. These strategies apparently had direct consequences for the success of the rebels. The rebels in Kosovo were successful in continually winning more seats in Parliament with their parties and ultimately in providing several Prime Ministers. By contrast, the rebels in Liberia were only able to achieve a few elected offices and were dependent on cooptation by the president.

In both cases former rebels succeeded in being assimilated into the existing elite. For the rebels in Liberia, however, the continuity of the political elite of the earlier Taylor regime was a barrier, because they were able to defend their old power positions. By contrast, the integration of the KLA leadership into the old Albanian elite proved to be an advantage for the former rebels because it was accompanied by a relative social closure of the entire political class. This closure in Kosovo also means a dissociation of the former commandants and leaders from their previous wartime comrades, who have not made it to the top.

Finally, also decisive for the different careers of the rebels in Liberia and Kosovo are the collective social perceptions of the war and, thus, the social recognition of the rebel groups. While the KLA is honored in Kosovo as the liberator of the nation and the KLA successor parties profit considerably from this symbolic capital, the rebels in Liberia do not enjoy much prestige and were also unable to mobilize any international support. By contrast, the internationalization of the post-war societies through external interventions only marginally affected the opportunities of the rebels. The impact of the external actors in both cases was noticeable mainly through the ways in which the wars were terminated and in the promotion of elite settlements through power-sharing pacts. However, international actors apparently have limited significance for the overall opportunity structure because they have no influence on the micro-practices of recruitment and social closure and can only work indirectly on a democratic
opening. It is, essentially, local dynamics which determine political careers in the social space of the post-war society.

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