

Introduction: Postconflict Peacebuilding and Democratization



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Scholars and practitioners have recently given increased attention to the intersection of two concepts: postconflict peacebuilding and democratization or, more broadly, governance. Several factors contribute to this development. First, postconflict peacebuilding itself has become an important concept within international security. The field of peacekeeping, long concerned chiefly with reaching and maintaining durable peace agreements, now embraces the need to address a complex range of challenges in war-torn societies: preventing future armed conflict, redressing past human rights abuses, building effective state institutions, (re)creating a social fabric, and fostering a healthy civil society.¹ Although some question its utility as a concept, *peacebuilding* has firmly entered the lexicon of peace and security studies.

Second, good governance is increasingly seen as an important concept in postconflict reconstruction. During the 1990s, multilateral and bilateral development agencies brought governance into their philosophy and programs on economic development. Security specialists have followed that trend, embracing the link between good governance and durable peace. International actors have added good governance to a postconflict agenda that has historically focused on ensuring immediate military security and regenerating the economy. Preventing future conflicts is not solely a matter of keeping those with guns from using them, but of establishing accountable, transparent, and participatory systems of authority. As United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) administrator Mark Malloch Brown states in his article “Democratic Governance: Toward a Framework for Sustainable Peace,” democratic governance is “vital not just for ensuring sustainable development, but also for sustaining peace within societies.”

Third, sound governance, at least in its political dimension, is increasingly identified with some form of democracy.² Although controversy surrounds definitions, in this special issue governance refers to the exercise of political, economic, and social authority in a society.³

Democracy, used in these articles to mean free and fair electoral competition with minimal civil rights guarantees, is now widely viewed as the only acceptable form of national-level political governance.⁴

As Gregory H. Fox demonstrates in his article “International Law and the Entitlement to Democracy After War,” minimal elements of democracy are part of international legal obligations, and norms of democracy permeate the UN system as well as regional intergovernmental organizations. European and U.S. democracy-promotion programs have grown tremendously in the past decade, and “democratic governance” now receives most of the UNDP’s core funding, as its administrator notes in this issue. International assistance, especially to countries experiencing some sort of political or military transition, virtually requires the instauration of electoral democracy, even if authoritarian practices and curbs on freedoms persist, and perhaps half of the world’s population lives in political systems that are not meaningfully democratic. Indeed, many such systems are deemed legitimate by the populations living within them. The “third wave” has its limitations.⁵

However, the increasing convergence in practice of these two subfields—peacebuilding and democratization—has only recently been accompanied by concentrated attempts by the scholars and practitioners of each to address one another. The postconflict peacebuilding community and the democratization communities have enjoyed remarkably little dialogue. The recent peacebuilding literature, for instance, has not engaged some of the difficult questions posed by research on democratization and governance. Much of that research emphasizes structural preconditions for statehood and democracy that fall beyond the short-term control of policymakers. More importantly, scholars and policymakers increasingly recognize that democratization, especially untimely elections, have sometimes sparked wars and genocide.⁶ Under what circumstances do postwar elections deepen hostilities and undermine good governance? Peacebuilding analysts and actors have not adequately addressed this question.

If the peacebuilding literature has not grappled with the field of democratization and governance, democratization theorists have not sufficiently examined the particularities of postconflict societies and polities.⁷ Some structuralists seem too pessimistic. Where states and societies experience great disruption, perhaps international actors and elites can forge new institutional arrangements more easily than in past centuries. Some democratization theorists have emphasized the agency of domestic actors during regime transitions from authoritarianism, underplaying the enhanced opportunities for international actors.⁸ The incentives afforded by globalization and by the increased leverage of international

organizations may permit the bypassing of historically prescribed steps in state formation and democratization.

At the same time, some democratization theorists may be too optimistic, and postconflict settings may present insurmountable challenges. Most of the literature on democratization, civil society, and participation draws on European and Latin American experiences rather than on the circumstances in African and Asian societies, where many recent peace operations have occurred. Assumptions about formal organizations or even the concepts of *state* and *war* may have little relevance.⁹ Despite notable successes, many so-called successful peace processes—for instance, Bosnia, Cambodia, Haiti, and Guatemala—have not led to what may be called stable democracies. Problems of violent crime, authoritarian rulers, social inequity, and marginalization have rebounded negatively on local populations' perception of new polities. These experiences suggest revisiting conceptual frameworks.

The deficient dialogue between peacebuilding and democratization specialists led a group of scholars at Brown University's Watson Institute for International Studies to organize a conference in April 2002. "State of the art" theorizing about democratization and local governance, on the one hand, and postconflict reconstruction and peacebuilding, on the other, constituted the agenda. The conference addressed several main questions: What is the current state of thinking about how to foster good governance in postconflict societies? How can we improve both the concepts and actions of international and national actors involved in postconflict peacebuilding? Can we identify innovative ways beyond Western models of democracy that enhance local participation in postconflict governance? More broadly, what is the future research agenda for issues of governance and local participation in war-torn societies?

With the exception of the three "Global Insights" articles introducing the volume and of Michèle Griffin's article, "The Helmet and the Hoe: Linkages Between United Nations Development Assistance and Conflict Management," the contributions to this special issue were prepared for that conference. All four of the former contributions add the informed voices of UN practitioners to the more academic treatments of the material. UNDP administrator Malloch Brown starts off this special issue pointedly explaining why democratic governance is crucial for development and postconflict reconstruction, acknowledging the need to adapt forms of democratic governance to local imperatives. Marrack Goulding's article, "Deliverance from Evil," makes a powerful argument for the sorts of international interventions that often lead to postconflict UN missions. He argues for wider interventions to stop human rights

atrocities, even while recognizing that developing countries that are most often the objects of such interventions see a double standard behind the major powers' decisions to intervene. In her article, "Afghanistan: The Way Forward," Graciana del Castillo shows the relevance of debates over governance and postwar reconstruction for current decisionmakers in Afghanistan.

Nancy Bermeo's article "What the Democratization Literature Says—or Doesn't Say—About Postwar Democratization," takes an overdue look at war's role in the founding of democracies worldwide, examining what democratization theory says about postwar situations, including challenging African cases. As guest editors for this issue, we draw on the conference discussions and other developments to explore the intersections and gaps between the fields of postconflict peacebuilding and democratization and governance. We suggest some future research directions. Peter Uvin and Charles Mironko in "Western and Local Approaches to Justice in Rwanda," show how Western concepts of justice have not worked well in that country, and how a local-level practice known as *gacaca* seems to offer an attractive and widely accepted means of simultaneous achieving justice and reconciliation. Their article illustrates the need to reflect upon how traditional forms of justice and governance may be integrated with liberal forms of democratic governance in war-torn societies.

Griffin offers an account of how the dual, historically separate goals of the UN system—peace and development—have converged in concept and in practice over the past decade. She illustrates the operational links between international peace and development in recent UN postconflict peacebuilding missions. Fox shows how core elements of the "democratic entitlement" are enshrined in international law. He provides a rationale for democracy promotion in postconflict societies and suggests a corrective for what he views as excessively narrow and negative assessments of UN efforts to foster Western models of democracy.

Finally, two reviews consider different literatures on conflict and peacebuilding. Elisabeth Jean Wood in "Civil Wars: What We Don't Know," provides a detailed analysis of recent work on the origins and termination of civil wars, arguing for cross-regional, comparative case studies to supplement burgeoning quantitative research. Melissa Labonte in "Dimensions of Postconflict Peacebuilding and Democratization," reviews six recent books on peacebuilding and democratization, exploring concrete instances of the intersection of the two concepts that undergird this special issue.

As guest editors, we are grateful for the contributions, collaboration, and time of the journal's editors in preparing this special issue of

Global Governance. It mixes scholarly contributions from an academic conference with other contributions related to the themes of the conference. We hope that our readers find it a useful mix that sheds light on the challenges of democratic governance in postconflict societies. 🌐

Notes

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1. Stephen John Stedman, Donald Rothchild, and Elizabeth M. Cousens, *Ending Civil Wars: The Implementation of Peace Agreements* (Boulder: Lynne Rienner, 2002); special issue, "Recovering from Civil Conflict: Reconciliation, Peace and Development," *International Peacekeeping* 9, no. 2 (summer 2002).

2. Albrecht Schnabel, "Peacebuilding and Democratization," in Amin Saikal and Albrecht Schnabel, eds., *Democratization in the Middle East* (Tokyo: United Nations University Press, 2003); Timothy D. Sisk, "Democratization and Peacebuilding: Perils and Promises," in Chester A. Crocker, Fen Osler Hampson, and Pamela Aall, eds., *Turbulent Peace* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Institute of Peace, 2001), pp. 785–800.

3. This definition draws on the UN Development Programme, "Good Governance and Sustainable Human Development" (New York: UNDP, 1997), p. 2. It diverges slightly from definitions that emphasize conflict management, such as William Zartman, *Governance as Conflict Management: Politics and Violence in West Africa* (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution, 1997).

4. Our contributors all draw on a modified Schumpeterian definition of democracy widely used in political science. The specific features are defined in our article "On Democratization and Peacebuilding" in this issue.

5. Samuel P. Huntington, *The Third Wave: Democratization in the Late Twentieth Century* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1991).

6. See especially Jack Snyder, *From Voting to Violence: Democratization and Nationalist Conflict* (New York: Norton, 2000).

7. "Democratization" here refers to transitions from one regime type toward democracy.

8. Guillermo O'Donnell, Philippe C. Schmitter, and Laurence Whitehead, *Transitions from Authoritarian Regimes* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1986).

9. Stephen Ellis, "Cautions on Macro-Political Peacebuilding," paper presented at the conference "Democracy After War? State-of-the-Art Thinking About Governance and Peacebuilding," held at the Watson Institute for International Studies, Brown University, Providence, R.I., April 2002.

