



Democracy,

Conflict and

Human Security

*Policy Summary:
Key Findings and Recommendations*

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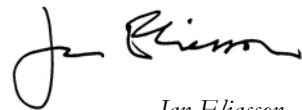
Printed by: Trydells Tryckeri AB, Sweden

ISBN: 91-85391-90-5

‘Our main task in today’s global community is to accept and live up to the triple challenge of development, security and human rights. These three challenges are together highest on the United Nations agenda. They affect and reinforce each other.

One of the most serious threats to our common security emerges from human desperation in societies which lack in respect for human rights and democracy. Acting for democracy is acting for peace and security....

The only way democracy will prove itself is through a living relationship between peoples and their governments based on trust, accountability and the determination to deliver practical results.’

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Jan Eliasson', written in a cursive style.

*Jan Eliasson
President of the United Nations 60th General Assembly
Minister of Foreign Affairs, Sweden*

Introduction

Democracy is in crisis worldwide at the very time when there needs to be a renewed emphasis on democratic practice as the key to the attainment of 21st century human security aims. Democracy matters for human security because well-designed and inclusive political institutions and processes are the key to both preventing violence and managing conflict constructively, and because respect for human rights and public participation are essential for meeting human development objectives.

The findings of this research present a stark picture—that democracy needs to be ‘reclaimed’. Why?

- *Democracy worldwide is ‘under fire’*: contrary to the end-of-the-cold-war predictions concerning the triumph of democracy as a political system, there are glaring ‘challenges of delivery’ and new questions of popular legitimacy and for the long-term viability of the state.
- *Democratization is instrumental to meeting human needs*: many current challenges relate to the need for improved development and the reduction of inequality.
- *Violent conflicts may have their origins in human insecurity*: insecurity is linked to *exclusion and lack of access to resources and power*.
- *There is a need for democratic practice*: besides and above the indispensable formal institutional framework, the legitimacy and sustainability of democratic systems are perceived as depending increasingly on the responsible exercise of power and on giving voice to those who feel marginalized.

About the IDEA Democracy, Conflict, and Human Security Project

Democracy, Conflict, and Human Security: Pursuing Peace in the 21st Century is a review of policies and practices on democracy building as political process directly related to the human security needs of entire populations, to development goals and to the peaceful management of conflict.

The analysis is articulated in two volumes, Volume I offering an overview of experience and key learnings, and Volume II containing selected readings and case studies.

The review considers democratization in the context of globalization, increased interdependence, and rising inequality worldwide.

The project is intended to stimulate *dialogue and debate for more effective policy outcomes*: post-election engagement between representatives and their constituents, the reduction of political violence, decentralization of power, inclusive constitutional provisions, and improved democratic processes for socio-economic delivery and the reduction of inequality.

For further information, see www.idea.int

- *Democracy building is highly political and not just a technical exercise*: respect for the dignity of citizens, local ownership and effective public policy dialogues are essential, with visible results in improved delivery.
- *Democracy is about political power: the constructive use of such authority is predicated on legitimacy and ownership*; clear accountability, ‘checks and balances’ and the decentralization of power are essential for effective response to human security needs.

This policy summary presents the principal findings of the IDEA *Democracy, Conflict and Human Security* project and the policy recommendations that flow from these findings.

Chapter 1

Democracy and Human Security: Linkages and Key Findings

The human security challenges of the 21st century require the promotion of a broader definition of democracy that includes human rights concerns, capacity for social and economic development, accountability, the building of consensus in settings of high diversity, improving electoral processes, and promoting public involvement.

Sources of insecurity lie in exclusion and lack of access to power and resources. The concept of *human security* emphasizes the protection of people from grave threats to their lives, safety from harm and violent conflict, and empowerment against such social threats as disease or crime. *Democracy* enables the protection of peoples through institutional safeguards, equality before the law, and the advancement of human rights. *Democratic practice* links the empowerment of people to critical developmental outcomes such as education, health care, and opportunities for livelihood.

There is a certain imbalance in international efforts to build democracy today. The current emphasis on democratic elections may strengthen certain kinds of political regime and the competition between political parties, but it does not guarantee state responses to collective needs, the participation of civil society in decision-making processes, or the social and political accountability of the ruling classes in developing and transitional societies.

Democratic Practice: A Definition

Democratic practice refers to both formal and informal institutional arrangements for collective decision making and a wide variety of deliberative decision-making processes that incorporate core values of democracy in efforts to build and sustain peace.

The concept includes both traditionally conceived *institutional arrangements* of power sharing and *process* options aimed at creating and strengthening democratic values and behaviour and promoting positive outcomes related to human development and human security. In the 21st century, democracy must be able to relate the values of human rights and participation to meeting the challenges of poverty, inequality, and the peaceful management of complex social relations.

Democracy's crisis stems from public dissatisfaction in many parts of the world with the inability of some elected governments to deliver economic opportunity for all, from the perception that in many countries democracy allows the state to be 'captured' by elites motivated by personal gain, from the concern that transitions to democracy can stimulate violent conflict, and from the association of international democracy promotion with global imperialism. Elections *are* critical for democracy, but democracy is more than electoral processes.

- The credibility of democracy as a political system increasingly depends both on *how* it works—practice—and on *what* (whether) it delivers. In other words, it is crucial that democracy be

able to move beyond the formal realm of electoral politics to the substantive one of enabling human rights, physical well-being and human development.

- Often the immediate effect of open competitive politics is to accentuate social differences. In some instances elections seem to contribute to or even stimulate violent conflict. At other times, it is clear that democracy can contribute to peace and set the stage for socio-economic development to alleviate the root causes of conflict. There is an acute need to better understand, anticipate and deal with contested issues during transition—the reconfiguration of the state and competition for power.
- Democratic practice can be the link between peoples and their governments: giving voice to ‘root causes’ and grievances in a way which helps to address them will in turn contribute to the more effective realization of human development and human security. It is also a catalyst for improved regional cooperation. Regional organizations have an increasingly strong role to play in assisting with conflict mitigation and economic development.
- A principal feature of weak state environments and internal violence is often the absence or inadequacies of democratic channels and response. Social conflicts occur when governance processes fail to manage conflict adequately through genuine political dialogue, mechanisms for legitimate decision making, and the rule of law.

Advancing Democracy for Human Security: Strategies and Approaches

In Crisis Situations...

Emphasize fundamental human rights.

Ensure the equitable distribution of humanitarian relief and empower local actors in its fair distribution to civilians in need.

Define a transition to inclusive democracy as a pathway to peaceful outcomes.

In Transitional Processes...

Design and implement a comprehensive plan for supplanting peace process negotiations with institutionalized bargaining structures, such as power-sharing executives, parliaments and local councils.

Ensure that the transition is something experienced by people on the ground and not just a process of change negotiated by elites.

For Long-Term Development...

Create conditions such as literacy and health through which people are empowered to be able to participate.

Ensure that through the political process resources, income and opportunities are fairly shared among all social groups.

Chapter 2

Democratization: Managing Turbulent Transitions

Democratic transitions may be problematic in that they rearrange political competition, alter structures and power relations, and may exacerbate social problems rather than ameliorating them. Several key findings emerge.

- The actual process of political reform is often destabilizing, and in the short term there may be real and direct threats to peace in democratizing societies as a result of the uncertainty and competition that democracy introduces into unsettled social environments, in particular at times of economic stress. Rapid or ill-considered democratization can also be a catalyst for violent conflict. As well, inadequate, incomplete or disingenuous democratic reform may generate threats to peace.
- There are many qualifiers today that attempt to describe countries at different levels of democratic development—‘partial democracy’, ‘partly free democracy’, ‘non-competitive democracy’, ‘transitional democracy’ and so on. There is no simple answer to the ‘threshold’ problem in measuring democratization (at what point can a country be considered ‘democratic?’) other than to say that the idea of a perfect ‘end-state’ of democracy has to be eschewed. More fruitful are the concepts of democratic practice, approaches that look at ‘pathways of democratization’, and a methodology for the assessment of the state of democracy.
- The phenomenon of social movements has been critical in the evolution of democracy, especially in some ‘colour’ revolutions in recent years, but there is no straightforward equivalence between mass movements and democratic outcomes. Social movements and popular upsurge have been key turning points in the process of ending authoritarian rule, but they are not a basis for sustaining a democracy. Accountability to the public, political equality before the law, and inclusive public policy measures are key.
- A striking feature of the introduction of democratic reform in both post-war and post-authoritarian settings has been the dominance of economic change with emphasis on a market economy at the same time. Recent liberal democratization agendas see democracy as restricted to the electoral and institutional sphere, not recognizing that political power is also a means to transform unjust socio-economic structures.

The experiences in democratization since the mid-1970s have yielded a number of useful findings about managing the uncertainty that political reform processes generate. The lessons that follow may be useful to thinking through strategies for local actors and for the international community to more effectively facilitate the process of political change while limiting risk and responding to human security challenges.

- Democratization processes can be conflict-inducing in the short term. Societies that have traditions of debate, consensus and conciliation, cross-cutting civil society initiatives or robust traditional conflict resolution mechanisms are better able to weather the turbulence of change. Conflict itself is not necessarily problematic, as it can be a constructive means of social change

in situations where the status quo is unfair or illegitimate. What is problematic, however, is when democratization catalyses widespread social or political violence—either by incumbent governments seeking to retain power by force, or among clashing social forces vying for influence or control. Democratization should be expected to be uneven in processes of change; international and local actors alike are encouraged to support crisis prevention measures and conflict management mechanisms for reinforcing confidence building, bargaining and negotiation; and to encourage the professionalization of policing, especially for public safety.

- Early-warning mechanisms for crises are critical in transition settings. This is also the case for electoral processes. From the review or preparation of the electoral law through to the election and post-election formation of a government, there may be any number of pivotal turning points towards, or away from, democratization and peace. Identifying potential crisis points early on and developing appropriate responses—such as monitoring missions and civilian monitoring capacities, human rights reporting, engaging civil society, media training or working with political parties, governments and opposition in dialogue processes—are constructive measures. Representative women’s voices are essential for better needs assessments and need to be encouraged increasingly in decision making.
- Local-level processes are under-appreciated; often, they are an underlying basis for sustainable democratization. The need for multiple methods of engagement to manage crises points to the importance of local-level processes for conflict mitigation. A multi-tiered approach is called for in which top-level bargaining bolsters the work of community-level mediators, and local-level confidence reinforces the transitional processes at the top. This also raises the notion of complementarity in processes of change, in which efforts at different levels of society reinforce each other. Democracy at the local level can be developed from the early stages of transition.
- Inclusion is *the* pivotal element of successful democratization. The most consistent finding of the comparative analysis of democratization is that processes and institutions must be broadly inclusive of major social factions. In some instances there will be ‘spoilers’ whose positions are extreme and who refuse to participate in peace and democratization talks, and every effort must be made to ensure that the general peace and democratization processes are as inclusive as possible while recognizing that there are limits to inclusion, from both domestic and international perspectives (e.g. those who have committed serious human rights abuses, or, in transitions following war, are under indictment by international criminal courts). Although there are no universally applicable lessons learned with regard to inclusion and exclusion, it is clear that sometimes the negotiating table needs to be enlarged to incorporate more negotiators, while at other times chairs need to be taken away.
- International norms that are in keeping with local needs provide a common normative basis for local and international dialogues on democratization. International norms on the promotion of human rights and democracy evolved rapidly in the 1990s and early 2000s, and their further development is critical to building and maintaining peace. In 1992, the United Nations General Assembly adopted the Declaration on the Rights of Persons Belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities. The OSCE established a High Commissioner for National Minorities, who seeks to prevent the eruption of ethnic violence in Europe through quiet diplomacy, particularly in the newly democratic states of the former Eastern bloc. Electoral assistance is now readily available from the United Nations, the Commonwealth, regional organizations, and a plethora of non-governmental groups.

- A long view should be taken of democracy building, to include not just the transitional process itself but also changes in the underlying social conditions needed for democracy to be sustained.
- Finally, there is a need for better understanding of both the historical roots of patterns of inequality and how to gauge the political implications of development in order to transform these patterns.

Chapter 3

Democratic Practice for Managing Power, Identity and Difference

Historically, peoples have struggled for democracy in order to reconfigure power relations while expressing identity and difference within a shared polity. Such aims require long-term measures that suit particular contexts and needs. The formal instruments of democracy require appropriate design for the societies they are meant to serve, informed by the fundamental principle of political equality. In practice the force of law is only as strong as the underlying moral consensus. It is also subject to structural constraints. Democratic ‘design’ may be challenged by deep social divisions, by problems of unconsolidated borders and national identities, as well as by acute underdevelopment. The following key findings can inform policy debates:

- Consensus seeking is an overriding principle of the search for democracy in divided societies, even if complete consensus by all parties in society is an elusive ideal. Consensus-based democracy has emerged as a distinct alternative to competitive democracy as traditionally conceived; but there are both intrinsic and empirical problems with the consensus principle.
- Majority rule and elections themselves can be conflict-inducing: many conflicts have been generated by fears and uncertainties surrounding elections. The electoral system chosen in a particular context is crucial, affecting several major aspects of the development of a conflicted country’s politics, in particular the way in which a majority is constituted, the types of political parties that develop, and thus their ability to cut across lines of conflict, and the chances of elections generating stable and inclusive governing coalitions.
- There are—even in societies with strong identity differences—arguably conditions under which majority-rule systems may be appropriate for the definitive resolution of social disputes. Majority-rule approaches to democratic practice, while generally a source of concern in societies splintered by conflicts over identity, cannot be excluded from consideration as a means for contributing to the peaceful management of conflict. The core features of accountability (responsibility for the success or failure of governance), alternation (the ability to replace governments with oppositions), clarity of decision-making outcomes, and efficiency in determining the will of the people are all maximized under majority-rule decision making.
- There are no easy or universally applicable rules on the balance between majority rights and minority prerogatives, although there is broad and increasing consensus in favour of cultural autonomy, effective decentralization and in some instances territorial autonomy for minority groups. Historically and in recent years the international community has sought to help define more clearly the rights of minorities through global norms in various human rights treaties, conventions and guidelines.
- Both the substance or content and the processes of constitution building are important in establishing the agreed social contract and ensuring shared awareness and utility of rights, duties and responsibilities within the political order. In Nepal, for example, the need for a constituent assembly (for political reform and to bring marginalized groups in to the mainstream) has been

a key factor in dialogue between the Maoist armed movement and the main political parties, a necessary point of agreement for power sharing and ending the suspension of parliament invoked by the monarch.

- It is important to consider the invisible social and cultural barriers, as well as legal ones, that may hinder inclusion along group identity or gender lines, so that access to agenda setting and decision making may be furthered. Historical and cultural factors will influence effective democratic institutional design, but the principles of power sharing, political equality, representation and participation are key to democratic practice.
- A broader and deeper foundation of moderation, rooted in informal political institutions and social organizations, is essential for sustainable peace and durable democracy. A dense network of informal institutions connecting different conflicting groups strengthens moderation in three ways: first, by cross-cutting various interests, institutionalized cooperation between communal groups mitigates mobilization along ethnic lines; second, in the short term cross-cutting organizations can monitor and oversee those members who violate social/organizational rules and norms through discrimination or prejudiced behaviour, and in the longer term they cultivate new tolerance across lines of conflict; and, third, civic groups are important agents of socialization. If cultivated across conflict lines, they can promote and demonstrate norms of tolerance and cooperation. Without cooperation at the middle and grass-roots levels it will be difficult to speak of democratically-based consensus.
- Political parties are the key to candidacy for elective office and present significant barriers to the election of women. Political parties have largely been reluctant to accept responsibility to act, demonstrating their lack of commitment to making progress on achieving the universally proclaimed goals of greater gender equality. In many cases, significant increases in women's participation have been achieved through the use of quotas—a form of affirmative action in favour of women.
- Some countries decide that the way to manage the tendency of party politics to contribute to ethnic enmity is to ban political parties that purport to represent an ethnic, tribal or racial identity. If politics is perceived as a 'zero-sum' game between differing identity groups or regions—particularly in situations of structural strain, competition for resources and a history of severe conflicts—then both divisions and relations can worsen. A deciding factor, however, is the mindset of the parties, including those which are dominant nationally. If there is agreement that the nation is inclusive of other groups and that multiple interests can be accommodated, the likelihood of violence is diminished.
- Constitution-making or constitutional review processes in Afghanistan, Fiji, Rwanda and South Africa that have featured public consultation are contrasted with others which have been generally insulated from public debate (arguably to ill effect). Constitution-building processes themselves can be inclusive consultation opportunities for dialogue and visibility, for agenda setting, raising awareness, and helping to shape, learn about and build consensus for the national social contract.

Chapter 4

When Democracy ‘Falters’: Analysis and Response

Sustaining any democracy requires renewal and continual review. A democratic system can be incomplete or partial and open to manipulation by political elites. Moreover, democracy is not only about elections. It is also about distributive and social justice. If democracy fails to provide for justly distributed socio-economic development, human security is likely to be threatened. There can be a perceived failure to deliver hoped-for economic advances and greater social justice; elected governments may lose legitimacy; there are numerous cases of ‘liberalization without democratization’; and crisis can constrain democracy, for example, the crisis caused by the HIV/AIDS pandemic in large parts of the world.

Special powers assumed to deal with internal and external threats may have long-term implications for human rights, the roles of the justice system and parliament with respect to the executive, the nature of political authority and military prerogatives, and policing. The nature of developments in the name of counter-terrorism is a further, recent concern.

The quality of the democratic process, including transparent and accountable government and equality before the law, is critical. There is a need for systematic tools of evaluation in specific contexts. The annex to chapter 4 in the volume summarizes the IDEA democracy assessment approach and methods, highlighting that systematic analysis across the broad range of democratic experience can help yield insights into its improvement and reform.

Key findings on ‘faltering democracy’ are:

- No democracy will ever be perfect or ‘finished’. By definition, democracy is complex and dynamic, ever changing and altering according to national events and processes. Low voter turnout, poor accountability levels or failures in visibility of representation, concerns over the validity of elections or questionable voter registration practices can all affect the quality of democratic processes. Human security needs, as evident in situations of social conflict, severe inequality, health crises, or responses to threats of political violence and/or terrorist incidents, pose challenges for and place additional strains on the maintenance of democratic systems.
- Democracy is vulnerable to abuse and characterized by a wide variety of limitations. Whether restricted by incumbent executive abuse of political power, constrained by social tensions within, or limited in the face of internal or external terrorism, or where the population is fed up with ‘democracy’ because it fails to deliver basic human needs—shelter, food, livelihood, education and health—democracy in today’s world is prone to falter. Indeed, democratic practice in its most extensive sense, with its emphasis on broad and deep participation, is fragile in many settings. Popular frustration can build up not only against the government in power, but also against the concept of democracy itself.

- The question of how democratization may contribute to the realization of human security is key: the reduction of inequality, the furthering of rights, free expression and mobility. Development is about much more than economics. No two states will face identical challenges, as geography, resource base, history, demography, cultural factors and politics will always be unique. In Latin America, for example, Chile has relatively less poverty and a less divided society than its neighbour, Bolivia, as well as a political party system which transcends class lines and is broadly-based. Its civil society is diverse with a wide range of interests and roles. Chilean policy choices of relevance to long-term human security needs have included measures to increase human rights awareness and guarantees, judicial moves to lift the immunity of former President Pinochet, and allowing greater voice and participation for the disaffected.
- There is a growing policy maker/practitioner consensus regarding the improvement of democratic delivery in poverty reduction. Democratic governments are pro-poor:
 - *when elections function in giving people a voice* for advocating their interests and needs; when, in seeking to woo as many voters as possible in election contests, political leaders craft and implement policies that will gain the support of the poor and marginalized. In principle, failure to attend to the needs of the poor will see governments held accountable in elections; the reduction of exploitative measures, cronyism and vote-buying requires long-term efforts such as the strengthening of legislative oversight capacities;
 - *when governments promote universal education, the flow of communications and the spread of knowledge.* The free flow of information and access can be linked to income generation; communications and infrastructure are necessary for economic markets to function effectively;
 - *when governments prioritize public goods* such as education, health care, job training, a clean environment and, critically, the rule of law; and
 - *when decision makers can anticipate and constructively deal (in negotiation) with the impact of foreign direct investment* or the terms of trade on poor sectors of the population, and craft policies which do not have adverse effects on poverty and inequality but have long-term benefits for poverty reduction. Trade policies matter. No longer are economies or democracies purely internal affairs.
- Allegations of ‘façade democracy’ often occur when liberalization measures are kept under tight rein by elites who fail to generate political inclusion. In such cases there is a declared opening up of the political space, allowing for electoral competition (sometimes with political parties, other times without), new freedoms for civil society, greater press openness, improved human rights performance, and greater representation of women. However, the processes of electoral competition are closely regulated by the existing holders of power in order to ensure that opposition candidates do not have an opportunity to present an alternative vision and plan of governance.
- Special powers are often invoked in time of crisis, and there are varieties of constitutional provision for this. Concerted acts of violence (or threats of such acts) are a challenge that demands steady, painstaking response lest the state compromise its very legitimacy through the measures enacted and the loss of public confidence. Democracies face acute dilemmas when confronting acts of violence which fall under the rubric of terrorism. Overreaction can alienate the population, damaging government legitimacy as much as (or more than) the actions of small terrorist groups. At the same time, if government, the judiciary, the police and the military prove incapable of upholding the law and protecting life and property, then their credibility and authority will be undermined.

- Development assistance and democracy promotion must be legitimate in their own right, de-linked from and not a by-product of security needs and fear. Democracy is neither a banner under which to fight designated targets, nor a commodity that can be exported or imposed.
- When involved in activity designated as anti-terrorist, democratic states should renew their commitment to universal human rights and the rule of law, as apparent double standards damage credibility and can severely compromise those working for democratic reform within repressive regimes.

Chapter 5

Democracy and War-torn Societies

Democracies may themselves be war-torn, as evidenced by Sri Lanka's bitter war with the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) since 1983, or the situation in Northern Ireland until 1998. In such cases the interplay between democratic mechanisms and initiatives to end violence and reach negotiated agreements will severely strain and test political party and elite behaviours, the use of constitutional reform and elections themselves, and civil–military relations in the extreme.

Key findings on democracy in war-torn societies include the following:

- Elite-level peacemaking without the groundwork of public awareness and acceptance will suffer as a consequence in the implementation phase. This in turn will reinforce suspicion, mistrust and frustration between the negotiating partners.
- Following from this, peace settlements invariably entail fundamental change of the polity and of political attitudes and culture. Public education and information are therefore of primary importance with regard to the nature and consequences of the change required. However, if they are seen to be partisan, public education and awareness raising will significantly detract from the overall success of the exercise.
- In a democratic context of political party competition, it is crucially important that there be a minimum consensus among the political parties, or at least two main parties, regarding the overarching importance of peace through a negotiated settlement. Political parties are the principal vehicles of political mobilization and are critical to public participation. Ultimately, peace settlements need all-party or at least bipartisan support, especially those that require constitutional change. This does not entail 'taking the question of peace out of the political fray' but it does entail minimum consensus on its overarching importance, lest the dynamics of 'zero-sum' political party competition drive a permanent wedge between social groups.
- Failure to integrate human rights concerns into the process and the settlements it results in will adversely impact on the credibility of the process and agreements. Basic confidence-building measures call for a minimum agreement on human rights, whereas continued violations cast doubt on the commitment of the parties to a political settlement and on the viability of a negotiating process.
- Public support for and the legitimacy of the peace process are conditioned by the nature of the democracy and the health of its democratic institutions and processes which bolster broad human security provision. Where there is structural strain, economic uncertainty or upheaval due to scarcity, division and fear are more likely to undermine support.
- The fundamental change of attitude and political culture required to effect and animate a new constitutional architecture of the state necessary for a democratic peace hinges crucially upon public participation in peacemaking and peace building.

- Where democratization is assisted in post-war settings by the international community, it is often understood as institution building and the convening of national elections in order to legitimize a new government. Power sharing is an approach to crafting democratic political institutions that assure all major interests in society of a place in the structures and decision-making processes of governance; but in a post-war environment, consensus does not often reflect shared visions or objectives. It is rather a kind of lowest common denominator. Integrative power-sharing solutions have an inherent advantage if they can be achieved.
- The realization of a settlement or ‘peace process’ depends on public trust and participation. Peace agreements imposed from above invariably encounter obstacles to implementation. They must include stakeholders and the main political actors. In a context of political competition, the exclusion of key political actors robs the process of the acceptance and legitimacy it requires for momentum and progress to a final settlement.
- Democratic practice at local level is as important as national-level elections. Informal structures and even traditional structures of authority or customary law can be important: often they have functioned and proved resilient right through periods of violence.
- Central to the debate on the relationship between democracy and conflict management is the challenge of electoral processes in societies that are prone to, involved in, or emerging from violent conflict. Elections and their outcomes can be a stimulant for violence by those who expect to lose. Among practitioners of international peacemaking and peace building, there is widespread concern about the nature, timing, administration and follow-up of electoral processes as an instrument for conflict management.

The following recommendations with regard to electoral processes in war-torn countries emerge from the research:

There are numerous preconditions if elections are to successfully anchor and sustain democracy and peace after armed conflict.

- *Commitment should be sought from all belligerent parties to the cessation of violence, to peace, and to reconciliation.* To this end a peace accord and a clearly defined reconciliation and political healing programme are required, as both the Mozambican and the South African situations vividly illustrate. Broadly-based representation in peace accords is increasingly seen as desirable, with representation also from non-warring groups in society.
- *Post-conflict elections are best held when parties have signed a peace agreement and have devised an achievable peace and reconciliation programme.* This peace and reconciliation programme must also be accompanied by the signing of a code of conduct for all the key actors, especially political parties.
- *There should be at least the beginning of a functional state structure when elections are conducted after armed conflict.* If the very existence of the state is in doubt, as is the case with many failed states such as Somalia, international assistance probably cannot fill the gap, and elections cannot bring political stability or resolve conflicts.
- *International assistance and external democracy promotion are highly valuable in post-conflict elections.* War-torn countries have severely ravaged economies and a constrained resource and production base from which to finance electoral processes. The involvement of international

observers contributes immensely to the credibility of the elections and the acceptance of their outcomes by the political parties concerned and the electorate at large. Moreover, it reduces the probability of large-scale fraud and cheating.

- *Elections after violent conflict should be run and administered by credible, autonomous and competent institutions that are not in any way linked to any of the belligerent parties in a partisan fashion.* To this end, the establishment of independent electoral commissions is essential, as is follow-up support to build national monitoring and citizen oversight capacities.
- *The demobilization of troops or warring factions and the integration of militias into a national army and/or police force, as well as peacekeeping operations, are vital before elections can be held.* This process of demilitarization of politics is crucial in transforming the culture of a politics of violence and coercion and embracing the politics of dialogue and consensus.
- *Prior to elections which follow violent conflict, returning refugees and displaced persons must be settled and allowed sufficient time to register as electors.* Refugees and displaced persons are often the worst victims of civil wars. Their active participation in elections is needed to strengthen the peace process.
- *The clearing of landmines and the banning of military supplies from external sources are also important enabling conditions for elections after armed conflict.* This was important for Cambodia, for Bosnia, and in the cases of Angola and Mozambique, two countries whose opposing factions have received massive amounts of external military supplies and which are also heavily mined.
- *The institutionalization of intra-party democracy is an asset.* In many post-conflict settings political parties feature especially stark deficits of internal democracy as a response to war-time demands for unity; this in part accounts for the current disintegration and fragmentation of opposition parties in societies emerging from war through extended democratization processes.
- *There is a need for constitutional reform in countries that have experienced a violent conflict before elections are held* so that belligerent parties engage in dialogue and negotiation around a new social contract regarding the form of the state, the political system and the type of electoral system they would prefer. This is important for building a minimum programme that binds the belligerent parties together and is different from a peace agreement.

Chapter 6

International Democracy Building: The Need for Legitimacy

In recent years, democracy building has faced an increasing crisis of legitimacy as geopolitical realities have eroded an otherwise broad international consensus about democracy promotion as a pathway to human development and human security. The imposition of democracy in Iraq through the barrel of a gun has prompted a deep, divisive debate in the international community not only about the rationale of democracy building but also about the legitimacy of international action to end dictatorships or civil war, form transitional governments, launch constitution-making processes, and address the thorny issues of transitional justice.

The rationale for democracy building by the international community needs to be reclaimed as universal for three reasons. First, if the world is to confront its future constructively, *the root causes of conflict cannot go ignored*; the world cannot afford a business-as-usual approach to the stark economic, demographic, environmental and health insecurities that lie ahead.

Underdevelopment and maldevelopment, such as growth that deepens inequality, are consistently seen as contributing factors in contemporary violent conflict. There are glaring omissions, however, if poverty is analysed only internally, because globalization is accelerating powerful external forces which also impact on the poor and on the state itself. Those who would assist with democracy building need to better understand the impact of external investment and its relation to domestic training and employment, natural resource management, trade policies, external assistance and economic liberalization.

The goals of macroeconomic stabilization and political stabilization should not be at cross purposes, such that additional insecurity is introduced which increases risk, fear and human needs. Reform processes should be mutually supportive, building in capacity to monitor indicators of social tensions and alternative macroeconomic indicators (such as the purchasing power of the population). The impact of measures on the affected population must be better understood. ‘Governance’ is not purely a technical issue, but relates to the interaction between citizens and their representatives.

Second, *the building of democracy must itself be legitimate and based on local realities*. For democratic practice to flourish over time it should not be introduced or imposed by fundamentally undemocratic means, either by authoritarian governments practising ‘façade democracy’, or by international actors that lack legal or de facto legitimacy of action in guiding war-shattered countries from violence to democracy, or in situations where the United Nations is under-resourced or hampered from acting effectively due to the sheer enormity of the task.

Third, progress towards democracy can be enhanced even when national realities limit the functioning of a fully-fledged, complete system of democracy at all levels of society; in transitional processes, at local levels, in interim ways, or through dialogue processes,

practices based on the fundamental values of democracy can lay the foundation for a more extensive, meaningful and stable system to emerge over time.

In the evolution of the democracy-building network, there is clearly a supply side aspect—the international community’s interest in the spread of democracy—and a clear demand side that stems from the desire of people around the world not to be ruled by authoritarian, corrupt regimes that do not provide for basic safety or facilitate prosperity.

The recommendations below reflect a concern for improvement in global policy and consensus on the utility of democracy assistance in attaining human development *and* human security. They highlight a need to re-evaluate problems evident in the current network, which hinder assistance to building effective, nationally owned democracies.

- *Demonstrate the linkages between democracy and human security:*
 - Document successful initiatives which link local communities to police reform, access to justice, meaningful participation in decision making, influence on elected representatives, and a voice on education and health measures.
 - Support innovation for decentralization of power, ‘knowledge banks’ on approaches to democratic land reform measures, resource revenue sharing, and civic education.
 - Cultivate the development of improved ‘participation’ in community projects concerning clean water and housing as active citizenship exercises in relation to rights and roles.
- *In short- to medium-term settings of international human security crises, expand the representation of women in peace support operations, in vulnerability and needs analysis, in specific national recovery and constitution-building processes, and in decision making on interim governance arrangements:*
 - Seek to improve and refine the ways in which local communities can identify factors they see as intrinsic to their resilience and human security, avoiding the imposition of ‘blueprints’ from outside which may prove inappropriate.
 - Work towards enabling state responsiveness to human security needs—away from technical good governance criteria to longer-term lower-profile support, as in mentoring and skills-training approaches.
 - Capture the importance of context and process, assistance to local-level democracy and the meaning of citizenship in national settings.
- *In the longer term, pursue the attainment of the Millennium Development Goals’ focus on improved, participatory governance as essential to:*
 - reduce and eradicate extreme poverty; and
 - address problems of inequality (especially when such inequality mirrors ethnic, religious, or other identity cleavages such as gender).
- *Democratize global governance and other transnational regimes by opening up multilateral decision making to more genuine public consultation and dialogue.* If the world is grappling with interdependences and issues that transcend national boundaries, democracy itself must go global. *Thus, greater support is needed to improve parliaments and other decision-making bodies to enable citizens and their representatives to participate effectively in global negotiations that directly affect their daily lives.*

- *Broaden the vision of democratic practice with sensitivity to context:*
 - *Norms and operational guidelines for democratic practice at the regional level need to be supported and further developed.* The international community should seek to demonstrate the application of standards, and emphasize compliance with clearly defined existing international norms that reflect a right to democratic, accountable governance, respect for minorities, and tolerance of different religions and beliefs.
 - *The international community needs to agree more fully on accountability measures for international intervention* and to explore the issue of accountability for new security actors such as private security firms; reaffirm the universality of international human rights law and the Geneva Conventions; and recognize the ‘modelling effect’ of older democracies in behaviour, for instance, regarding the prohibition of torture, or in attitudes to the reception of asylum seekers or refugees.
 - *Emphasize that there is no ‘one size fits all’ approach to democratization,* building on local structures that are conducive to representative and participative forms of government, as in the (modified for gender equality) Shura in Afghanistan, or the Somali convening of elders. Improve understandings of democratization processes as an avenue towards strategic peacemaking in contemporary armed conflicts, as in Nepal, Sri Lanka or Colombia. Democracy assistance may be an effective lever in mediation to encourage parties to settle the conflict at the bargaining table rather than on the battlefield.
 - *Translate and educate.* People can better make their own choices and design their own action and desired outcomes when they are well informed as to a range of debates, experience and possible avenues for national futures.
 - *Design comprehensive country-level strategies: further the development of assessment and monitoring capacities for countries that are under stress.* In countries where democracy promotion has been extensive, actors in the democracy-building network have teamed up to provide country-level assessments of the challenges to democracy, options for transition, and recommendations.

- *Improve coordination among democracy builders from global to local levels:*
 - *Empower regional organization structures* and approaches to monitoring conflict situations, understanding the sources of human insecurity, and promoting inclusive, participatory democracy in regions where they are strong or more fully developed, such as Europe and the Americas; extend the writ of the European mechanisms to enable them to engage more deeply in the Caucasus and Central Asia in much the same way as the EU has developed a systematic approach to democracy assistance in the Maghreb states and the Middle East in the Barcelona Process. ASEAN is well positioned to move in a credible manner on human rights and develop informed framework guidelines for democratization processes based on national experiences.
 - *Encourage the institutionalization of democracy building in regional organizations* that are presently weak or stymied in efforts to achieve regional solutions to governance crises in South-East Asia, Central Asia, South Asia and the Middle East.
 - *Build coherence and consistency among donors’ approaches.* Review macroeconomic reform measures and the impact of privatization in order to reconcile macroeconomic interventions and political democratization, goals which should be mutually supportive. Build capacity for monitoring indicators of social tensions, and develop alternative macroeconomic indicators (such as the purchasing power of the population) to assess the impacts of policies and projects on horizontal and vertical equity and social tensions. Support the assessment of potential implications and well-informed choices.

- *Refine and further develop promising institutions and instruments:*
 - *Improve existing instruments for democratization-related conflict prevention and responsive active capacities in situations where democracy is the strategic or ‘political’ approach to realizing peace, and work to develop a set of guidelines to inform the work of the new UN Peacebuilding Commission created at the 2005 World Summit. The Peacebuilding Commission would benefit from assessment of lessons learned on how peace-to-democracy transitions address challenges such as electoral system choice, electoral violence, the sequencing of elections, constitution-building processes, and the ways in which UN-coordinated peacemaking, peacekeeping and peace-building strategies can be applied to improve the design of transitional processes.*
 - *Avoid the ‘elections as exit strategy’ trap; build in measures as far as possible to ensure consistency and long-term development relevance.*
 - *Enhance the capacities of legislatures and political parties and improve linkages between parties and their societies, through training that builds transparency and accountability, and through more effective management of aspects of governance such as judicial process and access to justice, and offer options for conducting participatory policy making.*
 - *Enhance information sharing on best practices, comparative information, and specific consulting. Because of the highly technical nature of some aspects of democracy, such as constitutional design and electoral system choice and administration, a key function of the democracy-building network has been to provide information and specific consultative advice on these often complex issues.*
 - *Further professionalize election administration. The powers, responsibilities, capacities and professionalism of election management bodies (EMBs) are critical to processes of democracy worldwide. In recent years, organizations such as IDEA, the UNDP and the International Foundation for Election Systems (IFES) have teamed up to provide ‘one-stop shopping’ on electoral costs, election administration, and all other election management issues. The ACE Electoral Knowledge Network (<<http://www.aceproject.org>>) provides online, up-to-date information on best practices, options and issues in the rapidly growing world of election management. This knowledge base is combined with careful work with EMBs to share information, develop professional standards, and train new cadres of professional election managers.*
 - *Promote civic education. International NGOs have been extensively involved in mounting civic education campaigns in transitional societies, from ‘get out the vote’ campaigns to ‘street law’ (practical applications of human rights) to awareness of constitutional concepts and the meanings and purposes of democracy. The aim of such activities is to work at the grass-roots level to generate the capacity to participate and enhance awareness among the public of the meaning of human rights and ways in which the public can participate directly to promote and protect them.*
 - *Foster South–South support and South–North education. South Africa offered electoral assistance to the Democratic Republic of the Congo for its planned 2006 elections, but highly skilled (and overstretched) South African representatives commented how useful it could have been to invite India to contribute expertise and experience, as well. Experience, challenges and insights from the global South could benefit and revitalize approaches for sustaining democracy in the global North.*

Democratization does not move according to seamless or set pathways, but rather in incremental and messy fashion. The test of 21st century democracy will not be limited to the nurturing of widespread free and fair elections (a challenge in its own right), but will be determined equally by whether human rights standards are reclaimed as universal, inequalities reduced and social justice furthered. It will be determined and measured from the viewpoint of delivery—whether it seeks to

meet human needs, and whether it recognizes that human insecurity is one of the main root causes of the many violent conflicts the world is facing and that insecurity is often linked to exclusion and lack of access to resources and power. New thinking and behaviours are required globally. The challenge is democratic practice, in action, to move from formal to substantive democracy and to create legitimacy and ownership in support of sustainable democratic development tailored for the contextual circumstances.

About International IDEA

Supporting democracy worldwide

Created in 1995, the International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance – IDEA – is an intergovernmental organization that supports sustainable democracy. Working globally, but with a current focus on Africa and the Middle East, Latin America and South Asia, IDEA seeks to improve the design and effectiveness of democratic institutions, and to strengthen democratic processes. IDEA:

- provides researchers, policy makers, activists and media representatives a forum in which to discuss democratic principles;
- blends research and field experience, developing methodologies and providing training to improve democratic processes; and
- promotes transparency, accountability and efficiency in managing elections.

Its main areas of activity include:

Democracy building and conflict management. IDEA's work in this area focuses on constitution building, reconciliation, inclusive dialogue and human security. It targets societies in transition, particularly those emerging from periods of violence and weak governance.

Electoral processes, including ensuring the professional management and independence of elections, adapting electoral systems, improving access and building public confidence. IDEA develops training modules and materials for election officials and provides comparative data and analyses on both the political and the technical aspects of designing, organizing and running elections.

Political parties, political equality and participation (including women in politics). IDEA's work includes the review of political parties' external regulations, public funding, their management and relations with the public. It also includes identifying ways to build commitment to inclusive politics, especially those related to the inclusion of women in politics, through for example the provision of comparative experiences on the application of special measures like gender quotas.

Membership

Membership of IDEA is open to governments. Currently IDEA has 24 member states: Australia, Barbados, Belgium, Botswana, Canada, Cape Verde, Chile, Costa Rica, Denmark, Finland, Germany, India, Mauritius, Mexico, Namibia, the Netherlands, Norway, Peru, Portugal, South Africa, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland and Uruguay. Japan has observer status.

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