

achievements and shortcomings of the 1992 peace agreements are probably the most candid narration by a member of the FMLN parliamentary elite ever to be published in the postwar era. Criticisms by Rodríguez about the detachment of part of the leadership from the popular sectors, his acknowledgment of the lack of substantial socio-economic changes in the country in the last 25 years, and his frustration about the inability of El Salvador's democracy to create a more equal wealth distribution are factors that reflect well the disenchantment of a significant part of the old militants of the revolutionary organisations in the postwar era and that, in this occasion and in a somewhat exceptional manner, are expressed by a cadre who remained in positions of institutional responsibility.

Given all the above, *Priest under Fire* represents an unquestionably valuable source of information about the origins and development of the Salvadoran revolutionary movement and it should be a compulsory reference work for those interested in the recent history of this Central American country.

*Instituto Mora, Mexico City*

ALBERTO MARTÍN ÁLVAREZ

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Christine J. Wade, *Captured Peace: Elites and Peacebuilding in El Salvador* (Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, 2016), pp. xx + 281, £23.99, pb.

In *Captured Peace* Christine Wade investigates the political, economic and social aftermath of the Salvadoran peace accords that were signed in early 1992. The implementation of these accords and the support by one of the first multidimensional United Nations peacekeeping missions has often been portrayed as a success story in ending civil wars. In her study, Wade takes a critical approach and argues that the Salvadoran elites (economic, military and political) effectively captured the peace process to suit their interests.

The book is a welcome overview of almost 25 years of post-war transition in El Salvador. After a discussion on elite capture in and after peace processes (Chapter 1), the author discusses the problematic implementation of the Salvadoran peace agreement in the period after 1992 (Chapter 2), the development of political parties and electoral politics (Chapter 3), the introduction and deepening of neoliberal economic policies (Chapter 4) and the ongoing exclusion and marginalisation of large parts of the Salvadoran population (Chapter 5). The chapters are empirically rich, informative and well documented. Focussing on developments at the national level, Wade succinctly summarises and analyses the evidence and debates on a broad array of topics such as civil society, neoliberalism, mining conflicts, gang policies, political parties, mass migration to the United State, etc. Although the broad range of the topics sometimes comes at the cost of some depth of analysis, the book does provide a very comprehensive account of the Salvadoran post-settlement era and is highly recommended to anyone interested in and puzzled by El Salvador's problematic post-settlement peace.

The focus that Wade places on the politics of peace implementation and the power struggles that accompany peace processes is interesting and important. Indeed, there can be little doubt that elites deeply influenced the post-settlement process in El Salvador. The evidence presented in the book clearly substantiates the conclusion that 'Salvadoran elites, through their governing political party, ARENA, were not only able to limit the scope of the negotiations largely to institutional reform that

they would oversee, they were also able to minimize their losses by manipulating various aspects of their implementation' (p. 187). Nevertheless, the claim that elites actually *captured* the peace in El Salvador is too strong and simplistic. It suggests that a clearly identifiable group (the elites) won the continuing battle for peace in El Salvador. I would argue that the outcome was more nuanced.

While the study of Salvadoran elites is an under-researched subject, as Wade emphasises in her last sentence, the book could have provided a more structured and detailed overview of them. Wade acknowledges that Salvadoran elites are not a homogeneous group, as for instance demonstrated in the discussion about the different factions within ARENA, but many questions remain as to what happened to different elites (oligarchy, military, political party), how they related to each other, and how elite politics changed over time. There is also only limited attention to the relations of elites with the Salvadoran population, which is essential to explaining why ARENA (the main representative of 'elites') was for such a long time able to garner broad support. How did the party (re)develop and mobilise its support base? The left-wing elites and the ways in which they built their networks leading to electoral victories in 2009 and 2014 are only briefly addressed in the book.

Wade borrows the term 'peace capture' from Michael Barnett and Christoph Zürcher ('The Peacebuilder's Contract: How External Statebuilding Reinforces Weak Statehood', in Roland Paris and Timothy D. Sisk (eds.), *The Dilemmas of Statebuilding: Confronting the Contradictions of Postwar Peace Operations*, Routledge, 2009), who emphasise the negotiated nature of processes of peacebuilding between international actors (or peacebuilders), national elites and sub-national elites. These authors predict that the most likely outcome of peacebuilding processes is a compromise between these different stakeholders, implying that proposed reforms (such as democratisation, market reform, etc.) are only partly implemented. One of the reasons for this is that local elites are not sincerely interested in them. This seems to be exactly the case in El Salvador, and it is therefore somewhat surprising that Wade argues that El Salvador is not a case of 'compromise' but rather of 'capture.'

The fact that elites were much better placed to protect their interests, in part as a result of their continuing control over state institutions, does not imply that they '*captured*' the peace or the democracy (p. 113). The Salvadoran peace agreements were a sea change leading to a new political playing field in which left-wing elites (the FMLN in particular) gradually developed into one of the key actors in political life. In a captured peace process this would obviously not have occurred. Moreover, the term 'captured peace' also seems to imply a verdict about who is to blame for the failure of the peace process: right-wing elites. While the study shows that many of these elites did not seem to be genuinely interested in the type of reforms proposed in the peace agreements, it goes too far to argue that the problems that El Salvador confronts today are simply the result of the unwillingness of these elites to do better. There are many other actors, factors, and forces at play that influenced El Salvador's current situation.

The book closes with a useful reflection on the case of El Salvador and the future of peacebuilding in war-torn societies: take local elites seriously, pay more attention to the strengthening of institutions, and help former rebel movements make the transition towards political parties while giving them a role in a transitional power-sharing administration. In El Salvador this might have led to a more effective implementation of some aspects of the peace agreements. It remains to be seen, however, whether this would have led to consensus about a broader reform agenda – including economic reform. It is also doubtful that it would have helped to deal with the more

awkward issues in the peace process, such as the legacy of impunity. In this regard the Salvadoran peace process is another sobering account of the limitations involved in fostering consensus about what peace entails and how it should be built.

*Utrecht University*

CHRIS VAN DER BORGH

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David Close, *Nicaragua: Navigating the Politics of Democracy* (Boulder, CO, and London: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2016), pp. viii + 223, £58.50, hb.

In *Nicaragua: Navigating the Politics of Democracy*, the political scientist David Close discusses the four moments of political transition that have occurred in Nicaragua since 1979, the year of the Sandinista Revolution. These moments of transition, the author underlines, were more than simple changes of government. Rather, they were ‘full-scale makeovers of the political system’ that drastically changed the way the Nicaraguan state functioned (p. 4). Relying on political theory and case studies, Close traces how the two regime changes that occurred in 1979 and 1984 brought Nicaragua closer to democracy, while the last two moments of political transition, in 2000 and 2011, ‘moved away from democracy’ (p. 2). The book’s narrative of how the power to govern Nicaragua slowly became concentrated in the hands of one man is particularly relevant seen in the context of Nicaragua’s most recent election in November 2016, which allowed Daniel Ortega to embark on his third consecutive term in office. What is more, using a comparative perspective the author challenges the reader to think about the complex question of how it is possible that ‘political leaders can, given the right circumstances, overcome institutions designed to favour democracy’ (p. 163).

Indeed, Daniel Ortega, the former guerrilla commander and current president, is the central figure of this book, as he appears to have impacted all the major turning points in recent Nicaraguan history. Already in the late 1970s, as a left-wing revolutionary fighting for the Frente Sandinista de Liberación Nacional (Sandinista National Liberation Front, FSLN), Ortega played a key – although perhaps not a crucial – role in the overthrow of the Somoza dictatorship. Only five years later, after an intense and highly scrutinised election campaign, Daniel Ortega became Nicaragua’s first democratically elected president in almost half a century. Although his Sandinista party lost power in the elections of 1990, Ortega continued to dominate the country’s political landscape as ‘the personification’ of the Sandinistas (p. 187). Surprisingly, as Close describes in detail in the sixth chapter of the book, Ortega managed to get back into power through a pact with his former enemy Arnoldo Alemán, the leader of the Liberal Party (p. 114). The ‘power-sharing duopoly’ between Ortega and Alemán lasted until 2011 when, after the Liberals received only 5.9 per cent of the vote and Sandinistas won with a landslide of 62.5 per cent, Daniel Ortega became the country’s single leader once again (p. 150).

Overall, this book focuses more on institutions and political systems than on individuals. In particular, Close analyses how the four regime changes have influenced the strength and quality of Nicaraguan democracy. And as the author notes, this is certainly not the first scholarly work to deal with this important topic, as ‘from 1979 to 1990, Nicaragua and the FSLN were big news and a hot topic for academic research’ (p. 3). Indeed, throughout most of the 1980s, supporters and enemies of the Sandinista government were engaged in a highly politicised debate over the question as to whether the 1979 revolution had changed Nicaragua for the better or, as the