Democratization and human security

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Preface

This Fast Talk Team report draws upon the findings of an expert consultative process conducted by the Human Security Research and Outreach Program, supported by the Human Security Policy Division (GHS) of the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade (DFAIT). The Fast Talk Team concept was developed to provide DFAIT with a timely and flexible means to access high quality policy-relevant research with the objective of:

- generating perspectives on new or emerging issues;
- refreshing thinking on existing issues; or
- enhancing the effectiveness of conferences and workshops by developing a pre-conference dialogue which helps to frame issues, focus discussion, and build expert consensus.

Fast Talk Teams bring together officials seeking policy development input with prominent Canadian and international experts through a three-stage consultation process that can be completed in a time frame as short as 1-2 weeks. First, 4-6 experts are identified and asked to provide short 3-5 page written responses by e-mail to specific policy questions developed by DFAIT officials. Secondly, the officials and experts review the responses and participate in a 2-3 hour conference call to discuss them. Finally, a report summarizing the key findings of the written submissions and the conference call discussion is provided to all Fast Talk Team members for final comment and then circulated to officials.

The purpose of Fast Talk Teams is to generate policy-relevant research. They do not attempt to establish new policies for DFAIT or the Government of Canada. **Thus, the views and positions provided by this paper are solely those of the contributors to this research project and are not intended to reflect the views and positions of DFAIT or the Government of Canada.**

The Human Security Policy Division would like thank the Fast Talk Team leader, Jeff Senior, DFAIT and Canadian International Development Agency colleagues, as well as the expert participants for their contributions to this Fast Talk Team effort.

Expert participants

Seven experts participated in the March 2006 Fast Talk:

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Executive summary

The promotion of democratic institutions and values has become an integral part of efforts to prevent conflict and promote sustainable peace. Yet, the process of undergoing democratic change carries with it the potential to heighten political tensions and aggravate risks to human security. Most contemporary conflict is found within states undergoing political transition, and much of it is organized along ethnic, racial or sectarian lines. Democratic institutions or practices, such as free speech, political parties and elections, can be used in ways that might pacify -- but that might also intensify and further entrench – deeply-rooted differences along such lines.

In view of the considerable emphasis placed on democratization in pre- and post-conflict environments, with its inherent potential to ameliorate or aggravate threats to human security, the Human Security Policy Division (GHS) at the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade (DFAIT) conducted a Fast Talk to probe some of the key questions surrounding this issue. What do we need to understand better about democratization in order to lessen the prospects for political violence and enhance human security? Where can countries like Canada add value in efforts to promote democracy abroad? What should we aim to accomplish multilaterally and bilaterally?

Fast Talk results

The first segment of this exercise focussed on the current state of knowledge about democratization, including its relation to conflict; and on some of the geographic and thematic areas in which Canada might have a greater value-added role to play in promoting democracy abroad. Highlights include the following:

- Democratization is seen as an integral part of comprehensive efforts to prevent conflict and build sustainable peace. However, our knowledge of how best to combine two broad agendas – democracy assistance, on one hand, and conflict prevention/resolution, on the other – is generally underdeveloped, and the two agendas are occasionally pursued at cross-purposes.

- The sequencing of democratic reforms is crucial to success and to mitigating prospects for political violence. It is also a subject about which insufficient empirical work has been done. Although decisions concerning sequencing are highly context-specific, and need to involve national stakeholders, a wider set of cases might be studied, with a view

to extracting some general lessons about the sequencing of democratic reforms in different contexts. Such work could be of use not only to national actors, but also to regional or multilateral bodies such as the UN Peacebuilding Commission, among others.

- There are options for tempering aspects of the political process which can assist in reducing zero-sum outcomes, thereby dampening incentives for spoiler violence and enhancing safeguards for human security. However, more could be done to sharpen our understanding of the nexus between democratic processes and conflict in a variety of cases. The transition of rebel groups into political parties is a challenge faced by policy makers and practitioners alike. The anticipation and mitigation of prospects for electoral violence is another example of an area in which more work could be done.

- For democratic assistance to be successful and a stabilizing influence, it must aim to facilitate an indigenous agenda for political change. It should not be about (nor be seen to be about) the export of a pre-packaged 'democratic product', or the imposition of foreign models.

- **Canada** is well-perceived as a donor and is well-placed to assist democratic reform abroad for the reason (among others) that Canada is not seen to carry a hidden agenda in assisting change which is often politically sensitive in nature.

- Expertise on minority rights, tolerance, federal design, anti-corruption, fiscal policy and social justice are among the thematic areas in which Canada may have some particular value-added experience to offer. Geographically, parts of Latin America, Africa and Europe are areas on which Canada may wish to concentrate.

- Political leadership and party training has not been a traditional area of focus for Canada, despite its importance within the spectrum of democratization activities. The Canadian political party system may have some strengths to offer in this regard.

A second part of the exercise explored the strengths and weaknesses of different channels (international and regional, multilateral and bilateral) through which democratic assistance can be directed, along with the different ways in which democratic norms can take root and flourish. Results include the following:

- UN technical assistance, peace operations, and reporting on human development are key examples of the practical contributions the UN makes to the promotion of democracy. New opportunities to advance democratic practices will arise in the context of other UN activities, including the Human Rights Council, the Peacebuilding Commission, and the UN Democracy Fund.

- Though the UN has the potential to confer the widest sense of legitimacy on the promotion of democracy, it is politically constrained with respect to achieving broader consensus on democratic principles and standards by virtue of its membership.

- The EU represents the strongest example of the expansion of democratic norms and practices, albeit the example appears *sui generis*. However, more work could be done to develop regional reporting and monitoring, reactions to non-compliance, and the use of incentives and sanctions to encourage democratic reform.

- A number of regional and cross-regional organizations have advanced substantially in their commitment to democratic principles, though their different histories, capacities and mandates offer different possibilities for engagement on the part of Canada and others.

- The Commonwealth, the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), the Organization of American States (OAS), the African Union (AU), the Southern African Development Community (SADC), and the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) are among the organizations which represent the most promising opportunities for Canada to champion particular themes or countries, and to advance multilateral/regional models of democracy.

- Democracy at the local level is often neglected and could form a more important focal point in regional efforts to confront human security challenges in urban settings.

Final report

This final report summarizes some of the key ideas contained in the DFAIT background paper for the session, the written submissions of our experts, and in the subsequent conference call.

Democratization and conflict

What do we need to understand better about democratization and the linkages between conflict and democracy?

Since 1990, the promotion of democracy has become an explicit focus of aid and foreign policy to an extent that was largely unforeseeable prior to the end of the Cold War. The key objectives in promoting democratic governance are normally of two kinds. In the first instance, democratic values and institutions are seen as means to achieve desirable political or economic ends, such as security (for states and individuals), peace, development and prosperity. Secondly, some of the core values of liberal democracy are taken to have intrinsic merit and to be universal in scope, particularly insofar as liberal democratic systems of governance are predicated upon protection, participation, and accountability as defining elements of the relationship between states and individuals.

A number of premises formed the basic parameters of this Fast Talk session:

- The existence of mature, stable democracies is normally taken to be desirable from the standpoint of enhancing prospects for international peace and security. At the same time, the **process** of instituting democratic reforms over time with a view to arriving at a more stable, mature democratic form of government is challenging, and involves important choices about the design of democratic institutions and the sequencing of assistance, among others.

- Democratization can have the potential to exacerbate, as well as to ameliorate, political tensions in particular societies. As several panellists suggested:

    Democratization has both conflict-mitigating and conflict-inducing capacities, but the latter are often the first to emerge for obvious reasons. The process involves deep changes in the structure of power and in the relationship between the state

and its citizens. Those likely to lose their power and their privileges will rarely surrender without some resistance.

Democratization creates opportunities for human security crises. From Algeria in 1992 to Iraq in 2006, democratization (whether home-grown or imposed) can be accompanied by escalating political violence. Political transitions are inherently destabilizing and involve deep-seated social change. The uncertainty that change unleashes stokes fears and contributes to power-at-all-cost mentalities.

Most contemporary conflict is found within states undergoing political transition, and much of it is organized along ethnic, racial, cultural, or sectarian lines. Democratic institutions or practices, such as free speech, political parties and elections, can be used in ways that might intensify, or pacify, deeply-rooted differences along such lines.

- Notwithstanding the potential for democratization to exacerbate political tensions, it is normally taken to be an integral part of sustainable, long-term approaches to conflict prevention and peacebuilding.

The failure to put in place mechanisms and processes that allow for the peaceful resolution of the competition for power, and the inclusion of the population in providing the basis for the authority and legitimacy of government, only increases the potential of reverting to violence as a means to achieving goals. The failure to support democratic processes, relying instead on outside or only on elite-oriented deal making, sets a stage for instability and undermines human security in the longer term.

In the words of one contributor, democratization can create a series of temporal dilemmas. Democratic outcomes are desirable and seen as one of the surest ways to enhance long-term prospects for sustainable peace. At the same time, democratization may, in the short term, be associated with elevated levels of political tension and risks to human security. One of the key challenges is, then, to develop a keener sense of how to promote democratic institutions and practices in ways that dampen the prospects for political violence.

The state of democratization

What are the main gaps in our knowledge about democratization? Where can Canada add value?

The first segment of the panel's contributions focussed on two broad aspects of the topic: our knowledge of democratization, including its relation to conflict; and some of the geographic and thematic areas in which Canada might have a greater value-added role to play in promoting democracy abroad.

One panellist noted at the outset that democratization may take place in fundamentally different types of states or transitional contexts. Democratic transitions in authoritarian states, such as those in Eastern Europe, present challenges that are often quite distinct from those faced in states emerging from civil war and peace agreements, and from those in which conflict is ongoing.

There was also some preliminary discussion of the notion that democracy requires minimal security, economic, and developmental pre-conditions for it to take root. However, the general view was that democratization should be seen as an **integral and early** part of long-term, sustainable approaches to peacebuilding and conflict resolution. Where democratization is seen as something that should be pursued only after the attainment of other key security, economic or development objectives, significant challenges may arise. One concern in this regard was that delayed democratization could result in the entrenchment of more authoritarian practices that are difficult to undo or reform at a later point in time. As several panellists noted:

> *Following conflict, there are far more cases of countries that settle into a lightly modified authoritarianism than move forward to genuine democratization. In these cases, reasons of national security are readily available to justify limiting democracy. That is why it is critically important to ensure that democratization is a critical element in the national recovery programs right from the start. The argument that national security trumps democracy needs to be challenged.*

> *Democratization processes present a classic temporal dilemma. What might be done in the short term to limit violence, such as prodding the parties into a power- sharing pact, could well undermine the progress of democracy in the longer term by "freezing" power relations, as arguably has been the case in Bosnia.*

It was underscored by a number of panellists that there are options for tempering, modifying or defining parts of the political process in ways that will reduce the incentives for political violence. Pre-election pacts or negotiations were specifically mentioned as one way in which to reduce the zero-sum political outcomes that can be associated with electoral victories or losses; resource- and power-sharing agreements can do likewise. However, it was suggested that our understanding of the relationship between conflict resolution/prevention practices (power-sharing agreements; negotiations with rebel movements; disarmament, demobilization and reintegration, etc.) and democratization efforts (the holding of elections, creation of political parties, public competition for electoral votes, etc.) is generally underdeveloped. As one expert noted:

> *Conflict mitigation, prevention and post-conflict experts, in and out of government, and democracy promotion experts do not sufficiently appreciate the language and nuances of the other area to achieve cross-fertilization and maximum synergies. This is reminiscent of gaps between democracy and human rights promotion a decade ago.*

It was proposed that more could be done to extract lessons learned from a variety of cases in which democratic options were used to dampen prospects for political violence. For instance, more could be done to examine cases in which electoral system design and balance of power arrangements were used to create possibilities for competitors to win stakes in governance, to use legal systems and devolution of powers to ensure minority rights and equitable distribution of state resources, etc..

All panellists addressed the issue of **sequencing**. There was basic agreement that:

- sequencing is an issue that concerns decisions about which liberal democratic institutions and practices to emphasize at which point in time (as distinct from questions about how the promotion of democracy in general should relate to the pursuit of other development, security, and peace objectives);

- such decisions will be highly context-specific;

- their context-specificity makes it difficult to extract generally applicable rules about 'correct' or ideal sequencing in democratic assistance;

- however, general lessons learned about sequencing might be extracted from a wide set of democratization cases (about which there is a lack of empirical studies), and such lessons might be useful points of reference or departure for entities such as the UN Peacebuilding Commission; and,

- the involvement of a broad spectrum of national stakeholders in the process of arriving at sequencing decisions is vital. Sequencing decisions cannot or should not be pictured as the exclusive domain of donors and Special Representatives of the UN Secretary-General. The ownership, and perhaps bargaining, has to be nationally-driven as well.

As distinct from sequencing, the importance of **balance** in democracy assistance, i.e., the relative disbursement of aid to three key types of actors (state institutions, civil society, and political actors), was underscored by several panellists.

> *A democratic state needs to build its credibility. At the same time, citizens need to be empowered to test its trustworthiness. Political parties, parliaments and independent media have a crucial role to play, but again, their potential role should be seen in the given context (in some situations, they can also play a divisive and conflict- inducing role). In places where official institutions are themselves too deeply involved in the conflict, civil society organizations may need a stronger support (e.g. women's organizations in the Balkan wars of the nineties).*

There was general consensus about the nature of democratization and the desired relationship between those providing and receiving assistance. Panellists concurred that democracy should be understood or conceptualized as a **process** composed of a variety of elements both institutional and cultural in nature. Democracy assistance often focuses on political institutions and their reform. However, a vital component is the **political culture** which surrounds and supports institutional reform. It was suggested that our understanding of local political culture and indigenous institutions – ones that can provide the local building blocks for democratic governance – is often underdeveloped. Africa was cited as a specific geographic example, though similar comments might apply equally well to efforts to assist democratic reform in Afghanistan, Iraq, and elsewhere.

> *The assumption has largely been that a liberal democratic culture will simply replace other political cultures if the institutions and processes are in place. This does not appear to be the case, and instead, we see its domestication by other cultures, often undermining democratic institutional arrangements. We need more analyses on political cultures, and we need to discern which of the aspects of those cultures we can use to facilitate democracy and which need to be displaced, as well as appropriate mechanisms for doing so.*

There was also convergence around the idea that democracy should be conceived not simply as a static or ideal end state at which a process of reform is aiming. Conceptually, democracy and democratization permit distinctions of degree. It may therefore be more illuminating to situate states and political practices along a continuum of being more or less democratic (in degrees or shades of 'democratic colour'), as opposed to being pictured as either democratic or undemocratic in a black and white, or binary, fashion. The process of democratic reform should also be seen, as one panellist expressed, as "long, slow, risky, and reversible". It should be rooted in home-grown, internal impulses toward political change; and it should be championed by local change agents, with local ownership of the reform process.

> *Democratization is fundamentally an internal process expressing the needs and desires of people for responsive, accountable government. The challenge is to find better ways for the international community to support those aspirations. We know that democratization is a slow process requiring continuous change and learning, but the common methodologies used in delivering democracy assistance remain short-term, discontinuous, and dependent on outside agencies.*

Panellists also agreed on some of main ingredients of what might be described as the optimal (if not the actual) relationship between external and internal actors – between those that provide democracy assistance and those that receive it. Democracy assistance should be fundamentally aimed at facilitating an indigenous agenda for political change. It should not be about (nor be seen to be about) the export of a pre-packaged 'democratic product,' or the imposition of foreign models. Integrity on the part of those rendering assistance will be central to effectiveness and to a perception of legitimacy on the part of the recipients.

Several of the panellists noted instances in which the reality or perception of democracy promotion was at odds with this ideal, and was damaging for the sense of legitimacy or integrity surrounding foreign assistance. In Africa, the inconsistent application of conditionalities (where security or economic interests might temper the stringency with which they are applied) was cited as one example. The militarization of democratic change in Iraq has also, in the views of several commentators, harmed the image of an endeavour in which the perception of the means employed would appear to have a direct and important bearing on the achievement and legitimacy of the ends sought.

One panellist noted that the question of sustained political will to back reform efforts arises both for recipients and for donors. Donors too often view the

holding of elections as an exit strategy for assistance. Donors naturally look for rapid and measurable results, whereas elections and democratic reform should be seen more broadly as part of a larger and longer strategy for pursuing sustainable peace.

> *There is a virtual consensus, at least at the rhetorical level, that democracy promotion is a long-term, multi-faceted undertaking. Nonetheless, we have seen instances where it is defined in practice as an immediate, unidimensional "magic bullet"... [However,] elections cannot equal an exit strategy.*

There may be quite different **risk levels** that international donors are willing to assume in supporting democratic reform. For outside actors, often the most important – and more immediate – objective in conflict situations is to achieve the cessation of violence. Once open hostilities have ceased or diminished, national actors may be willing to assume greater risks in order to achieve other desirable results, such as justice and democratic change, in contrast with the risk levels of outside actors/donors. Afghanistan was cited as an example in which some of the internal demands for justice have not been met due to insufficient security measures for witness and jury protection.

Suggestions and other ideas

A number of ideas or suggestions arising from (or, in some cases, separate from) the foregoing points were as follows:

- The transition of rebel movements into political parties is a subject about which our knowledge is insufficient, particularly with respect to encouraging and aiding such a transformation, interacting with such groups, and analyzing the extent to which involvement in elections and the political process does (or can), in fact, help to moderate such groups. Examples such as South Africa, where liberation movements transformed successfully into political parties, could offer important lessons, while Mozambique provides a relatively successful example where emergence from civil war pitted former combatants against each other in a political process. In this context, the use of amnesty was mentioned by one commentator as an example of a practice which, in some instances, will be conducive to peace and political reform, while in others can be disruptive from the standpoint of consolidating peace and democracy. The role of other mechanisms such as truth and reconciliation commissions should also be explored in this light.

- There are a number of issues surrounding elections and violence that could be explored more thoroughly, including:

- o the holding of elections in countries/contexts where conflict is ongoing (with analysis of the prospects for achieving negotiated settlements to conflict);
- o the development of predictors or indicators that would assist in anticipating electoral violence;
- o further study of the use of pre-election codes of conduct, pacts, agreements, etc., to foster a non-zero-sum view of the political implications of elections, thereby reducing the incentives to spoiler violence (subject to the important caveat that pre-election pacts have been criticized for entrenching the divisions of war and reducing the meaningfulness of elections when they occur); and,
- o study of the role of civil society organizations in mitigating the potential for violence through violence monitoring (via early warning communication systems, election campaign monitoring, holding discussion forums, building youth campaigns against violence, moderating multi-party consultative committees, etc.).

- It was suggested that Canada might consider establishing a commission to explore democratization. Or, perhaps more modestly, Canada might commission additional research on themes such as those above, and others, where the lessons learned would be relevant to entities such as the UN Peacebuilding Commission and others involved in framing recommendations on peacebuilding and democratization; and to the best practices, principles, and/or norms that organizations may wish to adopt.

Canadian strengths

A number of views were registered on the subject of the extent to which Canada has a unique approach or particular national/democratic strengths in rendering democracy assistance. It was suggested that Canada has a potentially very limited role to play with respect to promoting democratic reform in powerful non-democratic states; other states/contexts will be more conducive or receptive to democratic change assisted by Canada.

One panellist indicated that Canada is not seen so much as unique, but rather as like-minded with other states of similar values and approaches. Norway and Sweden were offered as points of comparison. In very general terms, Canada has a good record (peacekeeping and peacebuilding missions were specifically addressed) and is not perceived to carry a hidden agenda. As one panellist noted:

> *Countries like Canada, Nordic countries, Switzerland, and some others have an important comparative advantage in the fact that*

they are not perceived as global powers or former colonial powers whose democracy assistance may carry with it concealed political or strategic agendas. Hence, their bilateral assistance to democracy building is likely to overcome more easily some suspicions and reluctance.

A number of themes were suggested as potential strengths for Canada, including the linkages between democracy and social welfare/social justice, lessons learned from past peacekeeping missions, as well as federalism, minority rights, anti-corruption, fiscal policy, and policies promoting tolerance. Among the countries identified as ones in which Canada could possibly make a significant contribution to the promotion of democracy were Sudan, Zimbabwe, Haiti, Burundi, Nigeria, Kenya, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Swaziland, Macedonia, Montenegro, Liberia, Nicaragua, countries in the Andean Region (particularly Bolivia), and Sri Lanka.

Panellists expressed several views on the pros and cons of **political party training**. It was noted that Canada had originally opted in the late 1980s not to become involved in this aspect of democratization owing chiefly to concerns about interference in the domestic politics of foreign countries. More consideration, however, is now being given to the thought that Canada should do more in this area (be it through more funding, through leadership training or parliamentary work, or, for instance, through the creation of new Canadian capacities). With respect to the potential development of new Canadian capacities in this area, one panellist suggested that Canada think carefully about the unique strengths of the Canadian political party system, i.e., how best to capitalize on unique Canadian strengths or characteristics that would, were Canada to follow the examples of Germany, the Netherlands, or the USA, make for a new contribution to this kind of work. It was agreed that political party training is essential work within the spectrum of democratization activities (whether undertaken by Canada or others), and that the delivery of assistance in this area places a premium on the integrity, impartiality, and inclusiveness with which the activities are undertaken.

Multilateral and bilateral options

What should we expect of the UN? Is democratization best pursued at the regional level? What is best left to bilateral donors?

A second and shorter segment of the exercise focussed on the promotion of democracy at international and regional levels. In particular, the group was asked to reflect upon some of the strengths and weaknesses of the different channels (international and regional; multilateral and bilateral) through which

democratic assistance can flow or be directed, along with the different ways in which democratic norms can take root and flourish. Oral remarks were limited primarily to the UN and regional organizations.

It is generally agreed that the EU represents the strongest example of the consolidation and expansion of democratic norms and practices through the combination of a variety of political, economic, and security inducements and incentives to democratic change. At the same time, it was noted that the EU experiment is rather *sui generis*, the conditions for which are not easily found elsewhere.

> *This is a hard situation to replicate.... The potential financial rewards for EU membership, with the added seal of legitimacy that comes with it in the international arena, are powerful incentives. No other regional actors can provide quite the same draw. That does not mean there are no incentives at all in other regions, just that the European examples should not necessarily be taken as replicable models for other regions.*

There was convergence around the idea that the UN can play a useful role in supporting democratic reform, for instance, through technical assistance encompassing elections and other aspects of the democratic process, along with peace support and other operations that are involved in state and institution building.

> *In post-war states, the track record of UN transitional administrations in at least moving through an initial, accepted post-war election is remarkably good... Where the UN is most likely to be directly involved in situations of democratization that affect human security are the instances in which multidimensional peace operations are deployed and the organization takes a direct role in democratization: in overseeing electoral management, cobbling together interim governments, providing security for polling, monitoring human rights, and facilitating a stable, sustainable outcome after elections are held. Research has shown that UN actions are more successful in getting through troubled transitions (as in Sierra Leone, Liberia, or Timor), but that transitional periods are too short and do not necessarily lead to stable states.*

A distinction was drawn between the practical (i.e., more operational) and political realms of the UN. Despite the lack of a clear institutional home for democracy promotion at the UN, it was suggested that there were a variety of entry points for advancing democratic reform at the practical level. Specifically mentioned were the newly-created Human Rights Council, the Peacebuilding Commission, the Democracy Fund, the Human Development

Reports produced by the UN Development Program, as well as the UN's management of particular natural/health crises, the negotiation of treaties, etc., each of which would contain different points of intersection with the promotion of democracy. At the operational level, one challenge is that peace support operations often work on the basis of short-term mandates that may not fully account for long-term (e.g. democratization) objectives.

At the same time, the extent to which the promotion of democracy is politically charged and contentious was noted. This includes a lack of clear international political consensus about the extent to which democracy is, in fact, central to core UN purposes, namely, the maintenance of peace and security and the promotion of development and human rights. In this regard, there was some divergence in the views expressed by the panel concerning the extent to which support for democracy might ultimately come to be seen as part of the UN's raison d'être. One panellist noted that pushing democracy too firmly at the UN may serve to erode, for some, the organization's legitimacy and the efficacy of its actions elsewhere:

> *The institutional hesitation is not just about respect for the non-interference tenets of the Charter, but because of the strong and direct association of democracy, and more particularly democratization efforts, with Western liberal democratic states. We can argue that one of the benefits of UN action on democratization is that it might mitigate that impact by virtue of the broader membership of the organization. An alternative outcome, however, might be more likely and more detrimental. An active democratization mandate on the part of the UN might undermine the organization by placing it even more firmly than it already is, in the minds of some, under Western, especially US, influence. As a consequence, the ability to achieve progress in other UN work may be hindered by activity brought about by resistance to UN advocacy of democratization.*

It was noted that the various **regional organizations** have fundamentally different histories, capacities, and mandates, and that there are therefore different scopes for engagement on the part of Canada and others. Given that Canada is a member of many intergovernmental and regional organizations, it was suggested generally that these fora (particularly the UN, Commonwealth, OSCE and OAS) represent opportunities for Canada to champion particular themes or countries, and to advance multilateral/regional models of democracy promotion. Some concern was expressed about recent political tendencies within the OSCE and OAS, with the suggestion that Canada might play a positive role in this regard. SADC and ECOWAS were identified as particular sub-regional organizations in which there would be scope for further work by Canada or others in assisting

with the normative, compliance, and operational aspects of regional democracy promotion.

> *An important imperative for regional organizations is to more effectively tie reactions to non-compliance with global and regional norms (on electoral fraud, for example). Monitoring tends to be episodic (during election events, for example) while often non-compliance with regional standards takes place daily and unfolds over time, such as restrictions on the media.*

It was also suggested that more work could be done to explore the use of incentives and sanctions in achieving greater compliance with regional and international norms, and that Canada might do more to assist the growth of globally-networked regional groups involved in delivering and pressuring for democratic change.

In addition to work at the international, regional and national levels, several panellists stressed that **local-level governance** is critical, and also a commonly neglected point. It is often the local level at which citizens "feel", and form judgments about, their political system and its ability to deliver key goods. This should therefore be a primary area of focus in efforts to improve or re-establish the connection between citizens and their institutions in both pre- and post-conflict settings.

> *Democratization and governance at the local and municipal level are definitely important issues, particularly in the framework of peacebuilding operations. The role of local democracy in a peacebuilding process is multi-fold: first, to provide security to the local population through the establishment of capable, autonomous and legitimate local authorities; second, to ensure that the delivery of humanitarian aid and basic services is based on transparency, accountability, participation by beneficiaries, a direct relationship with local authorities, and a good understanding of local needs; third, to design local government frameworks that are supportive of conflict management; and, finally, to involve civil society and, especially youth, in all peacebuilding and democratization promotion efforts.*

At the same time, it was noted that local-level politics are invariably situated within other political spheres that circumscribe and exercise control over the local level. Thus, engagement at provincial/state and national levels will be necessary as well. It was also noted that differences between urban and rural settings can strongly influence, or be elements of, political crises.

One panellist suggested that there is a good opportunity to bring a regional focus to bear on some of DFAIT's work on democratization and human security in cities. One goal of programming in this area could be to facilitate greater linkages and networking among mayors, local councils, and city-level non-governmental organizations. It was suggested that this is especially important in Africa, where urbanization has concentrated democratization and human security concerns in large, teeming cities. Efforts such as fostering cross-border learning by the United Cities and Local Governments in Africa may be a fruitful regional initiative that would aim to improve professionalism among those at the front lines of both democracy and human security.