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POSTCONFLICT ELECTIONS AND DEMOCRATIZATION: AN EXPERIENCE REVIEW



Issue Paper No. 8
May 2005

PN-ADB-897

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Editorial, design, and production assistance was provided by IBI—International Business Initiatives, Arlington, Va., under contract no. HFM-C-00-01-00143-00. For more information, contact IBI's Publications and Graphics Support Project staff at 703-525-2277 or mail@ibi-usa.com.

Cover photo: Mark Storella, Department of State

POSTCONFLICT ELECTIONS AND DEMOCRATIZATION

AN EXPERIENCE REVIEW

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Contents

Acknowledgments	iv
Abbreviations and Acronyms	v
Preface	vi
Executive Summary	viii
An Overview of Postconflict Elections	i
Postconflict Elections:A Review of Experience	6
Lessons for the international community.21
About the Author27
Annex 1. International Electoral Assistance in Postconflict Societies..28
Annex 2. Cost Variation Between Elections29
References30
Websites32

Acknowledgments

I wish to acknowledge the contribution of colleagues who served as international officers on several election operations and provided me with fresh information from the field: Jeff Fischer, IFES, chief electoral officer with OSCE in Bosnia and Kosovo, and with the UN in 1999 in East Timor; Jarrett Blanc, senior electoral officer in Kosovo; Carlos Valenzuela, UN deputy chief electoral officer in 1999 and chief electoral officer in 2001 in East Timor, UN chief electoral officer in Liberia, and technical adviser in Pal-

estine; Onofre Dos Santos, director of elections in Angola; Mark Stevens, from ERIS, EU deputy chief electoral officer in 2002 in Cambodia; and Staffan Darnolf, University of Stockholm, a senior electoral officer in Kosovo and Sierra Leone. Last, but not least, is recognition to Krishna Kumar, USAID, for asking me the right questions, which this paper tries to answer, and for his thorough editing of the first draft, increasing its accessibility to international audiences.

Rafael López-Pintor

Abbreviations and Acronyms

BRIDGE	Building Resources in Democracy, Governance & Elections project
EMB	electoral management body
EPRDF	Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front
ERIS	Electoral Reform International Services
EU	European Union
IDEA	International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance
IFES	International Foundation for Election Systems
IRI	International Republican Institute
NDI	National Democratic Institute
NGO	nongovernmental organization
OAS	Organization of American States
OAU	Organization for African Unity
OSCE	Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe
OSCE/ODHIR	OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNTAC	UN Transitional Authority for Cambodia
UNTAE	UN Transitional Authority for East Timor
USAID	U.S. Agency for International Development

Preface

USAID and other donors have supported postconflict elections in wartorn societies after the cessation of hostilities. Such elections are designed to serve the multiple objectives of electing a government that enjoys domestic popular support and international legitimacy, initiating the process of democratization of the polity, and promoting reconciliation by involving opposition parties and groups into the political process. However, all these objectives are not always mutually compatible.

USAID and other donors have assisted in the conduct of postconflict elections in various ways. They have provided technical assistance for constitutional reforms to legislative and executive bodies, helped establish electoral management bodies, provided support for establishing institutional and physical infrastructure for elections, assisted civil society organizations, and given financial and technical assistance to interim governments. They have also supported national and international monitoring of elections and have occasionally persuaded the ruling governments to abide by voters' verdict. Their involvement has ranged from complete responsibility for planning and implementation of postconflict elections (as was the case in

Cambodia and Kosovo) to a supporting role (as in Ethiopia and Haiti).

In this comprehensive paper, Professor Rafael López-Pintor succinctly presents major policy lessons that the international community has learned about postconflict elections. On the basis of review of literature and his own involvement in postconflict elections, Professor López-Pintor has sought to answer a wide range of questions: What have been the competing pulls and pressures for holding early elections? What political and logistic problems did the international community and its local partners encounter in holding postconflict elections? What type of assistance did the international community provide to support postconflict elections? What steps did the international community take to minimize the effects of elections on ethnic polarization? To what extent, was the physical and institutional infrastructure for holding postconflict elections sustained over time? What have been the effects of postconflict elections on democratization process? The author has made specific policy and programmatic recommendations that deserve consideration of the international donor agencies.

I am grateful to Dr. López-Pintor for producing this thoughtful paper. I am

also grateful to my friends in USAID's DG office and in the National Democratic Institute for their comments and suggestions on an earlier draft. Gary Vaughan also provided many perceptive suggestions that improved the paper. Finally, I wish to acknowledge the help of Cindy Arciaga of Development Information Services project for making necessary contractual arrangements and of John Engels for ably editing this paper.

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Executive Summary

This paper discusses the international experience in supporting postconflict elections and presents the major policy lessons learned. It is based on an analysis of 14 elections in Nicaragua, El Salvador, Guatemala, Haiti, Angola, Ethiopia, Mozambique, Liberia, Sierra Leone, Cambodia, East Timor, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Kosovo, and West Bank-Gaza.

Key Findings

- The presence of the international community in postconflict situations moves leaders of warring parties and groups toward peace, reconciliation, and democracy. The international community generally considers the following factors before committing itself to supporting elections: demobilization and disarmament, the political will of contenders to participate, an adequate legal framework, an independent neutral electoral administration, a minimum state infrastructure allowing access to different areas of the country, and the ability of international observer missions to monitor the elections.
- In more than half the cases, peace accords laid down electoral provisions in detail, including a deadline for holding elections. In most of these cases, however, the election date set by accords had to be delayed by months to years. In two instances, a date for elections had been set constitutionally before the conflict. In only three cases were elections held as originally scheduled.
- The prevailing pattern is that general elections—presidential, legislative, or both—take place before local elections. In only 2 of the 14 cases was a decision made to hold local elections before general elections. Both occurred in highly conflictive environments with deep ethnic divisions (Ethiopia and Kosovo). In three cases, municipal elections were slated to follow general elections (Bosnia 1997, Cambodia 2002, and Mozambique 2003). In two cases, local and general elections took place simultaneously (Nicaragua and Guatemala). In two others, the elections rotate according to a constitutional calendar (El Salvador and Haiti). As for the remaining five cases, local elections have not been scheduled (Angola, Liberia, Sierra Leone, West Bank-Gaza, and East Timor).
- Several factors seem to influence the decision to hold “premature elections.” The international community has an interest in holding early elections to diminish its presence and reduce the cost of international intervention. Many donors want to engage with the new leadership emerging from the ballot box as early as possible for the reconstruction

of the society. The logistics of political brokering, both domestic and international, also favor early elections, with short-term prevailing over longer-term considerations. Some international actors are concerned that *not* advocating early elections might be perceived as a lack of enthusiasm on their part in pushing democratization forward. More important, failure to support early elections may be viewed as a sign of support for the

of the international community, and of USAID in particular, in democracy assistance has been moderately positive. In the specific field of elections, one can identify consistent but circumscribed positive effects. These effects are particularly visible in the institutionalization of elections in countries moving forward in democracy. Postconflict elections also contributed to the broader goals of peace, reconciliation, state building, and

tions. A methodology for assessing the cost—even the cost of normal elections—has not been developed. Because of the wartorn condition of postconflict society, postconflict elections are more expensive than elections in transition societies. Special costs include those for security, international staffing, and observer missions. Although second- and third-generation elections tend to be less expensive, there are exceptions.

International actors most often approach postconflict elections as one strategic political resource, among others, for peacekeeping, state building, and democratization.

incumbent government, which may be composed of autocrats unable to proclaim themselves victorious on the battlefield.

- The international community provided assistance 1) for *the electoral process* and its various components, including assistance to political party development; 2) to *state institutions*, including the electoral administration and constitution and legal drafting; and 3) to *civil society*, with an emphasis on civic education and support to domestic NGOs as election monitors, including media monitoring. Often there is a shift over time in democracy assistance from electoral procedures to more institutional assistance and civil society organizations.
- As for the effects of international aid, electoral assistance is important, if not crucial, for the conduct of postconflict elections. Overall, the role

democracy—though only slightly. As for longer-term effects on democracy consolidation, it is, in most cases, too early to tell.

- It is difficult to think of elections alone as a mechanism for reducing ethnic tensions, inasmuch as voting automatically entails people aligning themselves according to their most deeply rooted identities. Unrealistic or too restrictive electoral provisions can actually reinforce interethnic confrontation. Experience indicates that the elections did not blur deep-rooted ethnocultural cleavages. They did, however, help former combatants cope with them in a civilized, democratic manner.
- The cost to the international community of holding postconflict elections is currently assessed partly as a cost of democracy assistance and partly as a cost of peacekeeping opera-

- Until recently, the international community paid little attention to issues of sustainability of electoral infrastructure. That situation has been somewhat rectified by, among other things, international concern about cost effectiveness. Issues of sustainability have three main components—technical, financial, and political—that tend not to develop at a similar pace. A country achieves *technical sustainability* when it no longer needs external advice for the conduct of elections. This is the easiest and cheapest of the three to achieve. *Financial sustainability* occurs when funds for elections are raised mostly from internal sources. This goal is a little harder to achieve. Finally, a country achieves *political sustainability* when both domestic and international actors accept the results of the election as legitimate and binding. Because it depends heavily on the evolution of trust among contenders, political sustainability has proved to be the most difficult to realize.
- International actors most often approach postconflict elections as one strategic political resource, among others, for peacekeeping, state build-

ing, and democratization. The first elections may come about by political necessity—or even expediency—rather than by cost-benefit considerations. That is, practical exigencies may overtake theoretical considerations. In a sense, postconflict elections have proved a necessary, though not sufficient, condition for moving toward genuine democracy with basic rights guaranteed, the rule of law working effectively, and a government that delivers.

- Among the countries studied, those where democratization advanced after postconflict elections outnumbered those where little or no progress occurred. A fair assessment requires measuring each country against its own past as well as within a regional context. Comparisons with well-established democracies should not be overemphasized. Within the spectrum of countries, one can identify six evolutionary patterns, ranging from instances where no substantial progress has been made to instances where all main challenges to peace, reconciliation, and democracy are being met with relative effectiveness.

Lessons Learned

Political and Security Conditions

- The first priority of the international community should be to create conditions for peace, security, and political trust. More specifically, effective demobilization and disarmament, as well as ownership of elections by contenders, are necessary.

- Assistance to establish a legal framework should emphasize including all eligible voters, as well as political parties and candidates.
- Assistance to develop electoral administration should stress enhancing the capacity of the electoral management body (EMB) to be neutral and professional, no matter how it is staffed. Electoral authorities should be open to the voices and concerns of contenders. If an internationally staffed administration is established, transfer to domestic authorities should start early to ensure local capacity building.

Logistics and Administrative Arrangements

- International actors should not underestimate local ability to conduct elections efficiently. Where some basic requirements for security and political trust are met, the material and procedural aspects of elections should be left, as much as possible, to local actors.
- Election planners should give voter registration utmost importance. They should produce initial voter registries with a long-term perspective, enabling updating in future elections rather than starting again from scratch.

Areas of Assistance

- International assistance has proved generally effective in election administration. Donors should continue to decrease assistance gradually, depending on sustainability.

- Some elements of the electoral system are better embedded in constitutions or protected by special legislation only after the main contenders have reached consensus. Such elements include the electoral formulas of representation, with quotas for women and ethnic minorities, and the composition of the EMB.
- Assistance, particularly financial aid, can be overdone.
- Long-term international observer missions are more effective when they cover the entire electoral process, starting with voter registration.
- Any action that enhances trust among contenders contributes to the quality of elections, including cost effectiveness.

Recommendations

Reducing Ethnic Tensions

- Assist in adopting constitutional and other legal electoral provisions. These include power-sharing arrangements, all-inclusive formulas of representation, interethnic composition of the EMB, use of minority languages in voting procedures and civic education, and facilitating voter and candidate registration, including external registration and voting.
- Support civic education campaigns that encourage participation of all communities.
- Develop partnerships between the international community and national actors, especially political parties, by keeping them informed and partici-

pating in all important decisions by the electoral authorities.

- Eliminate hate speech through democratic media development projects and media monitoring with standard methodologies. Publicize the results.

Reducing Costs of Postconflict Elections

- Encourage coordination between donors, governmental authorities, and political parties.
- Institute integrated strategic management and operational planning by the electoral authorities.
- Build voter registries that can be the basis for developing sustainable voter lists.
- Help develop a professional electoral administration with a minimal permanent staff.
- Use locally produced ballot papers and other voting materials.
- Undertake diplomatic efforts to build confidence in elections, as integrity costs can easily constitute the largest portion of electoral expenses in postconflict situations.

Overall

- Get an early start at peacekeeping. This will demonstrate sensitivity to the victims of war and help buy precious time for reconciliation.
- In devising aid policy and programs, pay more attention to internal power relations and the expressed interests and aspirations of the various actors.

- In relations with local actors, go beyond confidence building and election ownership. Make a connection with broader issues of human rights, institutional development, and socioeconomic policies.
- If there is a sufficient level of political confidence among contenders, trust local capabilities in election management. Doing so will quickly pay off in both institution building and cost effectiveness. Conducting elections is not difficult to learn. Moreover, some previous experience exists in most countries striving toward peacekeeping and reconciliation.

An Overview of Postconflict Elections

This overview describes the 14 postconflict elections that provide the basis for discussion presented below. It summarizes relevant information on the extent to which election regulations are included in peace accords, dates or deadlines set for specific types of elections, and whether a priority was established on whether general or local elections would be held first.

Nicaragua

The 1988 Esquipulas II accords on Central America hardly ruled over Nicaraguan elections. Nicaragua had an electoral calendar established by the 1985 constitution, which called for general elections for 1991. As in other countries of the region, all elections in Nicaragua take place simultaneously, except for regional elections on the Atlantic coast. Elections were held under international supervision in 1990, 1996, and 2001.

In mid-1989, at a summit of Central American presidents following the signing of Esquipulas II, President Daniel Ortega announced that general elections would be held a year ahead of the constitutional schedule. There were clear pressures, both internal and external, as well as the interest of the government in moving toward peace—and holding earlier elections could be instrumental. The government, under pressure from opposition parties, amended the electoral law for this purpose several times, up to

a few days before the elections (López-Pintor 1998, 39).

El Salvador

According to the 1983 constitutional calendar, presidential, parliamentary, and municipal elections take place in different sequences: every five years for president, every three years for parliament, and every three years for municipalities. Only every 15 years would all three coincide, which happened to occur in the first elections after the 1991 Mexico peace accords. Although the election date was not stipulated in the accords, the accords did include two paragraphs on the electoral system. One mandated a special committee to draft a proposal to the new legislature on reforming the electoral system. The other required the posting of voter lists for correction and review 20 days before the elections.

The Chapultepec accords of January 1992 restated the previous commitment to electoral reform. Since the end of hostilities, presidential elections were held in 1994, 1999, and 2004; parliamentary and municipal elections in 1994, 1997, 2000, and 2003. El Salvador has not requested international supervision of elections since 1994.

Guatemala

According to the 1986 constitution, all elections—presidential, parliamentary,

and municipal—are held on the same day. Thus, election dates do not depend on the 1996 Oslo accords. Nevertheless, under the accords' Agreement on Constitutional Reforms and Electoral Regime, an election reform commission was established. It undertook to set priorities for citizen documentation, voter registration, and distribution of polling stations (to facilitate inclusion of peasants and indigenous people). It also had responsibilities in public information and voter education. A reform proposal was actually drafted, but it has been blocked in parliament to this day. The country held general elections under international supervision in 1995, 1999, and 2003.

Haiti

Democratizing Haiti is more a story of alternating civil strife, multiparty elections, and paralyzed government than a march from autocracy toward stable, democratic politics. The move to multiparty democracy started with the constitution of 1987 and the general elections of 1988 (local, parliamentary, and presidential). Four years after the overthrow of Jean-Bertrand Aristide, principals signed the Governors Island accord in 1993. Subsequently, in 1994, a UN-backed, U.S.-led multinational force was sent to Haiti to use “all necessary means” to restore democracy (Nelson 1998, 73).

The Haitian constitution lays out an electoral calendar, with different types of elections being held at different times. Nevertheless, election dates were somewhat delayed during the crisis around 1995. In that critical year, local and parliamentary elections took place

in June, and presidential elections in December. The UN mission in Haiti provided security, the Organization of American States (OAS) acted as observers, and USAID and other donors gave technical and financial assistance. Some stability has followed as a successful demobilization effort aided reconstruction and reconciliation. The human rights situation also has improved since the elections.

Some parties boycotted the 1995 elections and again in 1997 (Nelson 1998, 80–83). They refused to engage in the new system and called for a national conference to negotiate power sharing. The May 2000 parliamentary and local elections were characterized by fraudulent ballot counts, attributed to the ruling party. Opposition parties then united in the Democratic Convergence boycotted the November 2000 elections, in which voters reelected Aristide. Repression of opposition followed an armed attack on the presidential palace in December 2001. The OAS intervened, calling for creation of an electoral council to prepare for local and parliamentary elections in a neutral manner. In January 2004, the term of the legislative assembly ended, but new elections were not called. At the same time, the opposition was demanding Aristide resign his presidency. Riots and demonstrations ended in armed insurrection, leaving scores dead. By the end of February, rebels had neared the capital, Port-au-Prince. Aristide fled, and a U.S.-French intervening force landed in Haiti.

Sierra Leone

After several coups d'état and unfulfilled peace agreements during the civil conflict since 1991 (though a general election was held in 1996), a UN peacekeeping mission was established in 1998. Belligerents signed a new peace agreement in Lomé in July 1999. The agreement prescribed a review of the 1991 constitution and also set the rules for establishing a national electoral commission with a multiparty base. It envisaged general elections to be held at a date in accordance with the constitution.

According to the constitution, presidential and parliamentary elections are to be held simultaneously within three months after officeholders have completed a five-year term. In emergency situations, the elections can be delayed for no longer than a six-month period (Article 85). An electoral law act of February 2002 regulates voter and candidate registration as well as all electoral procedures. The latest presidential and parliamentary elections took place in May 2002, 12 months later than the initial constitutional provision (due to the conflict). They were held with the logistical support of peacekeeping forces and much international technical and financial aid. International observers supervised the elections.

Angola

The Bicesse peace accords of May 1991 provided for general elections to be held within 18 months. To conform with the then-unsigned accords and the requirements of multiparty democracy, the constitution was amended in March 1991 to require presidential and

assembly elections every four years. The accords served to undergird and amplify these provisions.

Elections took place under heavy international supervision in September 1992, two months in advance of the deadline. However, only very limited demobilization occurred, and one of the main contenders refused to accept the results (Ottaway 1998). The constitution was amended later in 1992 to complete the democratic reforms.

Mozambique

The Rome Treaty of March 1992 includes a protocol on “criteria and arrangements for the formation of political parties” as a means to ensure “the workings of multiparty democracy” and another on “principles of the electoral act.” The latter contains guidelines providing for fundamental rights, structuring of EMBs, registration of refugees and displaced persons, a representation formula, and simultaneous elections for the legislative assembly and the presidency to occur within one year after the signing of the peace agreement. The protocol says nothing about municipal elections.

Elections actually took place in October 1994, a year and a half later than scheduled and under heavy international supervision (Turner et al. 1998). Thus, there was a rush in formulation but slowness in implementation. International donors exerted much pressure on the former belligerents to carry out their obligations regarding cantonment and disarmament before elections could be held. Presidential and parliamentary elections also took place in 1999 and

were due again in November 2004. The first municipal elections ever took place in November 2003, again under international supervision.

Liberia

A number of peace accords were signed before and after the 1997 elections as warfare preceded and followed that eventful year. From 1991 through 1996, various abortive ceasefires and peace talks took place in an effort to find what was called a “viable political framework” for holding elections. Finally, principals agreed to hold elections in May 1997, but the elections were delayed until July.

From the beginning, references to elections in peace accords were not accompanied by details. It was probably assumed that the same democratic institutions existing before the war (a president and bicameral parliament) would be reestablished. Voter registration for refugees and the composition of an enlarged electoral commission giving room to the different contenders were mandated. The accords of Cotonou in 1993, and Akosombo and Accra in 1994, reaffirmed previous commitments. The Accra agreement was the first to establish an election date of November 1995, almost one year after signing. The Abuja agreement of August 1995 delayed the date to August 1996. Further delays followed. The legislature enacted a provisional law in 1997 to be used only for those elections.

The elections finally took place more than a year and a half later than the first established date (Lyons 1998). A president and two chambers were elected. The results came under criti-

cism because only *parties* were to be marked. Neither the accords nor the electoral law mentioned municipal elections. A reversion to civil war in 2000 led, in August 2003, to the resignation of Charles Taylor and the signing of new accords brokered by the European Union and the Economic Community of West African States. The accords envisage elections to take place no later than October 2005, after a national electoral commission is reinstated and the electoral law reformed.

Ethiopia

In May 1991, the military government of Mengistu Haile Mariam (1974–91) was overthrown by the Ethiopian People’s Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF). Over a year later—and eight months later than scheduled—the interim administration conducted local and regional elections. It has been argued that the June 1992 elections “profoundly and adversely affected the course and outcomes of the Ethiopian political transition. The reasons have to do not only with the election campaign and processes themselves, but also with the flawed strategic planning and preparations for the elections” (Harbeson 1998, 111).

Several “transition pacts” between EPRDF and various minor political forces preceded the elections, but other significant parties were excluded or withdrew from the elections. A Transition Charter was produced that guided the political process until 1994, with the leader of EPRDF as interim head of state. The charter envisaged local and regional council elections within three months of the establishment of a

transitional government (the elections took place 11 months after the charter was signed). Elections for a constituent assembly followed. A new constitution provided for national parliamentary elections to be held at the conclusion of the transition (Harbeson 1998, 116–17).

The 1992 elections, rather than crowning the consensus of the transition charter, witnessed the charter's failure. Ethnic cleavages were not properly accommodated, nor were the armed contenders effectively demobilized or disarmed. Irregularities and intimidation pervaded the electoral process. Despite a new constitution having been drafted and approved, and parliamentary elections scheduled, analysts were critical of the aftereffect. One observer concluded that "the lasting outcome of these elections was the de facto single-party state that continues today" (Harbeson 1998, 123).

Cambodia

Article 12 of the Paris peace agreement of October 1991 established that a constituent assembly would be elected. The assembly would draft a constitution within three months and then "transform itself into a legislative assembly, which will form a new Cambodian government." It established that the assembly would have 120 members and be elected on provincial districts with party-list proportional representation. Article 12 further specified that "this election will be held under United Nations auspices in a neutral political environment." No date or deadline was established, the assumption being that it would all depend on the exis-

tence of such a neutral environment—a condition hardly ever realized. The constituent assembly was the only type of election contemplated by the peace agreement. No local elections were included.

The elections took place in May 1993, more than a year and a half after the accords were signed and three months after scheduled by the UN Transitional Authority for Cambodia (UNTAC). The date was established once all the factions had agreed to participate. The international community and UNTAC sought to ensure participation by the Khmer Rouge. But just one month before the elections, the Khmer Rouge withdrew from the provisional government and the electoral race (Brown 1998).

General parliamentary elections took place in 1998 and 2003. The first communal election ever was held in 2002. The European Union, Japan, and other donors heavily subsidized and monitored these elections. By 1998 the burden for administering elections had shifted mostly to Cambodians, but some international involvement remained. By the time of the 2002 communal elections, administration was formally just Cambodian. International assistance was confined to funding and technical help, basically through the UNDP and the European Union.

East Timor

The May 1999 agreement between Indonesia, Portugal, and the UN secretary-general set all the details for a direct-ballot referendum for independence: procedures, the UN authority as electoral administrator, and elec-

tion day just three months after the signing of the agreement. In August, a referendum did take place, but it was followed by devastating violence. The Indonesia-backed militia, aided by the army, reacted to the vote by destroying half the country's infrastructure. Some 60 percent of indigenous East Timorese fled.

Most international actors had believed the referendum would fail, given prevailing threats of violence. The UN, however, doggedly met the challenge. Despite the carnage, the political process toward independence and self-government was not halted. The UN proved correct in pushing for viable polls. In July 2000, a transitional cabinet was established. It comprised four East Timorese and four representatives of the UN Transitional Authority for East Timor (UNTAET).

The new UN mission was established in October 1999 after Indonesia finally recognized the results of the referendum. In March 2001, UNTAET issued a regulation for the election of a constituent assembly. After drafting a constitution, the assembly would become the legislature of East Timor. An independent electoral commission was established, consisting of three Timorese, three international representatives, and an international president. An election date was set for 30 August 2001—the first-ever democratic elections for East Timor. The constituent assembly voted to transform itself into East Timor's first legislature upon final approval of the constitution in January 2002. In April of the same year, the first presidential elections were held. In May, East Timor

became an independent nation. No local elections have yet been held.

Bosnia-Herzegovina

The war that ravaged Bosnia from 1992 through 1995 was marked by ethnic cleansing and other atrocities. The Dayton peace accords, initialed in Paris in August 1995 embodied broad electoral provisions, including deadlines and a sequence: first general elections, then local. Dayton compelled early voting by providing that presidential¹ and parliamentary elections be held between six and nine months after the signing of the accords—that is, sometime between February and May 1996. Local elections would be held as well, “if feasible.”

General elections took place in September 1996, just three months after the Dayton provision. Municipal elections were scheduled for the end of the same year but actually took place in 1997. They were held again in 2000 and 2003. The next general election took place in September 1998 at the end of the so-called stabilization period. General elections then took place every two years, in 2000 and 2002. A systematic legal body (the Election Law of Bosnia-Herzegovina) was enacted in September 2001, and further amended in 2002, covering all the types of elections (i.e., for the Republic of Bosnia-Herzegovina, the federation, the Republika Srpska, and municipal elections).

Kosovo

A deadline for early elections was established, although the first elections were

held almost a year late. Kosovo was torn by fighting between ethnic Albanians and Serbs in 1998–99. The Rambouillet accords of February 1999 followed the Dayton pattern by establishing some election-related provisions. An assembly of 120 members was envisaged. Of these, 80 are directly elected and 40 elected by qualifying national communities, with reserved seats for the smaller communities. A majority vote of the assembly elects the president. Both the assembly and the president serve a three-year term. No president can serve more than two terms.

It was established that first elections would be held within nine months after the agreement took force. The OSCE (Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe) mission in Kosovo was mandated to organize and supervise elections. The accords also stated that the president of the electoral commission—the OSCE mission director—“shall decide, in consultation with the parties, the exact timing and order of elections for Kosovo political offices.” To date, domestic and international observers have positively assessed three elections.

Municipal elections were held first, in October 2000. It was hoped that all ethnic communities (including internally displaced and refugee populations) would register and participate. The election was actually held almost one year past the nine-month deadline anticipated at Rambouillet, and some ethnic minorities—especially Serbs—boycotted the process. Assembly elections were then held in November 2001, with Serb participation. The assembly in turn elected a president. Municipal elections

took place again in October 2002. Most ethnic groups participated, although Serbs abstained. Only two years after the first election voter registration increased more than 40 percent, from 0.9 to 1.3 million. In relative terms, though, voter turnout slid from 79 percent in 2000 to 64 percent in 2001 and 54 percent in 2002.

In December 2003 the UN launched a set of standards for preparation of final status for Kosovo. It reaffirmed the principle that all communities and ethnic groups should participate in elections and in all institutions of government.

West Bank-Gaza

The Declaration of Principles on the Interim Period of September 1993 provided for a Palestinian interim self-government authority to be elected “not later than nine months after the entry into force of this declaration.” Further details were to be negotiated later. The elections actually took place two years and three months after the declaration was signed in January 1996. The interim term was planned for five years. Palestinians voted for president and parliament. Municipal elections were scheduled for the fall of 1996 but were later postponed owing to the recurrent conflict with Israel. However, following the death of President Yasir Arafat, Palestinians held successful general elections in early 2005.

¹ The presidency is tripartite: one Bosniak, one Croat, and one Serb. The member with the most votes becomes chairman, but the chairmanship rotates every eight months.

Postconflict Elections: A Review of Experience

International donor agencies, notably USAID, have supported postconflict elections in wartorn societies after the cessation of hostilities. Such elections serve multiple objectives. They elect governments that enjoy domestic popular support and international legitimacy. They also initiate a process of reconciliation by involving opposition parties and groups in the political process. Finally, they promote and consolidate demo-

Donors have supported national and international monitoring of elections and have occasionally persuaded the incumbents or the opposition to abide by the voters' verdict.

cratization of the polity. These objectives are not always mutually compatible.

USAID and other donors have assisted in the conduct of postconflict elections in various ways. They have provided technical assistance for constitutional reforms to legislative and executive bodies, helped establish Election Management Bodies (EMBs), provided support for establishing institutional and physical infrastructure for elections, assisted civil society organizations, and given financial and technical assistance to interim governments. Donors have supported national and international monitoring of elections and have occasionally

persuaded the incumbents or the opposition to abide by the voters' verdict. Their involvement has ranged from complete responsibility for planning and implementing postconflict elections to a more limited role.

Election Provisions and Timetables in Peace Accords

Peace accords in all 14 countries provided for postconflict elections. However, accords varied with reference to the scope and timing of elections and the election cycle.

In eight cases, accords dealt with electoral provisions in much detail. This included setting a date or a deadline for holding the first elections after the conflict. In 11 cases, including those with an electoral calendar established in a constitution, the actual date of elections was altered. Most often, elections were delayed from months to years after the date set by the accords. In only two cases were elections anticipated by a previously set calendar, and in only three cases were elections held as scheduled. In seven cases, the pattern of the election cycles was one of presidential and parliamentary elections being held simultaneously and local elections held later on a separate schedule. Local elections took place before general elections in only three cases, and in five cases, local elections were not held.

Electoral Provisions and Timing of Elections

COUNTRY, ELECTION YEAR	SCOPE OF ELECTION COVERAGE BY PEACE ACCORDS	ACCORDS SET ELECTION DATE/ DEADLINE?	DATE OF ELECTIONS: ACTUAL VS. EXPECTED	ELECTION CYCLE
Nicaragua, 1990	Little	No: per constitutional calendar	Anticipated in 1 year	Simultaneous: presidential, legislative, local
El Salvador, 1994	Little	No: per constitutional calendar	Per constitutional calendar	Separate: presidential, then legislative and local
Guatemala, 1999	Little	No: per constitutional calendar	Per constitutional calendar	Simultaneous: presidential, legislative, local
Haiti, 1988–95	Little	No: per constitutional calendar	Somewhat delayed by crisis	Separate: local, legislative, presidential
Angola, 1992	Little	Yes	Somewhat advanced	Simultaneous: presidential, legislative
Ethiopia, 1992	Detailed	Yes	8-month delay	Separate: local, then legislative
Mozambique, 1994	Detailed	Yes	3-month delay	Simultaneous presidential
Liberia, 1997	Little	Yes	Several years delay	Simultaneous: presidential, legislative
Sierra Leone, 2002	Detailed	No: per constitutional calendar	1 year delay by crisis	Simultaneous: presidential, legislative
Cambodia, 1993	Detailed	Left open to UN authority	1½ years after accord and 3 months later than scheduled	Separate: parliamentary, then local
East Timor, 2001	Little	No: per constitutional calendar	Somewhat delayed by crisis	Separate: local, legislative, presidential
Bosnia-Herzegovina, 1996	Detailed	Yes	3-month delay	Simultaneous presidential and legislative; separate local
Kosovo, 2000–02	Detailed	Yes	9-month delay	Separate: local, then parliamentary
West Bank-Gaza, 1996	Detailed	Yes	2-year, 3-month delay	Simultaneous: presidential, legislative

Source: Peace accords of the 14 countries.

Peace accords frequently provided for early elections, and frequently those elections were called for early in the peace process, before combatants were completely demobilized and disarmed or before definite progress toward national reconciliation was made. In nine cases, an election date or deadline was decided when parties agreed on a peace settlement, and this was usually earlier in the peace process. The uncertainties of postconflict situations are evidenced by election schedules that could not be met. Even when the constitution established a date, elections were sometimes delayed or planned for a later (uncertain) date. In fact, in nine cases, elections were delayed from a few months to several years after the dates set by the accords or the constitution.

In five cases, a preexisting constitutional calendar determined an election date (the three Central American cases, Haiti, Sierra Leone). In those cases, contenders did not argue about the election date, as elections had taken place before a peace agreement was reached and would continue in the future according to the same calendar. Still, elections were moved up one year in Nicaragua and delayed from a few months to one year in Haiti and Sierra Leone. In only one case (Cambodia 1993) was the polling date left to the UN authority to decide. Elections were held a year and a half after the signing of the accords, but still three months later than scheduled.

Some postconflict elections could be considered premature, especially when judged by their results in achieving the objectives of peace, reconciliation, and democracy. The failed outcomes in Angola in 1992, and in Liberia in 1992

and 1997, were the most dramatic. In the case of Liberia, the failure occurred despite the fact that elections had repeatedly been postponed since 1992 owing to recurrent warfare. The outcomes of elections were also less than desirable in Cambodia, Sierra Leone, and Haiti. In a number of other cases, international presence is still needed, and therefore it is difficult to predict the future. However, prospects are more promising in some countries (East Timor, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Kosovo). One case, West Bank-Gaza, remains under the extreme uncertainty stemming from the original conflict. The electoral outcome is still promising in Mozambique, although disarmament was not complete at the time of elections. Finally, the Central American countries show steady democratic progress, more so in El Salvador than in Nicaragua and Guatemala.

Why were early elections called so frequently? Six preliminary explanations can be offered:

1. The decision by the international community to push for early elections was often based on an interest in speeding up the move from warfare to a more civilized society that would allow for a diminished presence and lower cost of international intervention. From an international strategic perspective, there was an interest in knowing the results and starting to work with a new set of actors among former combatants who won at the ballot box. As a matter of fact, the arrangement of forces in the battlefield is closely reflected by the results of the ballot box: neither government nor opposition wins or loses the

elections by a landslide (López-Pintor 1997, 51).

Additionally, when there was an armed international intervention and an international administration set in place (Bosnia-Herzegovina, Kosovo, East Timor), the perception was that elections (much more often general elections than local) were required to achieve a progressive transfer of authority into local hands. Such was the case even if the elections were only a mechanism to demonstrate how much social support different political parties and personalities could gather. Early elections have also worked to defuse deep-rooted inter-ethnic conflict, substituting a political venue for the battlefield.

2. Some earlier successful international experience at peacemaking, which included elections, may have encouraged eagerness to complete the democratization cycle early. In a sense, the 1989–90 experience in Namibia and Nicaragua may have influenced the disposition to favor early elections in countries such as Angola and Ethiopia in 1992 or Cambodia in 1993. In those countries, however, the conditions needed for peace and democracy turned out to be much more problematic.
3. Calling for early elections as part of a postconflict operation may have been more appealing than delaying elections until security and national reconstruction conditions could be met. This approach was reinforced by an underlying assumption that all good things go together, that is, that elections—as an essential part of

representative government—can only bring other good things. By contrast, a stage-by-stage approach advocates late elections as a step to take only after the country has achieved substantial national reconstruction. This view may conceptually sound more insightful and humane, but it is much less attuned to the harsh realities of conflict politics. Nevertheless, this approach should not be easily discarded, if only because paying attention only to short-term considerations may turn out to be very costly in the long term. Domestic elites and populations may pay high costs in lives and living conditions. The international community may also pay a price in public image, political clout, and investments already made or in prospect. Angola and Liberia are extreme cases; other, less extreme, cases include Ethiopia and Haiti. Afghanistan and Iraq are currently undergoing testing.

4. Former belligerents and aid recipients may perceive not pushing for early elections as a lack of interest in moving the political process forward. More dangerously, they may see it as support for the incumbent government, which often had ruled autocratically or had emerged from civil warfare unable to establish legitimacy.
5. Budgetary and funding considerations usually play a role in deciding when to hold elections. Internationally managed operations are governed by time limits that normally require updating according to donors' annual budget cycle. Programs may also be subject to parliamentary approval. Even factors of expediency, includ-

ing domestic political conditions in donor countries, may be at work (e.g., a compelling electoral calendar or the effect of a death toll on public opinion).

6. Pressures from local actors tend to delay elections. This often puts international actors in the defensive mode of favoring elections as soon as possible. Local actors' desire for postponement is more often based on immediate motives than on considerations of national reconstruction. For example, the push for delays in order to better prepare for elections sometimes hides more immediate motivations, such as prospects of internationally subsidized public employment.

Preconditions for Postconflict Elections

Peace accords included some provisions for the legal framework for elections. The international community promoted demobilization and disarmament of ex-combatants with monitoring and technical and financial support. Some of that support went toward subsidies to the demobilized and training of new police and army contingents drawn from the ranks of former belligerents. Incomplete demobilization and disarmament was a frequent problem. Only limited disarmament took place in Angola, Liberia, Ethiopia, and Cambodia, but in Nicaragua and El Salvador disarmament was substantial.

There was a close correlation between disarmament and democratization. Of eight countries included in a 1998 assessment of postconflict elections, five (Angola, Liberia, Ethiopia, Cambodia,

Haiti) significantly failed to democratize (Kumar 1998). All these countries faced problems in demobilization and disarmament. The three cases showing a better democratization record (El Salvador, Nicaragua, Mozambique) were also relatively more successful at disarming. From the six additional cases in this review, four are still under some armed international intervention (Sierra Leone, East Timor, Kosovo, Bosnia), one is in the middle of an international conflict (West Bank-Gaza), and the other is slowly moving toward democracy (Guatemala).

Bringing former combatants into the electoral game often requires the international community to provide some or all of them financial support (more often than to the opposition). In the countries studied, such support typically supported political parties and campaign activities, including resources for access to media. Training party cadres, generating a trust fund for political party support, and helping develop independent media were also among the more frequent support endeavors (Kumar 1998, Carothers 1999, Burnell 2000). Nevertheless, many groups did not participate in elections (Hamas and Yihad in West Bank-Gaza in 1996, Serbs in Kosovo municipal elections in 2000 and 2002). There were also withdrawals at different stages of the process (the main opposition parties in Nicaragua in 1985 a few days before polling day, the Khmer Rouge in 1993 one month before the elections). The international community tried to persuade adversaries to rejoin the electoral race, but the efforts met with little success.

Although all parties agreed to a standard legal framework at the peace negotiations, building all-inclusive voter lists as well as law enforcement by a neutral electoral administration turned out to be problematic. This was the case both in countries with some electoral tradition (Central America) and in countries that required new electoral settings (sub-Saharan Africa).

A legal electoral framework was constructed from scratch or updated in response to new postconflict political conditions. The goal was for the framework to be acceptable to all contenders and strengthen their commitment to the new democratic politics. When a legal framework existed prior to the peace accords, it had to be revised, as was the case in Angola and Mozambique.

The international community provided technical assistance on legal drafting and training. When international organizations managing elections developed the legal framework in consultation with concerned parties, they took a piecemeal approach, as in Kosovo. In some cases, they promulgated short-lived legislation that was later changed, as in Bosnia or East Timor. Although international experts considered local needs and views, no effort was successful without serious commitment by local actors. Various international organizations and assistance agencies have produced valuable handbooks and guides (IDEA 2002 and corresponding websites).

From the 14 selected countries, the international community was completely responsible for planning and implementing elections in five (Sierra Leone, Cambodia, East Timor, Bosnia,

Kosovo). It played a strong supporting role in the domestic electoral administration in four (Angola, Mozambique, Liberia, West Bank-Gaza). And it had a substantial role in five (Nicaragua, El Salvador, Guatemala, Haiti, Ethiopia). When limited support is provided, it ranges from helping an existing electoral administration with voter registration and electoral materials (Nicaragua, El Salvador, Guatemala) to structuring the EMBs, normally by assisting projects run by the UN and USAID (Sierra Leone, Liberia, Angola, Mozambique, Ethiopia, West Bank-Gaza, Haiti).

Problems with full accessibility to campaign activities or to monitor elections often occurred in countries with regions largely controlled by former belligerents or with poor communication infrastructures (Angola, Mozambique, Cambodia). Such problems also existed where deep-rooted, territorially bound, interethnic conflict made access to certain communities risky (Bosnia, Kosovo).

Dispatching international observers to monitor elections has become standard practice. International organizations, such as the UN, EU, and regional organizations such as OSCE, OAS, OAU, or the British Commonwealth, were engaged in election observation. The size of international observer missions varies from the thousands (Cambodia, Bosnia-Herzegovina) to a hundred (most observer missions since the late 1990s). The scope may vary from coverage of just the period around polling day to a more prolonged endeavor. The latter approach is being adopted by all major international organizations.

Domestic electoral monitors, usually from existing civil society organizations, are increasingly encouraged and supported by the international community. They do not substitute for, but complement, international observation. They can act with full citizen rights during the electoral period and are not restricted by international mandates. They may also follow up the democratic development as civil society activists (Ottaway and Carothers 2000). The supportive role in creating and enhancing this type of organization by USAID and related agencies during the last decade has been impressive. Regional networks of domestic monitoring organizations also have been created in the last few years with the support of OSCE and the EU.

Among logistical problems, the following deserve mention:

- *Defining the electorate* before voter registration was a heavy burden where there were displaced and refugee populations, especially if nationality and residence became an issue (Nicaragua, Mozambique, Bosnia, Kosovo, West Bank-Gaza, East Timor). Voter registration was the most expensive item of an electoral budget, and the international community provided significant funding for registration. Most barriers to voter enfranchisement stemmed from the marginalized condition of certain segments of the population—e.g., indigenous communities, peasants, and women—or the attempt at sheer political exclusion of assumedly adversarial people (López-Pintor and Gratschew 2002).
- *The production of voting materials* was a function of trust—the less politi-

cal trust there was among contenders, the more demand there was for high-quality and expensive materials. Certain materials, such as indelible ink and high-quality ballot papers, were frequently delivered as in-kind contributions by donors.

- The *arrangement of polling centers* was often a lesser obstacle. The same was true for recruiting and training polling station officials, since people are generally very cooperative in postconflict situations. Nevertheless, polling center issues became problematic after the first election. Enthusiasm for domestic monitoring diminished as international exposure declined.
- Finally, *coordination among international agents and between international and national actors* was limited and created problems that were not always resolved. Often, international actors formed coordination committees to avoid duplication of financial and technical assistance. Such committees were effective in Nicaragua, El Salvador, and Mozambique. Where international bodies were in full charge of conducting elections, issues of coordination proved difficult to tackle.² In all cases, coordinating with financially and technically dependent national partners tended to follow a pattern of asymmetrical relations.

The Election Cycle

In five of the countries studied, the election cycle was constitutionally

established (Nicaragua, El Salvador, Guatemala, Haiti, Sierra Leone). In the remaining nine, the cycle was established by peace accords and ordinary legislation. In three cases, a decision was made to hold local elections soon after general elections (Bosnia 1997) or many years later (Cambodia 2002, Mozambique 2003). In two countries, local and general elections took place simultaneously (Nicaragua, Guatemala). In two other countries, the different elections rotated according to a constitutional calendar, with all elections coinciding every certain number of years (El Salvador, Haiti). In the remaining five cases, local elections have not yet been scheduled (Angola, Liberia, Sierra Leone, West Bank-Gaza, East Timor).

In only two of 14 cases did authorities decide to hold local elections before general elections (Ethiopia, Kosovo). Both countries suffered deep ethnic divides. That Ethiopia held regional elections before general elections was seen as a step backward for democratic transition (Harbeson 1998, 111). Kosovo held its first municipal elections in 2000, one year before the general elections. Those elections were only partially successful, because the Serb community refrained from registering to vote. By contrast, in the 1940s occupied Germany, under a plan designed and supervised by the U.S. Army, local council elections preceded regional elections, which preceded general elections (von Hippel 2000, 15).

The elites in transition societies perceive local elections as more politically sensi-

tive and risky than national elections.³ The decision for local elections to follow national elections may be based on profound political considerations or perhaps for the public good. Sometimes, though, the decision is based more on the selfish interests of the elites, who tend to see local elections a second priority, after national elections.

Furthermore, a number of countries have the election cycle fixed in their constitutions, which clearly implies a safeguard against the elites manipulating the electoral calendar. When room remained in postconflict situations for a decision on whether to hold a given type of election first, it all seemed to depend on the political conditions of the moment:

- In Kosovo in 2000, UN and OSCE authorities decided to hold municipal elections earlier than parliamentary elections on the following grounds: First, two parties, but especially Hashim Thaci's Kosovo Liberation Army, were claiming to control a number of municipalities abandoned by Serbs. Officials deemed it necessary to know how much support each party had in the various municipalities. Second, little concern attended the national level of government, which UN and OSCE authorities could more easily control. And third, the international community believed that starting with municipal elections would serve as a learning exercise at democracy.

² For example, an international structure may have different pillars of authority (as in Bosnia or Kosovo) or a variety of strong assistance programs may be conducted by different agencies.

³ This perception may perhaps result from political fragmentation and loosening of national authority.

- In Bosnia, the situation was the opposite. The accords slated general elections first, and that is how it went in 1996. Citizens voted in municipal and cantonal elections in 1997. Elections took place despite difficulties encountered as military lines split some territories, and authorities could not establish clear-cut electoral district boundaries.
- In West Bank-Gaza, following presidential and parliamentary elections, municipal elections were scheduled to be held by the end of 1996. They later were postponed because of the evolving conflict with Israel, and no future date was fixed. At present, the question is whether local elections should take place together with or separate from general elections, and if separate, which should occur first. The answer seems to turn on variables of the conflict related to security concerns.

In summary, factors to consider in deciding on election order are political rather than technical or logistic. They include the following:

- Searching for political and institutional stability, including central control by current elites. Authorities seek to preserve the precarious status quo achieved after the conflict ends without endangering the current incumbents at the national institutions (Bosnia, Kosovo, West Bank-Gaza).
- Completing the range of representative institutions from national down to local levels (West Bank-Gaza, Cambodia, Mozambique).

- Ground testing the readiness of new insurgents or alienated political actors to participate, and worries about how such participation may affect the precarious stability of the new polity (West Bank-Gaza, Kosovo).

Nature of International Support

USAID and other donors have assisted in conducting postconflict elections within the broader domain of democracy assistance. The assistance has been more intense since the early 1990s (Carothers 1997 and 1999, Kumar 1998 and 1999, Ottaway and Carothers 1999, Burnell 2000). A chronology of the birth and growth of democracy assistance agencies begins with the Konrad Adenauer and Friedrich Ebert foundations, both German organizations. USAID, the National Endowment for Democracy, and a host of other U.S. agencies have been major donors. There are also the development agencies of northern Europe, Switzerland, Japan, and the British Commonwealth. The UN (Electoral Assistance Division and UNDP), the EU, and the OSCE have also been significantly involved (Burnell 2000, 48–57).

Three aid sectors have been identified as part of the democracy template. First is the *electoral process* in its different components, including assistance to political party development. Second are *state institutions*, which include electoral administration and, more specifically, those dealing with the constitution and legal drafting. Third is *civil society*, with an emphasis on civic education and

support to domestic NGOs as election monitors (Carothers 1999, 88).

Democracy assistance has shifted over time from support for electoral procedures to support for institution building and civil society organizations (Carothers 1999, 125–52). The same shift applies to postconflict scenarios. Most donors and international bodies fund assistance projects in the different domains and with varying intensity, depending on country and type of operation (standard transition, postconflict elections, longer term sustainability). Nevertheless, implementing agencies show a certain specialization by area of assistance.

Among U.S. NGOs, for example, the International Foundation for Election Systems (IFES) most often provides technical support to the electoral administration. By contrast, the National Democratic Institute (NDI) supports civil society monitoring organizations and political party cadres. The International Republican Institute (IRI) also supports parties and media. The domain of the German foundations has traditionally been assisting political party development (Mair 2000, 136–40). Within the UN system, UNDP more often provides technical assistance to the EMBs (White 2000, 80–84). International observer missions are directly organized by the funding organizations (UN secretariat, EU, OSCE/ODHIR,⁴ and the like).

Among the elements peculiar to assistance in postconflict elections is

⁴ Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights.

cost—not just the amount, but the *kind of items* to be included in the electoral budget. A second peculiarity is the timing and modalities of assistance in developing a legal framework for elections, including constitutions. At an early stage, aid is usually requested by and provided to executive bodies and political factions (including war antagonists) when peace accords are being prepared and discussed. Legislative bodies are usually not involved: they may not exist, or they may be politically neutralized by the realities of the conflict. At a later stage, usually following the first elections, legal assistance may be required by a reform commission established earlier by the peace accord. Such aid is used to develop the electoral system and for related projects, such as drawing up citizen and voter registries (El Salvador, Guatemala).

Special international aid is usually required to define and document the electorate. This entails identifying eligible voters, compiling acceptable population estimates, providing personal civil identification, and conducting voter registration—ideally in a manner that will help in future elections.

Donors have given civil society organizations assistance to engage in voter education and to monitor the entire electoral process. Full monitoring embraces checking media content and campaign expenses, observing law enforcement by electoral authorities, verifying compliance by parties and candidates to a code of conduct, and surveying the voting operation itself, including parallel vote counting.

International actors have often been compelled to help persuade incumbents or oppositions to abide by the voters' will. For example, in Nicaragua in 1990, a quick count by the UN was handed over through Jimmy Carter to the incumbent, Daniel Ortega, early on election eve to encourage him to accept the results. In El Salvador, a similar strategy was used to foster acceptance of a runoff after a close result in the first round. In Mozambique, the opposition leader, Alfonso Dlakama, was persuaded to rejoin the race after withdrawing on the first day of voting. In Cambodia, the UN administration accepted the odd solution of a government with two prime ministers. This led to a coup by the one who lost at the polls. In Angola, Jonas Savimbi could not accept that he had lost the presidential race.

Overall, the role of the international community in democracy assistance, and of USAID in particular, has been moderately positive. Carothers has concluded that electoral aid has, in general, had consistent but limited effects, particularly in the institutionalization of elections in countries making progress at becoming democracies (Carothers 1999, 304). Within the limited realm of postconflict elections, that conclusion can be expanded to say that aid has been generally decisive for the very *existence* of the elections. Without the presence of the international community, and without substantial assistance, elections would not, in most cases, have taken place (López-Pintor 1997, 59; Kumar and Ottaway 1998, 229).

Elections have also contributed to broader goals. Specifically, they were modestly instrumental in helping end

civil conflict and establishing a state authority under democratic control throughout the country (López-Pintor in Kumar 1997, 49). The question is to what degree postconflict elections have produced long-lasting effects on democratization. Two possible answers emerge: First, elections may be an instrument for *peace and reconciliation*. Second, postconflict elections may affect *democratic consolidation*. While it may be too early to tell, one should not underestimate the risk that a number of postconflict societies may join the growing family of ineffective electoral democracies.

Overall Cost to the International Community

Democracy aid is more expensive in postconflict countries than in those not burdened by past internal warfare. Practically all relevant international agencies are present on the ground even years after the end of the conflict and the inaugural elections.⁵

The overall cost of postconflict elections is assessed as a mix—partly the cost of democracy assistance and partly the cost of peacekeeping operations. A methodology for assessing such costs has not been developed. For the moment, no methodology exists for assessing even normal electoral costs. Available evidence allows for only limited consideration of the cost of postconflict elections. Different electoral processes must pay for different products, making costs difficult to compare. For example, the costs of elections in established

⁵ Annex I summarizes the density of such presence by both government agencies and NGOs.

democracies do not include the same items as do the costs of elections in transitional democracies. Costs in transitional situations should in turn be differentiated from costs in postconflict elections—even though both involve wartorn societies and elections in both will incur certain high costs.

Postconflict elections generally involve especially high costs owing to the wartorn condition of society (Kumar 1998; Kumar 2000, 202–03; López-Pintor 2000, 71–80).

An assessment of election costs in 49 countries with different electoral backgrounds concluded that a very significant factor in cost variations is the amount of a country's experience with multiparty elections. Significant cost differences exist between routine elections in stable democracies, elections in transitional democracies, and elections during special peacekeeping operations. In countries with more multiparty democratic experience, elections are consistently less costly than in countries where elections are a new undertaking. This trend cuts across regions, levels of economic development, and even in countries where electoral practices are interrupted by military interventions. Countries with longer electoral experience, such as the United States and most Western European countries, experience low electoral costs, approximately \$1–3 per elector. In Latin America, typical costs are as follows: Chile (\$1.20), Costa Rica (\$1.80), and Brazil (\$2.30); in sub-Saharan Africa: Benin (\$1.60), Botswana (\$2.70), Ghana (\$0.70), and Senegal (\$1.20); in Asia: India (\$1.00) and Pakistan (\$0.50); and in Australia (\$3.20) (López-Pintor 2000, 76).

In fact, the cost of elections in peacekeeping environments tends to be \$10–30 per registered voter (López-Pintor 2000, 120). The overall postconflict electoral budget ranges from the hundreds of millions of dollars in larger, more complex operations (Cambodia, Angola, Mozambique, current Afghanistan) to tens of millions in environments with better communications and administrative infrastructure (Central America, the Balkans). The largest budget might approach the expenses of a presidential candidate in a U.S. election.⁶ As could be expected in wartorn societies, the integrity cost may amount to more than half the total electoral budget.

A dummy exercise on the cost of a standard postconflict election led to an educated guess on core and integrity costs for a country with a small or mid-sized electorate of 2–6 million. In this hypothetical example, the largest part of the budget is funded by the international community and paid in U.S. dollars. A total of \$52 million would cover 1) core electoral costs, including voter registration (\$30 million); 2) two international observer missions (\$2 million); 3) support for domestic monitoring NGOs (\$1.5 million); 4) support for political parties and media development, (\$1.5

million); 5) civic education (\$2 million); 6) other integrity costs (e.g., security, international staff) (\$15 million). The average cost per registered voter would be \$8.70–17.30.

Some cost reduction could be expected in second- and third-generation elections after the conflict. In fact, this is sometimes the case (Cambodia, Kosovo). But the opposite may also occur, with costs for second-generation elections remaining the same, or even exceeding those for first elections (Nicaragua, Guatemala). Sometimes cost reductions have been made not so much on the initiative of the electoral administration (local or international) but because of donor pressures. For example, Kosovo's second municipal election in 2002 and Mozambique's of 2003 both saw reductions of over 20 percent.

Postconflict Elections and Ethnic Divide

It is unlikely that elections by themselves reduce ethnic divides. The call to the polls almost automatically aligns people according to their deeply rooted identities. Interethnic confrontation could even be reinforced by unrealistic or too restrictive electoral legislation. In the best of cases, and with a proper legal framework in place, postconflict elections will allow for an expression of ethnic divides at the ballot box rather than through political repression and violent strife. Elections do not aim to bridge deep-rooted ethnocultural cleavages; rather, they seek to help rivals cope with those differences in an enlightened, democratic manner. Can the ethnic divide be better managed

⁶ Annex 2 lists the reported cost per registered voter of various elections in the three broad groups (established, transitional, postconflict). The cost figure includes both core costs and integrity costs. *Core costs* are those routinely associated with carrying out elections. *Integrity costs* generally concern security arrangements for registration and polling places: international personnel serving as part of the electoral administration, quality electoral materials as required by a low level of trust among contenders, long-term electoral observer missions, intensive voter education campaigns and election publicity, and assistance to political parties at national and local levels as part of a broader approach at capacity building.

with the help of electoral rules—especially in the mid- to longer-term—and if so, how? The answer from experience is that adequate legislation and other election-related measures can help. The message is not that interethnic tensions can be easily overcome by the electoral system, but that such a tool can serve to lessen them.

Bosnia and Kosovo provide recent examples. In both societies, postconflict elections have somehow frozen the ethnic divide at the ballot box and in the institutions of representative government. At the same time, an intervening international administration, including an armed force, minimizes the chances for interethnic confrontation. In Bosnia, the Dayton accords mandated a timetable for early elections; this widened the ethnic divide. At the same time, holding early elections changed the military scenario into a political one. The factions stopped fighting, and elections became a mechanism for more civil confrontation between the different communities.

Similarly in Kosovo, elections proved less a conciliatory bridge between ethnic communities than a mechanism to bring them toward the more civilized game of democratic politics. Although the electoral agenda in Kosovo was not as tight as that mandated in Bosnia, municipal elections in 2000 could not overcome the reluctance by Kosovan Serbs (both inside and outside the province) to register and participate. There was little incentive: they were subjected to continuing intimidation and economic pressure from President Slobodan Milosevic in Belgrade, and they required continuous military protection for their enclaves.

The Serbs did, however, come on board for the parliamentary elections of 2001, perhaps sensing a better opportunity because of several incentives offered by the international community and by legislation.⁷ For these elections, Serbs registered under the banner of only one party. That helped them gain a sizable number of seats: the 10 minority reserved seats plus their share in the proportional representation list. Though they registered massively in 2001, the Serbs withdrew again in the second municipal elections in 2002. At the municipal level, incentives were not especially appealing, as the Serbs could not expect such a large share of power—faced with the Albanian majority.

Examples can also be offered of effects in other directions. Compared to Bosnia and Kosovo, ethnic cultural differences in East Timor were not particularly relevant for elections. The Muslim community did enjoy some Indonesian support with respect to the Catholic community, but interethnic conflict was never seriously exploited in the electoral arena. In some countries, the ethnic divide was deepened by the electoral experience (Angola, Liberia, Ethiopia). Particularly in Africa, the risk is that political parties will further rigidify ethnic divisions. There, parties have formed along ethnic lines, reflecting the underlying social pluralism (Ottaway 2000, 80).

In other countries, elections have helped deal with ethnic differences, at least at

the ballot box, by using proportional representation in provincial districts. Doing so has automatically allowed for representation of the different minorities. This has occurred in Nicaragua's Atlantic coast region, in Guatemala with its large Maya populations, and in Mozambique with its strong, territorially based ethnic groups.

One may draw several conclusions from steps the international community has taken to minimize the effect of elections on ethnic polarization. As in other areas of social conflict, obstacles to interethnic accord can more easily be removed than incentives can be offered, especially through the electoral system. Strategically speaking, all the measures described below should be seen as parts of an integrated approach rather than as separate courses of action. In practice, results depend on the scope and duration of international peacekeeping operations and assistance missions, as well as on the personalities of those in charge of these missions.

Obstacles can be removed by establishing constitutional and other legal provisions on the shape of government and formulas for representation. In general, such provisions have to do with power-sharing arrangements (e.g., national unity government, tripartite presidency) and bringing ethnic sensitivity to electoral procedures (e.g., interethnic composition of electoral commissions at different levels, minority languages used for polling forms, civic education and voter information campaigns). They involve establishing inclusive formulas of representation (e.g., proportional, closed or open, mix of ethnically defined districts with broader national

7 For example, the international community arranged for visits by prominent personalities. Legislation included provisions that Serbs could register both inside and outside of Kosovo and that the Kosovo government must be one of national unity, with 10 seats guaranteed to the Serbs in the assembly.

lists, reserved seats for minorities, the possibility of interethnic alliances). And they seek to facilitate voter and candidate registration (e.g., time for registration, external registration, and voting).

Electoral experts and field practitioners have assessed the effects of elections and electoral legal tools on ethnic divides as moderately positive (Sisk 1996, 27–45; Reilly and Reynolds 1998; Harris et al. 1998, 188–211). Among analysts of democracy assistance, some assessments conclude on a positive tone (Kumar 2000, 205; von Hippel 2000, 202–04). Others, however, are less optimistic (Ottaway, 2003, 202–03).

In Bosnia and Kosovo, all the devices mentioned above were put into practice with varying degrees of success. For example, voter and candidate registration was greatly eased for Croats and Albanians in Bosnia and for Serbs in Kosovo. Although Serbs did not participate in the 2000 Kosovo municipal elections, they did come on board for the general elections of the following year. Actually, the winning party, the Democratic Party of Kosovo, got 48 percent of the vote but had to share with the other parties.

In Bosnia, the ethnically based tripartite presidency was intended to have an integrating effect. It may not have worked that way, though, as interethnic tensions abetted paralysis. Forming interethnic alliances was allowed but never used. Nonetheless, all minority languages were used for all official forms. Not doing so could be considered a disenfranchisement, in effect, of certain populations—those that would have difficulty reading a ballot not in their language. A somewhat lesser degree of inclusiveness was

allowed for materials produced for civic education and voter information. Those materials were printed or narrated in only the more widely spoken languages. It is generally presumed that voters had access to political media other than those offered by the electoral authorities.

Proportional representation within provincial districts is often used as a simple formula for allowing a voice for minorities who are territorially well defined. Also used are quotas and reserved seats. In Nicaragua's Atlantic coast districts, for example, a quota exists for candidates of ethnic minorities. In Kosovo, reserved seats were established for both municipal and legislative elections.

Allowing for external registration and voting can help keep a given minority on board by not further alienating it from the political process. In Kosovo, international authorities gave their support to fostering absentee voting for communities temporarily in neighboring countries. It worked well for the Kosovan Serbs in the 2001 general election but not in the 2000 municipal elections (see earlier discussion). External voting also worked in Nicaragua 1990, with exiles registering and voting at the border with Honduras. By contrast, in Angola in 1992, Mozambique in 1994, and Liberia in 1997, similar projects did not succeed despite the sizable communities living in neighboring countries.

Structuring the electoral administration on a multiethnic basis, achieving a timely transfer of authority from international to domestic management, and enhancing professional associations of electoral officers should all be considered positive steps toward interethnic

reconciliation. During peacekeeping operations, postconflict elections tend to be managed by international officials. National officers play a secondary role, including at the polling-station level (Cambodia, Bosnia, Kosovo, East Timor). When this is the case, the question arises: At what time and speed shall the transfer of authority from international to national actors take place? A related question is how to create national associations of electoral officers with membership not based on ethnicity. So far this has been attempted only in Bosnia, with some success.

Support for civic education campaigns encouraging participation for all communities is standard practice in postconflict elections. It is invariably a component of USAID and other agencies' democracy programs. Support may be provided directly by the intervening international body, as it was in Bosnia, Kosovo, Cambodia, and East Timor; it may also be done by domestic NGOs, or by both. This is one of the few areas of democracy assistance where observers have unanimously reported positive results (Kumar 1998, Carothers 1999, Ottaway and Carothers 2000).

The pattern of relations between the international community and national political actors—especially political parties—is of utmost importance for national reconciliation. If one looks at parties as commercial companies, with the vote as the main expression of their profit, what incentives can be offered to help them conclude that some profit can be made? For one thing, international actors should strive to keep the parties informed of all important political decisions. The aim is to enable

them to participate in the decisionmaking process of electoral authorities at all levels. Although the main parties do normally make up part of EMBs and of transitional governments, this does not necessarily mean that they are properly taken into account, or even informed, when important decisions are made. Such a lack of confidence does not benefit interethnic reconciliation. Rather, it further alienates each group from the power nucleus where key decisions are made.

Regarding media support and monitoring, the goal should be to eliminate hate speech. Efforts in this direction are usually made through media development projects of agencies funded by the UN, OSCE, or USAID. Such projects aim either to develop local media or support international media operations, mainly radio and TV. Another option is to support media monitoring following standard methodologies whose results are publicized. A comparative assessment of the effectiveness of these two approaches has yet to be made.

Related to media support is internet support and monitoring. Something may be done to eliminate hate speech through an internet support strategy, mainly through the websites of the various international missions or democracy projects. But in many postconflict scenarios, there is much behind-the-scenes activity that is hard to assess. As the internet is more a private than a mass medium, its potential for abuse raises issues about the fueling of ethnic divisions and the difficulties of monitoring such activity.

Sustainability of Physical and Institutional Infrastructure

Until recently, donors paid little attention to the sustainability of electoral infrastructure (Kumar 2000, 2006). Presently, however, changes are in the works. Progress largely depends on the ebb and flow of conflict and on international concern about cost effectiveness (López-Pintor 2000, 122). EMBs designed for postconflict elections have tended to remain as governmental structures under varying working conditions, including international assistance for the preparation of future elections. Only in situations of reversion to armed conflict has such infrastructure failed. An institutional model of electoral commissions independent from the executive branch has generally been adopted. When the EMBs were totally or partly staffed by internationals, a process of transfer to local authorities followed (Cambodia, Bosnia, East Timor) or was in the making (Kosovo).

Financial and technical support to electoral administrations by international organizations and donor agencies is usually provided through subcontractors. For example, UN multilateral assistance and that of some individual donor countries is frequently delivered through the UNDP and the Electoral Assistance Division of the UN Secretariat. USAID usually operates through IFES for electoral processes, and NDI and IRI for legal assistance, political party development, and civil society monitoring.

The same holds true for OSCE. The EU subcontracts with a number of international European and global

NGOs. Regional intergovernmental organizations, such as the OAS and the British Commonwealth, also tend to act as delivery agencies. Only seldom is financial assistance delivered directly to electoral commissions without having it tied to specific projects to be carried out by some implementing international or domestic organization.

EMB sustainability has three dimensions: technical, financial, and political. These dimensions do not develop at a similar pace.

A country achieves *technical sustainability* when it no longer needs external advice for the conduct of elections. Technical sustainability can be easily promoted, because election organization and management can be taught quickly and with limited resources. Challenges to technical sustainability come from the size of the EMB, the degree of centralization, the professionalism of permanent staff, career and salary patterns, use of new technologies, and the kind of activities undertaken by the EMB between elections.

The conduct of elections is not difficult to learn; moreover, some previous experience already existed in practically all countries going through peacekeeping and multiparty elections. This sometimes happened under single-party rule (the Balkans, Angola, Mozambique) and sometimes within a more pluralistic environment (Central America, Liberia). Sometimes insufficient reliance on local capabilities generated unnecessarily high costs and even resulted in electoral mismanagement. This was the case in Guatemala in 2003 regarding voter lists and voting arrangements. It

also occurred in Kosovo 2002, which maintained heavy international staffing for election administration.

Financial sustainability is realized when all, or nearly all, funds for elections are raised from internal sources. This goal is a little harder to achieve. For one thing, the government and certain political parties may not eagerly assist in providing safe funds to the election budget; their interest may lie in retaining control of the EMBs by keeping them financially dependent. For another, the longer an international presence lasts, the less likely it is the EMB will become financially sustainable. Vested interest in preserving the status quo seems sometimes to develop on both the domestic and international sides.

Finally, a country reaches *political sustainability* when the outcomes of the electoral system—voter and candidate registration, voting results, and adjudication decisions—are accepted as legitimate and binding by internal and international actors. Political sustainability entails full legitimacy, but this is hardest to achieve when the society has been very heavily affected by the political consequences of armed conflict.

The challenges to political sustainability include ensuring peace. Then comes the task of institutional design, including mechanisms to transfer electoral administration from international to national control. Finally, breaches in confidence must be drastically reduced. Political sustainability is more than anything else a function of public trust. Thus, it is confidence building that turns out to be a priority for strengthening an electoral

administration. In the final analysis, it is lack of public confidence that makes postconflict elections not only a politically complex undertaking, but also a particularly expensive one (López-Pintor 2000, 119–30).

How do the studied countries fare with regard to sustainability some years after the first postconflict elections? The following categories can be identified:

- Countries that reverted to warfare. Building an electoral infrastructure had to begin all over again, with severe challenges on the political, financial, and technical fronts (Angola, Liberia).
- Countries with recurrent waves of civil strife and preelection turmoil. They also face the three challenges of political, financial, and technical sustainability (Cambodia, Ethiopia, Haiti).
- Countries still living under international intervention of different intensity. The countries face the three challenges in varying degrees (Sierra Leone, Bosnia, Kosovo, East Timor, West Bank-Gaza).
- Countries where peace and reconciliation have advanced beyond the first stage of international intervention, but which are still facing challenges—if decreasing—of political, financial, and technical sustainability.

In this last category, the following sequence of political, financial, and technical sustainability applies, from least to most challenged: El Salvador, Nicaragua, Guatemala, Mozambique. Except for El Salvador, the international

community continues to heavily subsidize and monitor all levels of elections. External sources substantially fund electoral budgets (by 50–90 percent). Technical assistance was decreasing more in El Salvador and Nicaragua (after citizen identification programs were completed in the postconflict years) than in Guatemala and Mozambique. In a number of countries, third-generation elections were held at higher cost than inaugural and subsequent elections (Nicaragua 2002, Guatemala 2003). The lesson here is that in the best of cases it takes time for an electoral system to become fully sustainable.

Related to sustainability and capacity building is the issue of transfer of authority wherever the EMB was internationally staffed totally (Cambodia), or partly but still with veto power by the international chairman (Bosnia, Kosovo, East Timor). A second tier is where a number of internationals, normally UN representatives, sat with voice but no vote at the EMB (Nicaragua, Liberia). Substantial financial and technical assistance was also provided. A third tier is where there is only substantial and determinant technical assistance—that is, assistance pervasive enough to have a decisive effect (Angola, Mozambique, Sierra Leone, El Salvador, Guatemala, Haiti, West Bank-Gaza).

There are three patterns of transfer. One is where national authorities fully substitute for internationals. In this pattern, the internationals reduce their formal role to a supervisory capacity, though they still provide heavy financial and technical assistance (Cambodia since 1998 with direct involvement by

UNDP, EU, and Japan among others; East Timor with basic training through the BRIDGE project⁸ and other external support). The second pattern is where two pillars of authority are established, with coheads of the management body sharing decisionmaking capacity (Bosnia). And third is where higher tier trainees are placed at the level of departmental director but with no independent decisionmaking authority (Kosovo).

From the two latter examples, one may note that transfer of electoral responsibilities started later but ran faster in Bosnia than in Kosovo. In fact, in Bosnia it was planned and completed in two years, during 2002 and 2003 (more than five years after the first election). Kosovo may have stopped at the third tier on its way to the second. Transfer started one year after the first election. However, the process froze after the 2002 municipal elections, despite the fact that those elections were successfully conducted by a dual electoral administration with international and domestic polling officers sharing responsibilities. Still, in 2004, the chief electoral officer and other high-ranking electoral officers are international. UN and OSCE authorities have not released further responsibilities to the national polling administrators.

Postconflict Elections and Democratization

Democratization and democratic consolidation are long-term processes

and should be regarded in the same way that pacification and democratization in post-World War II Germany and Japan are assessed today (López-Pintor 2004; von Hippel 2000, 11–18; Burnell 2000, 341–46). From the short-term perspective of a decade or so, modest positive effects of democracy assistance resulted in some cases, but in others results were negligible or negative (Kumar 1998, 229–37; Kumar 1999, 19–22; Kumar 2000, 201–02; Carothers 1999, 308; Sisk 1996, xii–xiv, 87–118; von Hippel 2000, 24–25). A similar conclusion applies to the specific effects of postconflict elections on democratization processes, with varying degrees of success or failure depending on country and severity of conflict.

International actors generally view postconflict elections as one strategic resource among others, for peacekeeping, nation and state building, and democratization. The very first elections, especially, may be strongly determined by political necessity, or even expediency, rather than by cost-benefit considerations among the elites, both national and international. Practical exigencies taking over theoretical considerations are not exclusive events of this time, as the experience of post-World War Germany could attest (von Hippel 2000, 14). Machiavelli's distinction between necessity, fortune, and virtue as determinants of political action is most pertinent for postconflict scenarios (*Discourses*). In a sense, postconflict elections have proved to be a necessary, though not sufficient, condition for moving toward genuine democratic politics—that is to say, where basic rights are guar-

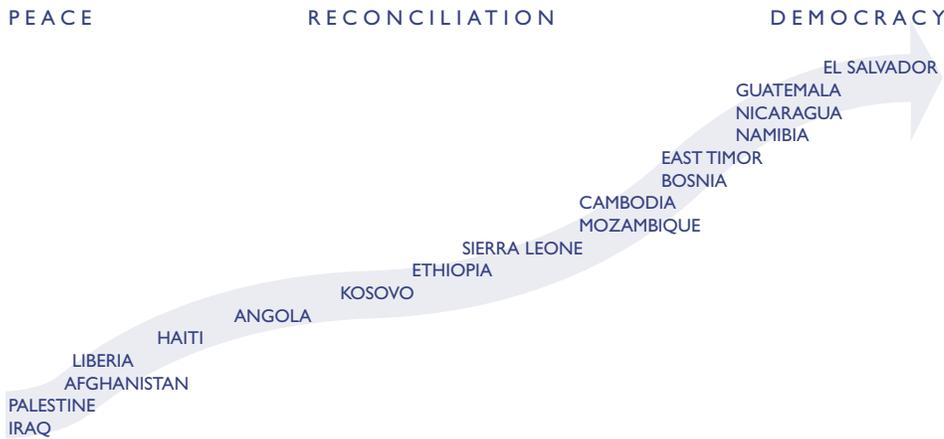
anteed, the rule of law is effectively at work, and the government delivers.

When the full spectrum of cases is considered, the range of effects of elections on attaining peace, reconciliation, and democratization shifts from negative and contradictory to clearly positive. The following evolutionary patterns are identified, similar to patterns of sustainability:

- Countries where no substantial progress toward peace and democracy was made after the first postconflict elections and which later reverted to warfare (Angola, Liberia).
- Countries showing some short-lived progress and setbacks, including armed rebellion and civil strife (Ethiopia, Sierra Leone, Haiti).
- Countries where recurrent elections after conflict have not removed a “dominant-power politics” regime (Cambodia, Mozambique) or one evolving toward semiauthoritarianism, such as a regime deliberately blocking the possibility of genuine democracy (Ottaway 2003).
- Countries where elections have proved insufficient to modify a syndrome of “feckless pluralism” of corrupt and weak governments that deliver little good to the country (Nicaragua, Guatemala, West Bank-Gaza) (Carothers 2002, 9–14).
- Countries still under international intervention but showing positive prospects for pacification and democratization (Bosnia, Kosovo, East Timor).

⁸ This is a joint venture by the UN, IDEA, and other assistance agencies.

How Different Countries Have Fared in the Pursuit of Peace, Reconciliation, and Democracy after Postconflict Elections or with Elections in Prospect (as of March 2004)



Source: López-Pintor

- Countries where the main challenges to peace, reconciliation, and democracy are more effectively met. El Salvador is the only case country included under the liberal democracy category. Most of the other cases are classified as pseudodemocracies (Diamond 1999, 279–80) or just electoral democracies, delegate democracies, or semiauthoritarian regimes.

From the range of cases above, it appears that countries progressing toward peace, reconciliation, and democracy after postconflict elections clearly outnumber those where little or no progress has occurred. Fair assessment requires that each country be measured against its own past as well as within a regional context. One should not overemphasize comparisons with well-established democracies. Some indicators of democratic quality should be considered in assessing whether postconflict elections helped improve the political condi-

tion of the country. They include the following:

- positing peace and reconciliation as more likely than a return to civil strife or international warfare
- accepting election results by former combatants
- developing a demilitarized civil police and an armed forces under civilian control, normally integrating personnel from different former contending factions
- consolidating a legal constitutional framework that includes all political forces and helps the rule of law to function by guaranteeing rights and freedoms, including those of ethnocultural minorities and those of women
- developing an electoral administration that is independent of the executive branch, politically responsive to par-

ties and civil society, and technically efficient under civil service protection

- enhancing the legal and professional status of independent mass media
- building national consensus on reconstruction and socioeconomic development policies

To conclude, the importance of political stability for democratic consolidation should not be overemphasized: stability sometimes actually works in favor of the two undesirable syndromes of dominant-power politics and feckless pluralism (Carothers 2002). By the same token, the necessity of developing minimal state structures for making democracy work should not be underestimated. Stateless societies and failing governments more frequently characterize the postconflict scenario. Such countries present formidable obstacles to achieving almost any objective relating to the public good. Developmental strategies should begin with full awareness of the origins of government and the consequences of its absence for human societies.

In environments of social precariousness and political uncertainty, postconflict elections are often expected to produce extraordinary results for institution building and the public good. From a moral political perspective, the stakes nowadays are very high. These case studies are stories of the role played by peace agreements and ensuing multiparty elections in establishing the minimal institutions needed for democratic rule. This is all taking place in a time of challenged internationalism, when the need for peace between peoples and respect for human rights competes with the principle of national sovereignty.

Lessons for the International Community

What lessons has the international community learned about the conditions and circumstances essential for launching free and fair elections?

- Peace, security, and political trust are the main requirements for the effective conduct of elections, and elections are necessary for a working democracy. Therefore, a first priority of the international community should be to work to advance those requirements. Former combatants must effectively demobilize and dis-

The political will for elections must exist among contenders, whether emerging from honest democratic convictions, a fear of the adversary, or as a matter of convenience.

arm before elections can be held. International actors should give special consideration to setting an election date, as well as developing adequate legal, administrative, and technical infrastructures for elections.

- Ownership of elections by former combatants should be ensured. The political will for elections must exist among contenders, whether emerging from honest democratic convictions, a fear of the adversary, or as a matter of convenience. The risk of not joining or of withdrawing must be minimized. Even with elections being decided as merely an exit strategy to protracted warfare, they will not pay

off if a high risk exists of reverting to civil war or of generating a power vacuum.

- Ensuring that a minimum state administration is in place throughout the territory is a decisive factor for the proper conduct of the entire election operation. Administrative responsibilities include voter registration, access for campaign activities, and the polling itself under conditions of security and freedom of choice.
- Assisting in the production of a legal framework should emphasize all-inclusiveness of eligible voters as well as political parties and candidates. Political contenders should reach a consensus on major electoral issues. In this respect, certain initiatives by elites should be viewed with suspicion as unfavorable to free and transparent elections. Such initiatives might take the form of shortening deadlines on voter registration, making registration requirements burdensome for certain populations, limiting the number of political parties, or toughening requirements for party registration (e.g., requiring financial deposits or a large number of supporting signatures).
- An independent electoral authority is needed. It must be inclusive, or at least open to the voice of political contenders. The formulas for inclusiveness vary greatly depending on countries and political cultures. They

range from electoral commissions staffed by political parties to a body composed of nonpolitical personnel to a mix of both. Help in developing an electoral administration should concentrate on enhancing its capacity for neutrality and professionalism, no matter how the EMB is staffed.

- Every effort should be made to ensure that whatever progress at inclusiveness was made for the inaugural elections is not later limited by shallow, inefficient, or corrupt electoral authorities. Just as voter and party registration create the gateway for enfranchisement and freedom of choice, so do voting and counting procedures create access to actual citizen representation. If an internationally staffed EMB is established, transfer to domestic electoral authorities should be started as soon as possible to ensure that early local capacity is built and that the high costs of internationally held elections are reduced.
- Voter registration is the most expensive single item in an electoral budget. Therefore, building up of initial voter registries should be planned with a long-term perspective to facilitate further updating. This will have three benefits: it will avert the need to start from scratch at future elections, improve the quality of voter lists, and make voter registration more cost effective (López-Pintor 2000, 126).
- Regarding logistics and administration, local capacity to efficiently conduct elections should not be underestimated. Where basic require-

ments for security and political trust are met, material and procedural aspects of elections should, to the extent possible, be left to local agents. Domestic actors should depend as much as possible on local resources, both material and administrative. The international community should put greater emphasis on ensuring the political and security conditions for freedom than on the material arrangements for elections.

- Smaller, longer term, strategically minded international observer missions are proving more effective as a support tool for democratization than former grand-style observers being deployed on polling days (López-Pintor 1997, 59). International observers better contribute to transparency and fairness by broadening the scope of observation, both in time (before, during, and after polling day) and in the realm of observation. That is, they should assess the legal framework, the conduct of voter registration, campaign activities and expenditures, access to media, the polling operation, counting and announcement of results, and the system of complaints adjudication.
- International support for domestic monitors will further ensure the democratic quality of elections. They have proved to play an important role in ensuring transparency and confidence in the electoral process, and to be able to follow up the democratic process after elections.

What factors should be considered in determining the timing of elections?

- Wherever a preexisting electoral calendar is constitutionally set, the logical and easier path is to stick to the schedule rather than reopen the constitutional debate at a time when so many other issues are at stake between government and opposition.
- Where an election calendar is not specified (which is the case in most postconflict scenarios), election timing may come to the forefront of political concerns. Here international actors should pay special attention to considerations of security, state building, and national reconstruction. Incumbent governments will generally urge delay, while the oppositions will press for earlier elections. Generally, the international community more often supports early elections.
- After the pros and cons of early elections have been considered, the conclusion may be that early elections are inadvisable unless minimum security and administrative conditions exist, including an effective ceasefire, widespread demobilization and disarmament of former belligerents, access throughout the territory, participation by all relevant political forces, and a neutral electoral administration—national or international—in place. The prospects for democracy are gloomy when elections are held before effective demobilization and disarmament have taken place. In this respect, the failed cases of Angola in 1992, Cambodia in 1993, and Liberia in 1997 are illustrative in different degrees.

- If the political situation allows, elections could be delayed until a country has substantially recovered from war damages and its basic infrastructure has been rebuilt. This conclusion stems more from actual political experience than from considerations of idealism. It is fair to wonder: Under what authority can the immediate postwar period realistically be managed and national reconstruction better ensured? What kind of legitimate authority is needed and can be made effective from an international perspective and with the given available resources? Often no more feasible option exists than to include an early elected government in the peace agreements.
- The frequency with which first elections are postponed seems to demonstrate that pressures are higher for early elections at the time when the accords are signed than those reality will later allow. In this respect, it is worth remembering that wherever national reconstruction is at stake, the main objective of elections is not an orderly transfer of power and the formation of majority government—as in stable democracies. Rather, it is to establish a new regime in which all political forces are represented and a consensus reached on some basic political and economic objectives. Elections are meant as a conciliatory mechanism unto themselves. They normally lead to the drafting of a constitution and to further negotiation over security and socioeconomic policies.
- Even in cases where electoral results were not accepted by the losing

party, a reasonably fair voting regime ushered in a new political scenario. Nothing remains the same once the voice of the people has been heard and it is known how much popular support each political group can muster. Political rhetoric as a rationale for action is compelled to change; the use of force loses its justifying power.

What criteria should be used for determining whether to hold national elections followed by municipal or regional elections, or vice versa?

- There is no conclusive evidence on whether holding one type of election ahead of the other better serves the overarching goals of peace, reconciliation, and democracy. But the fact is that local elections are seldom held before general elections. That goes against the conventional wisdom, which holds that by beginning with local elections, democratic practice may proceed more smoothly than by going in the opposite direction. Everything indicates that the elites perceive local elections as more politically sensitive and risky than national elections.
- The main guideline on which election to hold first is that priority should be given to the leading political objectives of peace and reconciliation. Maintaining political stability, or the equilibrium obtained by signing a peace agreement, may also be important for a decision. That is especially the case if some ground testing of potential participants is deemed necessary.

What lessons can be learned from experience providing different types of assistance to support postconflict elections?

- Electoral assistance has been important, if not crucial, for the conduct of postconflict elections.
- In the specific area of election administration, international aid has proven generally effective and should be maintained in varying degrees depending on progress on sustainability. In a recent global survey on structuring and functioning of EMBs, the author concludes that

intervention by the international community has generally been considered effective in helping both the democratization process and the establishment of international management bodies. In some of the new democracies, the impact of technical and financial international assistance on the organization of elections has been decisive. Generally, election management bodies have improved both organizationally and operationally. Over time, their dependence on administrative, management and operational support from the international community decreases, although they will continue to need technical advice and financial assistance. (López-Pintor 2000, 120–21)

- In assisting with the legal framework, international actors should urge that some main elements of the electoral system be embedded in the constitution once the main contenders have reached a consensus. This refers to the nature and composition of the EMBs (independent? party staffed? nonpartisan?) and the formula for

representation (proportional, majority, quotas for women, ethnic minorities?). The aim is to preserve loyalty to the spirit of the accords, end the conflict, and deter easy legal reforms by incumbents.

- Donors should avoid overdoing assistance, especially financial aid to voter registration and the voting operation. For one thing, when political mistrust is not overwhelming, many aspects of the voting operation (e.g., voting facilities, voting materials, polling officers) can be covered with available local resources. For another, setting a precedent of expensive elections may jeopardize the conduct of future elections at reasonable cost. The lesson holds whether the EMB is partly or totally staffed by internationals.
- On the role of international observers, longer term, intensive missions have proven more effective than shorter term, extensive ones by covering the entire electoral process, starting with voter and candidate registration.
- Whatever action can promote confidence building among contenders will contribute to the quality of elections, including cost effectiveness. In addition to their peacekeeping function, international actors can contribute significantly to the election and democratization processes, especially when abundant personnel and matériel are deployed in the country over a lengthy period. In the first place, they may act as go-betweens and information channels between the belligerents, and also between armed political leaders and civilians—now potential voters. Second, they can provide an

atmosphere of greater security and confidence of the civilian population. As limited and imperfect as successes in this area may seem, one should not underestimate the impact of aid programs in civic mobilization and education, organization of electoral systems, and the followup of the process in all of its phases.

What steps can be taken to reduce the overall cost to the international community of holding postconflict elections?

- Coordination among donors, government officials, and electoral authorities and political parties beginning in advance of the elections will not only increase confidence in the political process but also prove cost effective by improving the planning capacity of the different actors (López-Pintor 2000, 125).
- Integrated strategic, management, and operational planning is an important cost-reduction tool (López-Pintor 2000, 128) that can be used to determine the type and scope of international aid to transitional governments and electoral authorities. Often, however, such strategic and operational planning is done late due to conflict conditions.
- Voter registration is the most expensive item of an electoral budget. Therefore, basic citizen identification (when it is required before voter registration) as well as registration procedures should be approached with a long-term perspective in order to provide for a basis for sustainable voter lists. Permanent registries promote both transparency and cost effectiveness, particularly when they

are periodically updated without obliging voters to reregister (López-Pintor 2000, 126). This is not always easy when there are large displaced populations, people are hard to identify, or there is external voting (which in itself deserves special attention).

- Helping develop a professional electoral administration with a minimum of permanent staff has proved cost effective (López-Pintor 2000, 128).
- Locally produced ballot papers and other voting materials, if politically acceptable, result in cost savings (López-Pintor 2000, 129). This depends greatly on the level of political confidence. Acceptability, in turn, hinges largely on getting all the potential contenders on board and duly informed and treated by the EMB and international actors. Costly materials also set a bad precedent for future elections.

What steps can the international community take to minimize the effects of postconflict elections on ethnic polarization?

- Postconflict elections may have a widening effect on existing ethnic divisions, if only by crystallizing ethnic polarization at the ballot box. This should not be seen as just a negative output of elections but as a reflection at the ballot box of prevailing social reality. Removing obstacles to participation and interethnic reconciliation should include the following actions, viewed as an integrated approach:
 - *Institute constitutional and legal provisions, including power-sharing arrangements, all-inclusive formulas of representation, interethnic*

composition of the EMB, use of minority languages in voting procedures and civic education, and facilitation of voter and candidate registration, including external registration and voting.

- *Support civic education campaigns* encouraging participation of all communities.
- *Develop a partnership relation* between international and national actors, especially political parties. This is of utmost importance for national reconciliation. Strive to inform political parties of all-important political decisions and include them in the decisionmaking process of the electoral authority at all levels. An atmosphere lacking in confidence is not beneficial to interethnic reconciliation. It further alienates each group from the power nucleus where key decisions are made.
- *Endeavor to eliminate hate speech* through democratic media development projects and media monitoring with standard methodologies. Publicize the results. Internet support and monitoring also has potential as a strategy to eliminate hate, as do the websites of different international missions or democracy-related projects.

What steps can be taken to sustain the physical and institutional infrastructure for holding postconflict elections?

- At the institutional level, legally define the EMB, preferably in constitutions, as an independent permanent institution (at least at the central level). Electoral authorities should

be independent from the executive branch, and they should be given secure funding, normally from the nation's consolidated budget. Nomination and appointment procedures to the EMB should guarantee the basic stability of the organization.

- At a more technical level, advocate and assist a professional staff under civil service protection. This is the best way to preserve the learning of electoral technologies over time. A civil service approach to electoral administration offers the safeguard of institutional memory. Politically appointed election commissioners may come and go, but the professional staff remains.
- When the electoral administration is internationally staffed, either totally or partly, do not delay the transfer of responsibilities to a national authority beyond the minimum necessary after the first elections. This serves to ensure or enhance sustainability (technical, financial, and political), ownership by locals, and cost effectiveness.
- Address financial aid to specific needs of the electoral process on which external monitoring and audit can be conducted.
- As far as political mistrust allows, avoid procuring expensive electoral materials. Rather than "fraud-safe" items, the main guarantees for genuine democratic elections should be a minimum of trust among contenders and their ability to check on one another's electoral procedures. An honest EMB is also important.

- Electoral observer missions, both domestic and international, are basically confidence-building resources. As far as public confidence in the democratic process strengthens and a robust public opinion consolidates, the election monitoring functions will logically be left to party and candidate representatives from the national EMB down to the polling stations.

What steps can be taken to promote the beneficial effects of postconflict elections on the democratization process?

- In a single sentence, the main lesson learned would be to intensify the politics and trust the local technical capabilities.
- On the political front, an early start to peacekeeping will not only demonstrate sensitivity to the human conditions of the populations affected by war, but will also allow for buying precious time for reconciliation building (von Hippel 2000, 174).
- In devising international aid policy and programs, give more attention to internal power relations and interest articulation. This will be instrumental in building democracy. Considerations on more immediate political stability matter, but democracy can be consolidated in the long term only on a solid local basis (Carothers 1999, 344-46; Ottaway and Carothers 2000, 308-10).
- Relations with local actors should go beyond confidence building for just owning the elections. International efforts at postconflict elections should make the connection with broader issues of human rights, democratic institutional development, and

socioeconomic policies. Current and future trade, international aid, and investment relations can all affect these areas. Becoming sensitive to a broader range of issues, including economic development (Carothers 1999, 105–08). A *trilateral approach* to rebuilding collapsed states should be taken, encompassing security, civil society and democracy, and international support for economic development (von Hippel 2000, 193).

- On the technical side, trusting local capacities in election management will quickly pay off in both institution building and cost effectiveness—provided there is sufficient political confidence among contenders. Conducting elections is not difficult to learn, and some previous experience already existed in practically all countries going through peacekeeping and multiparty elections. There are situations in which insufficient reliance on well-established local capabilities will generate unnecessarily high costs and even electoral mismanagement.

About the Author

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Annex I. International Electoral Assistance in Postconflict Societies

Recent and Current Involvement by Different Agencies									
COUNTRY	U.S.AGENCIES			UN SYSTEM			EUROPEAN UNION		GERMAN FOUNDATIONS
	USAID CURRENTLY RUNNING DEMOCRACY PROGRAM	NDI OFFICE CURRENTLY IN COUNTRY	IFES CURRENTLY RUNNING PROGRAM	PEACE-KEEPING OPERATION	OBSERVER MISSION	TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE	RECENT OBSERVER MISSION	CURRENT DEMOCRACY ASSISTANCE PROGRAM	CURRENT PROGRAMS
ANGOLA	•	•		•	•	•		•	• E
MOZAMBIQUE	•	•		•	•	•	•	•	+
LIBERIA		•	•	•	•	•	•	•	
LIERRA LEONE	•	•	•	•	•	•		•	
ETHIOPIA	•					•		•	• E
NICARAGUA	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	+ E
EL SALVADOR	•		•	•	•	•		•	• E
GUATEMALA	•	•				•	•	•	+
HAITI	•	•	•	•	•	•		•	
CAMBODIA	•	•		•	•	•	•	•	• A
EAST TIMOR	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	
BOSNIA-HERZEGOVIA	•	•	•	•		•		•	+
KOSOVO	•	•	•	•		•		•	
WEST BANK GAZA	•	•	•			•	•	•	+

Note: German foundations, + both foundations (Konrad Adenauer and Friedrich Ebert) with current programs in the country; • only one foundation currently present in the field; A for Adenauer and E for Ebert.

Source: López-Pintor based on reports and websites of the different agencies.

Annex 2. Cost Variation Between Elections (in US\$)

Transitional Elections		Postconflict Elections	
<u>Election</u>	<u>Cost</u>	<u>Election</u>	<u>Cost</u>
Lesotho 1998	7.53	Cambodia 1993	56.05
Mexico 1997	6.54	Mozambique 1994	12.25
Russia 1995	8.76	Angola 1992	27.91
Bosnia 1996	9.42	Gaza-West Bank 1996	10.21
Kosovo 2001	24.55		

Source: López-Pintor (2000, 73–75). Figures on Kosovo are from IFES. All amounts are adjusted (by IFES) to 2001 dollars using consumer price index inflation rates (calculated by the Minneapolis Federal Reserve Bank).

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IDEA

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http://www.kas.de/stiftung/wir_ueber_uns/6webseite.html

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