

Annette Ittig of York University, suggested that Afghanistan could not as yet be neatly categorized as a "post-conflict society", as the country is still experiencing incursions (including civilian casualties) from the US-led coalition against as-Quaeda and Taliban groups. Moreover, there are power struggles between the Afghan Transitional Authority and regional warlords as well as widespread criminalized activity. One consequence of the lack of actual rule of law in Afghanistan is that the war economy in Afghanistan continues to expand, particularly and trade of opium, as well as in illicit arms dealing. The resolution of these issues requires a long term, regional approach including the compliance of Iran, Pakistan and the CIS. A concurrent problem is the fact that the US-led effort is not designed to protect the people of Afghanistan but rather to protect American interests. As for rebuilding in Afghanistan, it is unclear whether or not local warlords, particularly those implicated in war crimes, can become peacebuilders. This is compounded by the fact that memories of past abuses are long. A critical issue is the return and sustainable reintegration of refugees and internally-displaced persons (IDPs). It is important to recognize that refugees and IDPs are not passive. Rather, they possess remarkable survival skills and coping mechanisms. Among their economic strategies is the receipt of remittances from family and members of the diaspora. Such remittances could play a key role in Afghanistan's post-conflict reconstruction, particularly in the rehabilitation of the country's devastated private sector.

Serge Lortie, of the Department of Justice, said that in general justice reform in the context of rebuilding war-torn developing countries is relatively new. Justice reform initiatives must be flexible, and most importantly, demonstrate a willingness to listen and learn from society. From a legal perspective, four main considerations are applicable to Afghanistan. First, human security must be the primary objective of justice reform. Thus, disarmament of ex-combatants and thugs must occur, and a civil police force must be established as a replacement for military forces. A high priority must be set on establishing a criminal code, civil code, and prisons (though some of this already exists in Afghanistan). Second, attention must be paid to the relations between the new and old regimes. To help avoid widespread revenge and retribution, a legal body designed along the lines of a Truth and Reconciliation Commission must be implemented. Third, state institutions must be strengthened, and the police, judges, and civil servants must be paid reasonable wages. Fourth, knowledge is all-important because justice reform must take into account prior and local norms, practices, and laws.

While the cases are diametrically opposed in many ways, it is important to apply the lessons learned from peacebuilding experiences in Latin America to the current challenges in Afghanistan due to specific parallels that exist between the Central American and Colombian conflicts, said Colleen Duggan, of the International Development Research Centre. With Guatemala in mind, there is a need to re-think the neo-liberal democratic reconstruction model that has become dominant within the international community from the early 1990s onwards because it often entails: the highly accelerated and wholly unrealistic establishment of a new political systems; a rush to the holding of elections; and the formation of an economy predicated on neo-liberal principles in situations where market conditions do not exist. Moreover, a series of questions must be addressed regarding the type of state to be founded (democratic, secular, multiethnic), the nature of law and order arrangements that will be in place once the UN departs, and whether or not the international community will remain engaged for a long period in the rebuilding of the country. The question of war economies and the role of the illegal drug trade