Maximum or minimum?

Policy options for democratisation initiatives in UN Peace Operations

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Executive summary

UN peace operations have become more complex since the end of the 1990s. In most operations the UN has been mandated to organise elections and support state-building. Only in very few cases, however, has democratisation been an officially articulated task in Security Council mandates – despite the stress often placed on democratisation in high-level policy documents. This indicates ambiguity within the UN system as to whether the rhetoric on democratisation expressed in key UN reports is in fact meant to be translated into the guiding principles in UN peace operations.

While this ambiguity is problematic, a far more serious concern is the following: The UN has not developed the guidelines and operational strategies necessary for ensuring that 'elections [are supported by] a broader process of democratisation and civil society building that includes effective civilian governance and culture of respect for basic human rights'.[1] Several high-level DPKO representatives interviewed for this report confirmed that no standard procedures have been developed with regard to democratisation.[2]

After conflict, peace agreements usually make concrete provisions for elections, as well as to the establishment and functioning of political institutions. The stipulations in peace agreements often serve as a road map, binding and focusing the UN peace operation to work towards fulfilling the aims embodied within it. The increasing prominence and comprehensiveness of peace agreements is in many ways a highly positive development, since, by letting peace agreements assume a strategic function, local ownership is enhanced. On the other hand, it is important to stress that, by failing to elaborate generic guiding principles, UN operations risk becoming reactive and incapable of quickly developing plans at the field level to ensure that, during a mission and working within the bounds of the peace agreement, broader issues of democratisation can be entrenched in the best possible manner.

Peace agreements could usefully be complemented by rigorous strategising in the UN on how best to capitalise on the provisions of a peace settlement. Moreover, there are some key structural challenges with regard to the UN system's efforts in the sphere of democratisation. The division of labour between the Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO) and the Department of Political Affairs (DPA) is still not entirely clear, and there are some difficulties with the roles these two agencies are intended to fulfil in democratisation efforts.

The deficits in strategising at headquarter level serve to generate a further strategy deficit at country level: there do not seem to be any formal templates or guidance to mission staff on how they can best interact with political actors and generate systematic knowledge on formal and informal political processes in the host country, which may feed into potential democratisation strategies.

[1] Report of the panel on United Nations Peace Operations A/557305-S 2000/809.
[2] Interview UN representative 3 May 2006, Interview UN representative 19 May 2006.

This reports aims at a preliminary stocktaking of UN efforts in the sphere of democratisation, while also highlighting two policy options or 'ideal type' strategies related to democratisation.

One – a *minimum policy option* – holds that the UN should give priority to security in peace operations. Apart from ensuring the formation of a national government through a consultative process or national elections, the UN should postpone wider democratisation efforts. The other – a *maximum policy option* – encourages the UN to seize the momentum that a UN peacebuilding intervention may generate and take comprehensive steps to facilitate democratisation through, among other things: conducting national and local elections; encouraging the introduction of good governance, democratic practices and rule of law in government institutions at central and local levels; and, importantly, invigorating the formal and informal elements of civil society.

The principal argument for a minimum approach is that a political system and a state cannot be created by external actors but should develop from within. By contrast, the underlying assumption of a maximum strategy is that external assistance can create successful conflict transformation and build peace. In a maximum strategy, security and elections are seen as elements of a larger endeavour towards ensuring political transition.

Both policy options carry significant risks.

A minimum approach to democratisation may result in:
- a snowball effect: limited engagement triggers the need for more involvement
- new centralisation and unaccountable leaders
- inability to sustain democratisation
- unfulfilled expectations
- perpetuating the role of civil war actors.

A maximum approach may trigger:
- unintended consequences of deep-seated UN involvement
- excessive demands on time, preparation and UN expertise
- inconsistency between intentions versus planning skills and implementation
- funding shortages
- foregoing UN neutrality in the post-conflict country
- the 'laundry list' syndrome – too many UN agencies seeking a share of funding and involvement in the activities of an operation.

The report also singles out the range of sub-components which may form part of democratisation strategies (see Table A).

Table A: Democratisation sub-components

	Democratisation components	Minimum democratisation	Maximum democratisation
1	**Duration**	Short time-span for democratisation efforts	Long time-span for democratisation efforts
2	**Timing**	Key democratisation activities initiated early in the mission period	Key democratisation activities initiated late in the mission period
3	**Scope**	Efforts to enhance popular political participation at national level through conducting/assisting with a national election	Efforts to enhance popular political participation at local, regional and national levels
4	**Local knowledge**	Few efforts at obtaining in-depth knowledge of social and political organisation and process – formal and informal	Major efforts at obtaining in-depth knowledge of social and political organisation and process – formal and informal
5	**Design of electoral and political system**	Little assistance and limited time allocated for the development of optimal electoral and political systems	Major assistance and extensive time allocated for the development of optimal electoral and political systems
6	**Events versus process**	Assistance focused on elections, seen as a one-time *event* and key output	Assistance focused on elections but also on strengthening media, ensuring representation and participation of vulnerable groups, enhancing democratic functioning of government institutions. Elections form part of an overall and long-term *process* to stimulate democratic awareness in the population, trigger political mobilisation (including party formation) and build a culture of peaceful political solution to conflict and grievance
7	**Financial resources**	Low relative or low absolute levels of spending on democratisation initiatives	High relative or absolute levels of spending on democratisation initiatives

This report presents findings from two recent peace operations: East Timor and Afghanistan. While both operations produced significant achievements, the two cases also represent important failures. In East Timor, UN dominance in the transitional administration and lack of local consultation combined with mostly 'minimal' democratisation strategies seem to have fostered authoritarian dominance by the national party 'Freitlin', rather than entrenching pluralism and participation. In Afghanistan, the principle of ownership and fostering national decision-making was applied in combination with a maximum democratisation strategy. However, this strategy was jeopardised by, among other things, limited international stabilisation assistance, and overly ambitious time-plans and 'projectisation'. In order to mobilise additional funds, the Afghan democratisation process was broken down into individual and time-bound projects with separate and limited budgets. This caused interruptions and delays due to time-consuming resource mobilisation efforts, unclear division of labour among the various UN bodies, breakdown of institutional memory and high staff turnover.

Many of the issues raised in this report may be important for the UN Peacebuilding Commission to consider. In the conclusion we indicate how our findings could be relevant to the work of the Commission.

1. Introduction

UN assistance to post-conflict areas is increasingly focused on peacebuilding.[3] In addition, several ongoing and major reform initiatives of the UN system have been initiated with the aim of enhancing the abilities of the organisation to build lasting peace effectively in war-torn societies[4] Democratisation is an important aspect of peacebuilding. This report synthesises insights on democratisation in UN peace operations and outlines policy options for how the UN can best help democracy to become entrenched in post-conflict societies.

We present one minimum policy option and one maximum policy option. The *minimum policy option* holds that the UN should give priority to security and preserving the peace. Apart from ensuring the formation of a national government through a consultative process or national elections, it should postpone wider democratisation efforts, and instead encourage actors other than those associated with UN secretariat structures to take the lead at later stages.

The *maximum policy option* encourages the UN to seize the momentum that a UN peacebuilding intervention may generate and take comprehensive steps to facilitate democratisation through, among other things: conducting national and local elections; encouraging the introduction of good governance, democratic practices and rule of law in government institutions at central and local levels; and, importantly, invigorating the formal and informal elements of civil society.

An *underlying argument* of this report is that different policy options match differing conditions in host societies. We make two proposals: First, we reiterate the need for the UN to enhance its ability to formulate and adhere to overall strategies and concepts – a recommendation put forth by several reports prior to this one. (See also Call, 2005; Sens, 2004; Tschirgi, 2004.) We recommend more explicit thinking and formulation of visions within the UN system on how the world organisation may promote its democracy agenda in specific contexts. Second, we propose that UN decision-makers be allowed greater flexibility in setting goals and designing components of specific peace operations. In some contexts, an ambitious and broad democratisation agenda, in combination with a compressed timetable, might not always be an optimum strategy.

We have chosen to limit the definition of 'democratisation' to those activities undertaken by UN peace operations that aim to increasing popular political participation.[5] This may

[3] Report of the panel on United Nations Peace Operations A/557305-S 2000/809, 2005 World Summit Outcome A/60/L.1.

[4] In the context of peace operations, the most significant of these is the establishment of a new Peacebuilding Commission (PBC), 2005 World Summit Outcome A/60/L.1.

[5] We will later discuss maximum and minimum versions of democratisation strategies. While the focus in this report is on *UN activities that foster political participation*, our definitions share some affinity with Jean Grugel's (2002) concepts of maximalist and minimalist democratisation: 'the basic minimalist definition sees democratization as the regular holding of clean elections and the introduction of basic norms)……[maximalist democratisation] is the introduction and extension of citizenship rights and the creation of a democratic state.

be facilitated through conducting or building national capacity for carrying out elections and voter education, supporting civil society and strengthening independent media. It also includes all technical assistance that enhances the democratic functioning of government structures: this may take the form of increasing public insight and accountability in state administration and encouraging open, predictable and law-based dialogue between the state and citizenry at the local, regional or national levels.

Peacebuilding is the sum of all actions undertaken at the end of a civil conflict to consolidate peace and prevent the recurrence of fighting (see Paris, 2005: 38). Democratisation has increasingly formed an integral part of such efforts.[6] As noted above, in this report we are particularly interested in the type of actions undertaken by UN peace operations at the end of a conflict which are associated with efforts to facilitate popular political participation, whether directly or indirectly. Democratisation is also closely linked to state-building – which, however, will not be a major focus here.[7]

Since the end of the Cold War, strong commitment has been voiced within the UN to a form of peacebuilding that encompasses democratisation – especially since the Agenda for Democratisation of 1996 and the High-Level Panel Report (the *Brahimi Report*) of 2001.[8] This makes democratisation a relevant test case for the extent to which the UN has managed to transform overall visions into corresponding strategies, adjust organisational structures, and ensure implementation of new policies derived from innovative visions. In this report we assess separately and in detail one key component (democratisation) of the complex set of activities the UN engages in after the end of conflicts. It can be argued that, due to its all-encompassing reach, studies of peacebuilding tend to generate conceptual imprecision (see Zisk Marten, 2004). Assessing one smaller component of overall UN efforts to build and consolidate peace may prove to be a constructive way of advancing our knowledge not only on democracy issues in post-conflict societies, but also on the extent to which the UN can effectively advance its proclaimed peacebuilding agenda.[9]

[6] Alternatively, it could be argued that peacebuilding efforts are the means by which the UN seeks to achieve the end-goal of democracy.

[7] The aim of state-building is to create a state that exercises legitimate and effective authority throughout the national territory and upholds the rule of law. It seeks to ensure that the state has a monopoly over the use of armed force, the ability to raise necessary revenues, and that the state institutions are capable of carrying out its administrative tasks effectively.

[8] Report of the panel on United Nations Peace Operations A/557305-S 2000/809; Boutros-Ghali1996: 19.

[9] Moreover, there are relatively few documented experiences or comprehensive theories on how democratisation supports – or works to undermine – peacebuilding efforts. One exception is Jarstad, 2005.

Underlying challenges

The ambitious commitment set out in UN reports to encourage peace and democracy in post-conflict zones stands in sharp contrast to several serious challenges. First, transition to democracy is difficult. As Thomas Carothers (1999) notes, of the nearly 100 countries considered to be 'transitional democracies' in recent years, only one fifth are clearly en route to becoming 'successful, well–functioning democracies' or enjoy a positive dynamic of democratisation. In war-torn states, democratisation has proven particularly difficult (see annex).[10]

Secondly, external actors attempting to build institutions in war-torn countries may face dilemmas commonly associated with social engineering. Outside engagement will often be driven by 'an instrumental need to standardise complex, dynamic and unique circumstance of local environments'.[11] This hinders outside agents like the UN in fully grasping local political contexts and makes it less likely that technical assistance for democratisation will succeed.[12] Moreover, UN assistance and presence in a country will not by itself transform the power, interest or preferences of major political forces, especially the preferences of those who are not supportive of democratic transformation.[13] Any democratisation effort will necessarily be hostage to the strategies and behaviour of local actors.

Finally, there seem to be some structural flaws in the ways in which the UN system engages in war-torn countries. An immediate and central problem to be highlighted in this report is the following paradox: democratisation is a long-term process, but the UN engages in peacebuilding and democratisation with short-term time-frames. Resolutions of the UN Security Council (UNSC), for example, are usually for consecutive six-month periods. Moreover, the apparent absence of a definite division of labour and clarification of roles and leadership between UN country teams and UNSC-mandated interventions makes for confusion and sub-optimal resource utilisation at field level – despite recent efforts to solve these issues with the Integrated Missions concept. (See Eide et al., 2005;

[10] Carothers (2002) has also argued against the notion that all countries that end an autocratic regime or starts a new after conflict may be labelled in transition toward democracy and that democratisations follows a logical progression from 'opening' to 'breakthrough' and consolidation. This rationale is based on a considerable belief in the importance of elections as a core function. It is widely recognised that elections are not a panacea; nevertheless, high expectations to what elections can achieve still prevail, as indicated in the emphasis placed on elections. Further, the fourth assumption is that general conditions such as economic development, political history, and social and cultural fabric are subservient to a democratic transition: such factors are will adjust automatically, tailored by a redesign of institutions matching the new political governance system. Reality shows that most 'transitional countries' do not follow a linear progression but fall into a 'grey zone' of pseudo-democracies suffering from democratic deficits, including lack of broad representation and participation, abuse of power and violation of human rights.

[11] Scott, 1998, quoted in Labonte, 2003. In assessing Afghanistan, Astri Suhrke (2006: 30–31) has similarly stressed how compressed timetable for political liberalisation created fear among traditional political power-holders and religious leaders, and 'so did the public ritual of pledging conferences with billion dollar promises of aid and the virtual invasion of foreign NGOs, all of which raised expectation levels. The political model opened for some democratic participation, but the formal limitations on political parties introduced by outside powers undermined the prospects for an effective parliament. In this scene of widespread discontent and fears, of demands for benefits and frustrated aspirations, the Afghan political coalition that carries forward the modernization project seems rather narrow and fragile.'

[12] Indeed, the same critique may be levelled at this report and our attempt at formulating possible 'ideal type' options for democratisation strategies.

[13] Carothers, 1999: 305.

also Ahmed, 2003.) Overlapping roles and competition between the two UN secretariat branches, the Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO) and the Department of Political Affairs (DPA) at times also undermines prospects for effective UN engagement.[14] Similarly, the search for optimal modalities for intervention continues. Over the past decade years, the UN has experimented with installing, on the one extreme, UN-run 'benevolent autocracies' (in Kosovo and in East Timor) and the other end 'light footprint' missions in Afghanistan.[15] Neither type seems to provide unequivocally positive examples for future engagement.

Structure and goal of the study

In light of these three underlying challenges, it seems odd that the UN has chosen to expand its peacebuilding agenda ambitiously – instead of seeking to consolidate and solve existing problems with how the UN operates, before moving forward. However, this is not the basic focus of our discussion here. Our point of departure is the encouragement to undertake democratisation within larger efforts at peacebuilding in UN peace operations, as voiced in several reports commissioned by the Secretary-General. This vision was clearly articulated in the Brahimi Report:

> [effective peacebuilding requires that] free and fair elections should be viewed as part of broader efforts to strengthen governance institutions. Elections will be successfully held only in an environment in which a population recovering from war comes to accept the ballot over the bullet as an appropriate and credible mechanism through which their views on government are represented. Elections need the support of a broader process of democratisation and civil society building that includes effective civilian governance and culture of respect for basic human rights, lest elections merely ratify a tyranny of the majority or be overturned by force after an operation leaves.[16]

In the following, we clarify the concept of democratisation and outline the various kinds of strategic choices that democratisation initiatives entail for the UN in post-conflict situations. We then go on to take stock of UN Security Council mandates, UN system planning, and UN structures associated with democratisation in peace operations – noting the inconsistency between visions from high-level reports that see democratisation as an integral part of peacebuilding, as against the absence of democratisation in mandate texts. This might indicate ambivalence within the UN system as to whether the rhetoric on democratisation is in fact intended to be translated into the guiding principles in UN peace operations.

The report provides insights and lessons learned from attempted democratisation in several peace operations – drawing especially on the cases of East Timor and Afghanistan. We conclude by outlining policy options available to the UN.

[14] Interview UN official 19 May 2006; see also Call, 2005; Suhrke, 2006.
[15] The term 'Benevolent Autocracy' is used by Chesterman (2004).
[16] Report of the panel on United Nations Peace Operations A/557305-S 2000/809 p.7.

Definitions and concepts

Our aim here is to analyse democratisation efforts in the context of UN peace operations. There is some disagreement on definition and use of the term 'peace operation'.[17] We will use Roland Paris' understanding of the term as a generic phrase that refers to any international peacemaking, peacekeeping, peace-enforcement, peacebuilding or preventive diplomacy operation that includes a multinational military force aimed at restoring or preserving peace (Paris, 2005: 38). It is important to note that we deal solely with peace operations undertaken by the UN, with a special focus on recent, complex peace operations (see below). Moreover, we want at the outset to highlight the difference between activities within a peace operation that are financed from the UN Secretariat's assessed budget and which stems directly from a Security Council mandate, and, on the other hand, activities undertaken by the UN country team during an operation and hence financed from voluntary project contributions or a UN organisation's core funds.

These two different sets of activities by two different types of UN actors have increasingly come to form part of complex peace operations or integrated peace missions.[18] The tasks that the UN has taken upon itself since the end of the Cold War when assisting countries in moving from war to lasting peace have become complex**.** This has necessitated the involvement of a broader range of UN agencies and more comprehensive planning and co-ordination among UN actors. The concept of 'Integrated Missions' has been designed to facilitate a co-ordinated response by the UN system to the varied and multifaceted tasks arising in conflict situations. However, while there have been some improvements in joint planning at headquarters and field level (see section on planning), the recent Report on Integrated Missions (Eide et al., 2005) provides evidence that, in most cases, integration remains the ideal rather than reality when it comes to co-operation among UN agencies. This, arguably, has implications for how we understand 'peace operations'. Therefore, unless stated otherwise, 'peace operations' will in this report refer primarily to those activities directly mandated by a UN Security Council text and financed directly through the UN assessed budget. The terms 'multidimensional' and 'integrated mission' designate concerted or joint initiatives by the two different types of UN actors referred to above.

Contributions

The report is intended as an original and timely contribution to the literature on peace operations. Various books and journal articles have critically engaged with and provided in-depth insight on peacebuilding. (See Zisk Marten, 2004; Paris, 2005; *Global Governance* Special Issue, 9, 2003; Kumar and Cousens, 2001.) Some also look specifically at democratisation in peace operations.[19] We differ from them by focusing explicitly and solely on

[17] Zisk Marten (2004:5) notes that the Brahimi Report used the terms 'peace enforcement', 'peacebuilding' and 'peace maintenance' operations interchangeably, and mentions that the question of whether to use the term 'peacekeeping operations' or 'peace operations' in the title of both the panel and the report reportedly caused so much controversy in the UN community that it almost undercut the group's work.

[18] Eide et al. (2005: 4) define Integrated Mission as 'an instrument with which the UN seeks to help countries in the transition from war to lasting peace, or to address a similarly complex situation that requires a system-wide UN response, though subsuming actors and approaches within an overall political-strategic crisis management framework.

[19] Roland Paris provides impressive comparative and systematic case material on political and economic

UN peace operations, and by providing a discussion that brings up highly relevant policy issues and highlights pressing strategic choices facing the UN.

Methods

This report is based on a review of literature on peace operations and interviews with central representatives at UN headquarters and field offices. The focus is on two countries – Afghanistan and East Timor – although reference will also be made to UN missions in other countries. These two cases were chosen because of the variety they provide – in geographical spread and by representing different types of missions. East Timor is as an example of a heavy UN mission presence, while Afghanistan exemplifies a more non-intrusive mode.

There are several issues *not* dealt with here. Democracy has strong normative connotations; a starting point for much UN activity is that democracy is the best way of organising a society and that democratisation is something the UN *ought* to do. This is an outlook based on Western and liberal assumptions. In this report, we do not question these assumptions, although we do recognise that these ideas are situated within particular sets of values that may not be universally shared. We will also not discuss the legal basis for UN efforts at democratisation, simply noting that these issues have been debated comprehensively elsewhere (see e.g. Farer, 2004).

liberalisation from various missions world-wide. The case material of Paris (2005), however, consists of narratives of political events and overall peacebuilding efforts on the part of international actors (see below). An edited volume by Edward Newman and Roland Rich (2004) looks at whether the UN can have substantive positive impact on the development of democratic governance inside countries. Both these volumes form an important backdrop for our study.

2. Theory perspectives: can democratisation succeed?

Scholars disagree as to whether a focus on democratisation activities within peace operations represents the best possible support to post-conflict countries. Several recent assessments have questioned the viability of democratisation initiatives in post-conflict situations. Roland Paris (2005), who surveyed fourteen UN peace operations in the period 1989–1999, holds that, in most of these cases, moves aimed at political or economic liberalisation either failed or created destabilising effects. A key reason for this pattern, Paris argues, is that political and market liberalisation exacerbates social tensions. Elections, for example, foster competition, which adds volatility to post-conflict situations. Jack Snyder similarly stresses that democratic transition often triggers instability, violence or even war (see Snyder 2000; Mansfield and Snyder, 2005).

Charles T. Call and Susan E. Cook likewise point to the poor track record of interventions by the international community and stress the problems associated with implementing the 'democratic reconstruction model' (Call and Cook, 2003).[20] They are particularly concerned at the lack of resources and short time-scales in post-conflict interventions, which makes it difficult for external actors to make a significant impact in relation to institution building. They argue that there is a need for more careful consideration of the range of possible democratic governance models, and that greater attention needs to be paid to specific and local contexts so as to create more locally entrenched and legitimate post-war political systems.

More pessimistic is the outlook of Kimberly Zisk Marten (2004: 19), who holds that attempts at controlling and affecting a country's political society by outside intervention are usually both inefficient and unworkable. The states initiating and participating in peace operations seldom have the levels of long-term commitment needed to make an intervention succeed. In her view, intervention should be restricted to 'security keeping'.

However, most other scholars are reluctant to dismiss democratisation by foreign actors in post-conflict countries. Roland Paris (2005) argues that the international community should maintain the goal of democracy but engage in the long-term task of building viable state institutions before undertaking democratisation. According to Paris, there is a need for 'institutionalisation before liberalisation', in order to 'avoid pathologies'. Call and Cook express ambivalence as to whether failures of the past might be due to the inappropriateness of Western models of liberal democracy to post-conflict societies, or simply to insufficient resources and poor choices. Call and Cook's conclusion stresses the latter and resembles that of Paris: democratisation might work, but there is a need for greater sophistication, time and resource commitment in international intervention (Call and Cook, 2003).

Others have challenged some of these standpoints. In a review article of Paris' book, Salman Ahmed (2005) argues that delaying elections for several years after an interna-

[20] The term 'democratic reconstruction model' was used by Marina Ottaway (2002).

tional peace operation arrives is simply not realistic.[21] Local populations, Ahmed says, expect peace operations to 'quickly help them redress the legacy of illegitimate or tyrannical rule'. Rather than delaying elections, peace operations should rapidly seek to foster an environment favourable to holding them. Some development practitioners similarly stress that the months and years immediately after a peace agreement represent an important window of opportunity. The momentum generated from a peace agreement and the initiation of an international intervention can strengthen democratisation efforts.[22] Moreover, Call and Cook concede that, even if democratisation goals may be unrealistic, they might have some unintended and positive effects. In Cambodia the UN peace operation did not succeed in creating a viable democracy, but human rights groups, media and independent political parties nevertheless emerged – due largely to the political space created by the UN's stress on universal democratic standards.

The above discussion indicates the profound disagreements over whether and under what conditions democratisation efforts in peace operations benefit war-torn societies. The differing positions adopted by these scholars translate into distinct policy options. At the one end of the spectrum, Zisk Marten advocates a minimal approach where few efforts in peace operations should be directed towards democratisation. Zisk Marten recognises the need for the creation of a new government, either through an election or through a consultative process. Beyond this, however, she urges that peace operations should focus on preventing anarchy rather than fostering deep-seated political change. At the other end we find Roland Paris, and Call and Cook. These analysts stress the hitherto gloomy picture of democratisation efforts, but, rather than conceding that democratisation will not work, they argue for more or better democratisation. Paris, for example, wants a more comprehensive, or maximum, UN engagement that can pave the way for democratisation by building institutions that will later serve as pillars enabling a democratic transition.

[21] George Downs and Stephen Stedman (2002) share some this optimism and have also opposed Paris' line of thought – albeit on different grounds: They argue that if more modest criteria of success are applied to peace operations – such as the prevalence of peace when the international peace operation departs – the track record of the UN appears more positive.
[22] Interview UN official 12 May 2006.

Table 1: Academic perspectives on prospects for successful democratisation and peacebuilding

	Scholar	Assessment	Recommended response
Minimum	Kimberly Zisk Marten	Broad-based transformation of politics and culture of foreign societies through foreign intervention does not work – coordinated liberal democratic state action have insufficient coherence and commitment	Limit the goals of interventions and focus on preventing anarchy. Support the formation of new government, either through consultative process or through elections.
Maximum	Roland Paris	Political liberalisation through elections generates competition which undermines fragile post-war situations	Broad-based efforts by international community to build institutions before undertaking political liberalisation
	Charles Call and Susan Cook	Democratisation efforts have failed because of insufficient insight into the political dynamics of host societies	Interventions need longer timescales and more sophisticated ways of interacting with and understanding political processes

3. Strategic choices: Maximum or minimum democratisation

What actually is meant by 'more' or 'broader' democratisation? In the following, we disentangle 'democratisation' as a concept and highlight distinct sub-components. These components can usefully be situated along a spectrum of 'maximum' or 'minimum' strategies.

Table 2: Democratisation sub-components

	Democratisation components	Minimum democratisation	Maximum democratisation
1	Duration	Short time-span for democratisation efforts	Long time-span for democratisation efforts
2	Timing	Key democratisation activities initiated early in the mission period	Key democratisation activities initiated late in the mission period
3	Scope	Efforts to enhance popular political participation at national level by conducting/assisting with national elections.	Efforts to enhance popular political participation at local, regional and national levels.
4	Local knowledge	Few efforts at obtaining in-depth knowledge of social and political organisation and process – formal and informal	Major efforts at obtaining in-depth knowledge of social and political organisation and processes – formal and informal
5	Design of electoral and political system	Little assistance and limited time allocated for the development of optimal electoral and political systems	Major assistance and extensive time allocated for the development of optimal electoral and political systems
6	Events versus process	Assistance focused on elections, and election seen as a one-time *event* and key output.	Assistance focused on elections alongside serious efforts to strengthen media, ensure representation and participation for vulnerable groups, and enhance democratic functioning of government institutions. Elections form part of an overall and long-term *process* to stimulate democratic awareness in the population, trigger political mobilisation (including party formation) and build a culture of peaceful political solutions to conflicts and grievances
7	Financial resources	Low relative or absolute levels of spending on democratisation initiatives	High relative or absolute levels of spending on democratisation initiatives

The decision to implement a democratisation strategy during the course of a UN operation implies making strategic choices. Planners from the host country and/or a UN peace operation will need to decide whether democratisation should start *early* or *late* in the course of the operation. Second, should it be a democratisation where the various components and related project activities are executed over a *short period* of time, rather than sequencing the implementation of elements over a *longer period*? Third, is there to be democratisation at local and regional levels in addition to central levels?

A fourth and related aspect is the degree to which a UN mission seeks to assess, understand and engage with *indigenous political processes and actors*. Béatrice Pouligny (2000) argues that multidimensional UN peacekeeping missions interact, sometimes unknowingly, with important formal and informal aspects of the social and political organisation of a host society. UN missions tend to recognise and explicitly engage only with Western-style NGOs, even though many groups that assume political functions and roles in war and post-war periods are not structured along Western 'civil society' concepts. There is thus a danger, she stresses, that UN missions are unaware of the political functions played by these actors. Yet, faced with an international intervention, informal groups develop distinct strategies towards missions which shape the social and political contexts encountered by a UN peace operation. UN missions have differing levels of commitment to acquiring dense knowledge on both formal and informal political processes. The level of commitment to this type of knowledge in turn shapes the extent to which it may inform the design of democratisation strategies in peace operations.[23]

The fifth sub-element of a democratisation strategy is the degree to which a mission chooses to engage with and provide insights on a variety of *electoral models* and constitutional options in order to enable the host countries to adopt the most optimal democratic model. Arend Lijphart and Jamal Benomar (2004) argue that deep societal cleavages pose a grave problem for democracy and that it is more difficult to establish and maintain democratic government in divided societies. However, they also hold that careful constitutional engineering can help to remedy political grievances and create incentives for moderate and unifying political actors.[24] That means there is a choice available to international actors implementing democratisation initiatives: what degrees of assistance and advice should be levied on the design stages of democratic systems? This also relates to a further aspect: will the peace operation oversee the creation of a permanent democratic model, or should interim solutions be adopted?

The sixth and perhaps most central sub-element is the *number of components* to be included in a democratisation strategy. Peace operations may have a narrow *event* focus, concentrating on building capacity for election administration, help with the conduct of elections and carrying out voter education. Alternatively, democratisation strategies can expand beyond election events and initiate a broader *process* which enhances popular participation in and awareness of governing institutions. This may include working to empower, for example, minority groups or women. Measures to achieve this could include enabling the media to assume watchdog functions and entrenching transparency measures in governing practices, as well as awareness-raising and comprehensive civic education programmes. In countries with limited parliamentary and democratic experience, civic education may be a vital part of the preparation to motivate potential voters. Assistance in this sphere may include national curriculum for a continued civic education programme, and training of national election observers.

Finally there is the matter of the *financial resources* available. Will the peace operation

[23] Several authors have presented arguments along these lines. See Kumar and Cousens, 2001; Hohe, 2002b.
[24] Nigeria is one example, see Lijphart and Benomar 2004.

be allocated much or little resources, in absolute terms, for democratisation? Will the mission allocate relatively low or relatively high levels of funding to democratisation initiatives as opposed to other activities? A related issue with regard to multidimensional missions is who controls the funds, and what kind of funds are used. Are democratisation activities largely funded through the annual assessed budget and administered by the DPKO, or are they financed through voluntary contributions and/or administered primarily by other actors like the UNDP, in a multidimensional mission?

Later we assess how maximum and minimum democratisation efforts have played out in several UN peace operations. First, we turn to a brief assessment of UN Security Council mandates, UN planning and UN administrative structures associated with the UN's efforts to entrench democratisation in post-conflict countries.

4. UN Security Council Mandates

Resolutions of the UN Security Council rarely refer explicitly to 'democracy'. On the other hand, there is frequent mention of election-related tasks – and mandates often indirectly carve out the political space for the UN to do democratisation in its peace operations. Nevertheless, the inconsistency between the overall visions found in high-level UN reports that describe democratisation as an integral part of peacebuilding, and the absence of democratisation in actual mandate texts may indicate that there is ambiguity within the system as to whether the rhetoric on democratisation is meant to be translated into the guiding principles in UN peace operations.

A survey of mandates from 1991 onwards reveals growing complexity in the civilian tasks with which UN missions have been mandated in UNSC resolutions.[25] Similarly, in a survey of the resolution texts of four countries (East Timor, Afghanistan, Sierra Leone and Liberia) we found evolution in the complexities of tasks and several democracy-related points. We noted how the resolutions often stress the importance of elections, but that there has been less mention of the term 'democracy'.

UNSC resolution 1378 on Afghanistan provides a good illustration. Here the Council 'expresses its strong support for the efforts of the Afghan people to establish a new and transitional administration leading to the formation of a government, both of which 'should be broad-based, multi-ethnic and fully representative of all the Afghan people…… [and] should respect the human rights of all Afghan people, regardless of gender, ethnicity or religion'. Interestingly, the Security Council calls for the formation of what is in effect a democratic government, yet does not express this call in terms like 'democracy'.

UN Security Council peace operation mandates are often worded in a similar way. Above we noted the growing complexity of mandates. The change was twofold: an expansion in both the subject area UN peace operation personnel engage, and the type of UN activities. While in the early 1990s UN missions were mandated to verify or monitor elections, one decade later such missions were increasingly requested to conduct elections or build capacity and pro-actively support national election authorities.

Comparison between the mandates for the missions to Liberia in 1993 and 2003 illustrates this change. In the first mandate (S/RES/866), the UN mission was charged primarily with overseeing the ceasefire, assisting with demobilisation and demining, and observ-

[25] Security Council resolutions surveyed for this report included:
Western Sahara SCR690, 1991; El Salvador SCRs 693& 832 1991/93; Croatia SCR743 1992; Cambodia SCR745 1992; Angola SCR747 1992; Mozambique SCR797 1992; Somalia SCR814 1993; Liberia SCR 866 SCR10201993/1995; Haiti SCR867 1993; Rwanda SCR997 1995; Bosnia-Herzegovina SCR1035 1995; Croatia-Eastern Slavonia SCR1037 1996; Angola SCR1118 1997; Central African Republic SCR1159 SCR1230 1998/1999; Sierra Leone SCR1181 1998; Kosovo SCR1244 1999; East Timor SCR1272 SCR1410 1999/2002; Congo (DRC) SCR1291 2000; Afghanistan SCR1378 2001; Afghanistan SCR1378 2001; Liberia SCR1509 2003; and Sudan SCR1590 2005.

ing and verifying elections. By contrast, the 2003 UNSC resolution on Liberia (S/RES/1509) made civil provisions that included 're-establishing national authority' and 'functioning administrative structures at both national and local levels'. This resolution mandated the mission 'to assist the transitional government…. in developing a strategy to consolidate governmental institutions, including a national legal framework and judicial and correctional institutions', and also urged the Liberian transitional government to ensure protection of human rights and rule of law.

Elections have a central place in both resolutions. In the 1993 resolution, the UN mission was charged with 'observing' and 'verifying' the election process, whereas in 2003 UNMIL was given a larger task: to 'assist in preparing for elections'. One striking feature remains: absence of democracy terminology. For instance, the six-page Liberia resolution of 2003 uses the term 'democratic policing' once, but otherwise does not at any point employ the terms 'democracy' or 'democratisation'. In the four-page Liberia resolution of 1993 these terms do not appear at all. While the Liberia resolutions seem to represent the main trend, some other mandate texts differ. UNSC resolution on Haiti from 1994 (940), for example, states that 'the goal of the international community remains the restoration of democracy and the prompt return of the legitimately elected President (S/RES/940 1994, quoted in Rich, 2004: 14). In Sierra Leone, the UNSC called for 'restoration of the democratically elected Government and a return to constitutional order' (S/RES/1132 1997, quoted in Rich, loc.cit.). Still, UNSC mandate texts seem characterised first and foremost by the omission of reference to 'democracy', even though such mandates normally include election-related terminology and tasks.

These trends stand in contrast to the commitment voiced in UN reports on peacebuilding and the proposed central place of democratisation in such efforts. UN Secretariat representatives note that 'democracy' is a controversial term for many countries, including Security Council members.[26] This has resulted in a lack of explicit reference to democracy. This in turn means that mandates reflect the ideological differences among member states – they are, in the words of Roland Rich (2004:13), exercises in political expediency and bargaining rather than in the implementation of universal principles or overall UN aims.

[26] Interview UN representative May 2006.

Liberia: UN Security Council mandates 1993 and 2003

S/RES/866 (1993) paragraph 3:
UNOMIL shall comprise military observers as well as medical, engineering, communications, transportation and electoral components, in the numbers indicated in the Secretary-General's report, together with minimal staff necessary to support it, and shall have the following mandate: (a) To receive and investigate all reports on alleged incidents of violations of the cease-fire agreement and, if the violation cannot be corrected, to report its findings to the Violations Committee established pursuant to the Peace Agreement and to the Secretary-General; (b) To monitor compliance with other elements of the Peace Agreement, including at points on Liberia's borders with Sierra Leone and other neighbouring countries, and to verify its impartial application, and in particular to assist in the monitoring of compliance with the embargo on delivery of arms and military equipment to Liberia and the cantonment, disarmament and demobilization of combatants; **(c) To observe and verify the election process, including the legislative and presidential elections to be held in accordance with the provisions of the Peace Agreement;** (d) To assist, as appropriate, in the coordination of humanitarian assistance activities in the field in conjunction with the existing United Nations humanitarian relief operation; (e) To develop a plan and assess financial requirements for the demobilization of combatants; (f) To report on any major violations of international humanitarian law to the Secretary-General; (g) To train ECOMOG engineers in mine clearance and, in cooperation with ECOMOG, coordinate the identification of mines and assist in the clearance of mines and unexploded bombs; (h) Without participation in enforcement operations, to coordinate with ECOMOG in the discharge of ECOMOG's separate responsibilities both formally, through the Violations Committee, and informally.

(S/RES/1509 (2003) Selected points from the mandate text:
(l) to contribute towards international efforts to protect and promote human rights in Liberia, with particular attention to vulnerable groups including refugees, returning refugees and internally displaced persons, women, children, and demobilized child soldiers (…); p) to assist the transitional Government, in conjunction with ECOWAS and other international partners, in reestablishment of national authority throughout the country, including the establishment of a functioning administrative structure at both the national and local levels (…); **(s) to assist the transitional government, in conjunction with ECOWAS and other international partners, in preparing for national elections scheduled for no later than the end of 2005;** (q) to assist the transitional government in conjunction with ECOWAS and other international partners in developing a strategy to consolidate governmental institutions, including a national legal framework and judicial and correctional institutions.

Resolution 1509 also stressed '(16) the need for an effective public information capacity, including the establishment as necessary of United Nations radio stations to promote understanding of the peace process and the role of UNMIL among local communities and the parties'. Moreover, it highlighted 'the need for accountability for violations of international humanitarian law and urging the transitional government once established to ensure that the protection of human rights and the establishment of a state based on the rule of law and of an independent judiciary are among its highest priorities.'

(all emphases added)

Has the absence of references to democracy made the implementation of UN missions less optimal? The Brahimi Report stressed the 'pivotal importance of clear, credible and adequately resourced Security Council mandates', and further argued that 'most [UN failures] occurred because the Security Council and the member states crafted and supported ambiguous, inconsistent and under-funded mandates'(as quoted in Rich, 2004: 16). In the case of democratisation, the problem is not so much the ambiguity in mandated tasks, but the inconsistency between the overall visions put forward in the UN high-level reports that refer to democratisation as an integral part of peacebuilding, and the absence of democratisation in mandate texts.

This, however, does not necessarily hamper the execution of a specific mandate. There is usually room for democratisation strategies within the limits of a mandate. Take 2003 Liberia resolution, for example: In addition to a specific election reference, there are several points mandating the mission to help in re-constructing functional government structures; and to ensure that principles of human rights are adhered to, that vulnerable and minority groups are included and protected, and that public information and support are provided to the media. Such formulations may offer important leeway for the UN mission to initiate democratisation efforts that entail elections as well as ensuring that democratic principles and practices are enshrined in government institutions.

5. UN and democratisation: structures and strategies

In the introduction we noted that the UN has declared its clear commitment to include comprehensive democratisation as part of peacebuilding efforts in the aftermath of war. This section examines what strategies, guidelines and organisational structures are associated with democratisation initiatives within UN peace operations.

UN Structures
Several actors within the UN, including DPKO and the Department of Political Affairs (DPA) are charged with tasks related to democratisation efforts. The DPKO's Office of Operations is responsible for designing the overall concept for any given mission. It also forms an important part of the Integrated Mission Task Force (IMTF) at headquarters level, where all relevant UN departments, funds and programs participate and where concrete structures, responsibilities and activities of an operation are agreed on (in accordance with the Security Council mandate).

At mission level, two groups of the DPKO mission staff are charged with tasks related to democratisation. One group, the political affairs section, is primarily entrusted with 'understanding the dynamics of the armed conflict…[, to] follow closely the evolution of these dynamics and to develop strategies to help these parties in conflict resolve disputes through peaceful means' (UN, 2003: 23). In other words, the political affairs officers are charged primarily with conflict management tasks. They are, however, often also entrusted with other tasks, such as conceptualising, planning and establishing new political institutions under a transitional mandate. The other group in the DPKO mission staff working with tasks related to democratisation initiatives is the civil affairs section. The role of this section is to 'engage and assist local authorities and communities in efforts to consolidate peace by restoring the political, legal, economic and social infrastructures that support democratic governance and economic development' (ibid.: 35). A defining feature of the tasks and modes of operation for both political and civil affairs officers in a peace mission is the tendency to engage in mediation, observation and consultation with and between local actors (ibid.). Political and civil affairs officers are seldom expected to carry out tasks related to capacity building or technical assistance for the reconstruction of government institutions. Civil affairs personnel have also suffered from unclear job descriptions and the absence of an institutional 'home' for collecting best practices.[27]

By contrast, the Department of Political Affairs is charged with rendering specific and pro-active assistance in the sphere of elections in a mission. The DPA determines electoral standards, assesses the needs and scope of an electoral operation, formulates and staffs the mission and monitors the implementation of UN electoral operations. (UN, 2003: 148.) The Electoral Assistance Division (EAD) within the Department of Political Affairs (DPA) was established in April 1992 as the division with principal responsibility for these tasks. Depending on the Security Council mandate, the EAD may take on the roles normally fulfilled by national election authorities, including the 'establishment of a

[27] Interview UN official 19 May 2006.

system of laws, procedures and administrative measures necessary for holding free and fair elections, as well as the actual administration of the electoral process'.[28] At the other extreme, the EAD may assume the more limited role of verifying the electoral process. In this case it deploys international election observers responsible for observing all aspects of an electoral process. The level of EAD engagement is generally situated somewhere in-between these two types of assistance. The national election authorities will typically still be in charge of the process, whereas the EAD provides staff offering major assistance with regard to capacity building and election observation.

There appear to be some gaps in the structures and functions of DPKO and DPA when compared with the ambitious and transformative democratisation agenda that the UN has designed for itself. While the civilian and political components of DPKO are given tasks related to broader issues of democratisation, they are seldom provided with funds or tasks beyond the roles of consultation and mediation. The EAD, by contrast, can be more pro-active, but its focus is often restricted to ensuring that the elections as such are carried out.

Difficulties have also arisen due to overlapping roles and functions. Co-operation and co-ordination between the DPKO and the DPA has, for example, had a history of confusion and tensions over which section should act as lead agency in peace operations. Many of these tensions have been resolved by the subsequent guidelines issued by the Secretary-General.[29] Nevertheless, as Charles Call found in his 2005 study of UN structures, 'dis-satisfaction remained [after the issuing of the new guidelines]….especially with the DPA'.[30]

UN secretariat units like the DPKO and the DPA also work closely with the UN country team at the field level within the framework of Integrated Missions. UN country team members, such as the UNDP, may assume important democracy-promotion roles. As mentioned, this report focuses on the democratisation initiatives undertaken by UN secretariat structures. However, as integration is increasingly becoming 'the guiding principle for the design and implementation of complex UN operations in post-conflict situations and for linking the various dimensions of peacebuilding (political, developmental, humanitarian, human rights, rule of law, social and security aspects) into a coherent strategy'[31], the linkages and degree of joint efforts between and by UN peace operations and UN country team have increased. We return to the discussion of the role played by the UN country team in the conclusion to this report.

Strategies

Above we noted the clear UN commitment to include comprehensive democratisation in peacebuilding efforts in the aftermath of war. Arguably, however, the UN machinery has not followed through with developing guidelines and operational strategies for ensuring that 'elections [are supported by] a broader process of democratisation and civil society building that includes effective civilian governance and culture of respect for basic hu-

[28] www.un.org Department of Political Affairs.
[29] A/57/387; see also Call, 2005: 25–26.
[30] Call, loc.cit.
[31] UN Secretary-General 'Note of Guidance on Integrated Missions' 9 February 2006.

man rights'.[32] Several high-level DPKO representatives interviewed for this report confirmed that no guidelines, strategies or standard procedures have been developed with regard to democratisation.[33] The *Handbook on UN Multidimensional Peacekeeping Operations* (UN, 2003) illustrates this state of affairs: it gives a detailed outline of the standard UN procedures for election assistance in one central chapter, but issues beyond the execution of elections are hardly mentioned. The concluding chapter stresses the importance of peacebuilding and that 'democratic government…..is increasingly identified as serving the basis for both lasting peace and sustainable development', but offers no concrete guidance or standard measures to be taken in this sphere.

In the absence of generic procedures or strategies for comprehensive democratisation in UN missions, two other processes generate timetables and plans for activities, which, taken together, constitute a form of default strategy on democratisation in individual missions. The first of these is the peace agreement between the parties to a conflict. The second is the mission concept, which the DPKO Office of Operations develops in accordance with the UNSC mandate and the other participants of the Integrated Mission Task Force.

A peace agreement usually makes concrete provisions for elections, as well as broader issues pertaining to the establishment and functioning of political institutions. The stipulations in the peace agreement may thus serve as a road map, binding and focusing the UN peace operation to work towards fulfilling the aims embodied within it. In the case of Liberia for example, UN mission representatives note that the provisions of the peace agreement was central with regard to which initiatives UNMIL took in the sphere of democratisation.[34] Similarly, in Sudan the Comprehensive Peace Agreement and Machakos Protocols specify principles and timelines which, if adhered to, will function as a guiding document for the UN involvement in the political sphere. In the case of Afghanistan, the 2001 Bonn Agreement, while not a peace agreement as such, has become a central road map. UN statements, including UNSC resolutions, have explicitly endorsed the Bonn Agreement and used it as a starting point when designing their own interventions. The case of East Timor represents an exception, since here it was a prior agreement between the UN and Indonesia that formed the basis for the UN engagement.

The increasing prominence and comprehensiveness of peace agreements is in many ways a highly positive development, since, by letting peace agreements assume a strategic function, local ownership is enhanced. On the other hand, by failing to elaborate generic guiding principles, UN operations risk becoming reactive and incapable of quickly developing plans at the field level to ensure that, during a mission and working within the bounds of the peace agreement, broader issues of democratisation are entrenched in the best possible manner. Peace agreements could usefully be complemented by rigorous strategic thinking in the UN on how best to capitalise on the provisions of an agreement.

The process of designing the mission concept generates planning and strategies, but is

[32] Report of the panel on United Nations Peace Operations A/557305-S 2000/809.
[33] Interview UN representative 3 May 2006, Interview UN representative 19 May 2006.
[34] Interview UN representative 12 May 2006.

severely strained by the scant time available. With the initiation of the UN mission to Afghanistan, serious efforts were made by UN agencies to integrate their planning in the Integrated Mission Task Force. While the task force seems to have worked well in the initial phases, time constraints quickly pressured the UN agencies to initiate action unilaterally, which in turn eventually undermined the relevance of the IMTF. The case of East Timor similarly shows the problems of time constraints. According to Astri Suhrke (2006), even if UNTAET had the dual function of peacekeeping and civil administration, the mission was nevertheless developed along standard procedures for peacekeeping, including limited time for planning and little local consultation. While deployment and planning for peacekeeping were manageable within the time-span allocated, the complex task of planning for a civilian administration proved more daunting.

The case of East Timor highlights the fundamental difference between deploying UN staff in order to keep the peace, and working towards conflict mitigation versus deployment for larger tasks such as civil administration. Moreover, there seems to be a parallel between undertaking civil administration tasks and democratisation: in order to succeed, both need detailed knowledge of local political processes, and both types of initiatives will entail extensive engagement with the local population. The planning for such tasks is fundamentally different from peacekeeping, and requires more time for planning and engagement with local partners than do the more technical peacekeeping activities.

Time constraints coupled with the absence of procedures for strategising on issues beyond election initiatives can prevent the UN from ensuring interlinkages among the various components of a peace operation that may work towards comprehensive democratisation.[35] Moreover, there are indications from the limited material we have gathered that little significant co-ordination takes place at headquarters level prior to the launching of a mission. (See Eide et al., 2005; also Ahmed, 2003.) There are also signs that few missions manage to translate mandates and in-depth knowledge of local conditions into viable and explicit democratisation strategies.

To conclude, it seems that the UN has not yet been able to follow up its words with action: there is little machinery available in the world organisation that can translate the democratisation commitment into workable, comprehensive and integrated plans and strategies that may form part of overall UN peacebuilding initiatives.

[35] The case of East Timor provides another interesting example. The World Bank initiated a project intended to enhance local governance and local political participation by establishing community-level development committees. This had the potential to enhance political participation and as such lent support to democratisation initiatives. UN staff that served in East Timor stress, however, that important synergy effects were lost due to lack of co-ordination and information sharing in relation to this project. Interview UN representative 12 May 2006; see also Hohe, 2002b.

6. Democratisation: lessons from Afghanistan and East Timor

Turning from the mandates, structures and strategies associated with democratisation efforts in UN peace operations, in this section we assess how some of the sub- components of democratisation efforts have featured in specific UN peace operations. We present a brief examination of the democratisation processes of the peace operations in Afghanistan and in East Timor, focusing on their main achievements, challenges, obstacles and lessons learned in relation to democratisation efforts and minimum and maximum approaches. Both these peace operations were established to assist a transitional government, but were distinct and are therefore interesting to compare.

East Timor

United Nations Assistance Mission to East Timor (UNTAET) was given 'overall responsibility for the administration and exercise of all legislative and executive authority [and were to] provide security, establish a new public administration with focus on institutional development and capacity-building to self-government, initiate the provision of social and civil services, co-ordinate humanitarian assistance and ensuring peace and stability.[36] The UN had thus the ultimate authority from central to district level, which had not been experienced anywhere earlier.[37] The UN faced an overwhelming task: *'We have to build everything from scratch… and it is impossible to establish a new administration, democratic institutions, restore public services and revive an economy in just over two years',* said Special Representative of the Secretary-General (SRSG)Sergio Vieira de Mello just over two months after mission start.[38]

The planning of UNTAET was rapid and lacked formal consultation with the East Timorese. This undefined local involvement derived from the ambiguous formulation in resolution 1272 stating that UNTAET should consult and work closely together with the East Timorese, whereas all political power and control were in fact concentrated in UNTAET. There was no clear definition of what was meant by to 'consult', and this gave UNTAET considerable leeway and autonomy (Chesterman, 2005: 135–36.) The CNRT

36 S/Res/1272, 25 Oct. 1999.

37 Kosovo and East Timor are used as comparable missions, but the UN's role in East Timor differed significantly from Kosovo in several ways. (See Griffin and Jones, 2000.) One of the most significant differences was that Kosovo was a province of Serbia, whereas East Timor was under the complete authority of the UN. It should be stressed also that UNTAET was a highly complex and ambitious operation. In terms of staff and size it was enormous, comprising administrative, personnel for humanitarian assistance and relief, and a military component (9,646 uniformed personnel, 1,051 civilian international and 1,928 local staff for one year compared to about 200 civilian and 4,000 international assistance peacekeepers in Afghanistan) and funding provided by the General Assembly, demonstrating the international community's will to make a UN peace operation succeed. Indonesia had administered the territory from its invasion in 1975 until 1999. All senior officials left when the Indonesian militia launched operation 'Clean Sweep', when the outcome of the referendum became public and the East Timorese voting in favour of independence (Chopra, 2002). Skills were lacking in the areas of senior management, technical and professional areas of government, public finances, judiciary, police, defence, social sector, commerce and agriculture (World Bank, 1999).

38 Quote from UNTAET and World Bank Press Release, 'East Timor moves from emergency reconstruction to development mode', 15 June 2001, in Subianto, n.d.

was the main interlocutor for the UN, which might have eased the UN's consultation process with the East Timorese: however, it did not turn out that way. The UN was concerned about impartiality – a legacy from the first generation of peacekeeping missions – and this principle hindered an active engagement with the different political actors. The lack of consultations caused frustration among the East Timorese. Consequently, the CNRT was reorganised, quickly becoming the de facto government at local level by reinforcing its relations with the grassroots. The CNRT might have served as the vehicle enabling UNTAET to reach out to the greater part of the population, but this opportunity was lost through centralised and exclusive planning.

Immediate priorities were the severe destruction and pressing humanitarian needs. State-building came second as the UN had both an executive and legislative mandate. There a significant vacuum as to rule of law, as well as the lack of primary regulations, dispute-resolution mechanisms and civilian law and order. (World Bank, 1999:15.) Broad-based representation, consultation and democratisation were not articulated concerns, unlike the Afghan case in the Bonn process. The focus was primarily on administrative, social and economic governance, and less on the need to build a national political leadership.

UNTAET perceived East Timor in general as a *terra nullis* because of the skills and capacity deficiency in the public sector. However, informal political institutions and leadership had emerged out of the clandestine structures and customary governance practices, and East Timor was not a political destitute. Its traditional forms of political authority were not recognised by the international administration, probably because new political systems were not compatible with these traditional concepts of legitimacy. (See Hohe, 2002a.)

The SRSG came to realise the need for a formal consultation mechanism and engagement of the East Timorese, and, in response, the National Consultative Council was established six months into the mission. There were no powers attached to the Council. The East Timorese protested, requesting a more substantive and formal role. A two-track approach was then proposed, and the NCC was transformed into a National Council that served as an interim legislature. The East Timorese were invited to co-govern through the East Timorese Transitional Administration – the ETTA.

Afghanistan

In the case of Afghanistan, the importance of ownership and self-government was addressed with the creation of the Interim Administration in December 2001. At Bonn, a purely Afghan Interim Administration was established on the basis of the participation of some 25 Afghans, representing mainly the Northern Alliance, the diaspora, NGOs and civil society. According to the Bonn Agreement, the people of Afghanistan had the right to 'freely determine their own political future in accordance with the principles of Islam, democracy, pluralism and social justice', with political liberty and a right to vote. Local ownership was therefore emphasised even before the UN peace operation was launched. Bonn was, however, not a peace consultation but a political selective agreement among the victors that had defeated the Taliban. The role of the UN Assistance Mission to Afghanistan (UNAMA), established in March 2002, was to support the transitional admini-

stration, facilitate political dialogue, monitor human rights, and co-ordinate recovery and reconstruction assistance.

In contrast to East Timor's heavy UN presence, the planning of UNAMA sought to operationalise the new concept of 'integrated mission'. However, lack of clear strategies made planning a complicated and time-consuming exercise in co-ordination, and, in the end, the different agencies established their operations in conventional fashion. The UNAMA SRSG launched a 'light footprint' approach, which was sensitive to the complexity of Afghan politics, the principle of Afghans' right to self-determination and the possible unintended effects of foreign presence in terms of local perceptions of invasion and disempowerment. The UN was mindful of the fact that it would be not be desirable – in fact it would be impossible[39]– to even try to govern Afghanistan as in the case of East Timor.[40] UNAMA consisted of a simple two-pillar structure: Pillar 1 for political affairs, and Pillar 2 for co-ordination of recovery, relief and reconstruction with a light presence outside Kabul. Elections were a main preoccupation of the UN: Elections for establishment of a transitional administration through a Loya Jirga (Grand Assembly), elections for a Constitutional Loya Jirga, Presidential election, and two national assembly elections – five elections in four years.

Elections

The timing of elections is always contentious, and the first set of elections will most likely always be less than perfect.

Nevertheless, countries which experienced relative stability after the arrival of sizable peacekeeping troops, as in the case in Sierra Leone, Liberia and East Timor, the momentum seems to have provided a conducive environment for the introduction of a new regime, widespread reforms and developments in relatively short time.

39 The Emergency Loya Jirga (Grand Assembly) took place already after six months; Constitutional Loya Jirga, presidential, and elections for the Upper (Meshrano Jirga) and Lower (Wolesi Jirga) Houses of the Afghan Parliament. Upper House elections were indirect from the Provincial Councils. Provincial Council elections were held on the same day as the Lower House elections. District elections were also scheduled according to the Constitution, though were not held.

40 Initially UNAMA applied a ceiling of 230 UN international staff, 50% of these being support staff. The number grew as the light approach became too light, and at its peak UNAMA came to account for about one-third of the total UN international presence by late 2002. (Conflict, Security and Development Group, 2003.)

Arguments in favour of early elections*

- An election can be an important conflict resolution tool. Early elections may prevent warring factions from a return to fighting by promising a new and fairer way of sharing power.
- Elections can be of symbolic importance to nation- and state-building.
- Early elections in post-conflict societies may kick-start democratic political governance.
- Relatively early elections may be a necessity to meet the need for a legitimate successor regime
- A relatively rapid political liberalisation process may be compounded by the risk of donor fatigue.

* Based on interviews with election specialists and UN staff

In East Timor, a formal step towards democratic government was initiated with the agreement on a date for the election of a constituent assembly, which took place 22 months after UNTAET came into operation. The national leadership exercised considerable pressure to hold elections and terminate the UN's decisive authority. In this case, then, central elections were fundamental to the nation- and state-building process, as well as being significant as a symbolic expression of independence. The latter was achieved with the presidential elections of May 2002.

'Postponing the elections beyond 2001 is impossible – 'you can't hold back the horses for political change.'

– UN Transitional Administrator in East Timor, Sergio de Mello

In the case of Afghanistan, the Bonn Agreement became the *de facto* strategy for the peace operation in the country. This was further specified at the biannual donor conferences, starting with the pledging conference in Tokyo 2002. The Bonn Agreement and the ensuing donor consultations endorsed a rapid political timetable to create the first democratically elected government in Afghanistan through a relatively compressed political timetable. Democratisation accelerated throughout the country, yet also blended traditional systems with modern ones in the form of *Loya Jirga* in the first two elections. The Grand Assemblies were held to select a Transitional Administration and to start the process of adopting a new constitution. However, they were also used as a way to mediate between factions and conflicting interests concerning the broader process of nation- and state-building.

Electoral systems – more than just a technical issue

The choice of electoral system may influence the nature of politics in societies divided along ethnic, political, religious or other lines, since it influences the formation of political parties. Therefore, the decision regarding the electoral system should be based on a careful assessment and aimed at strengthening fragile political structures. The conventional school of thought argues that proportional representation (PR) is the most constructive way to unite fragile and divide societies and promote a multi-party system. An alter-

native, however, is to try to avoid the formation of parties along divided lines and instead encourage inter-ethnic bargaining and 'swap of preferences', often labelled 'centripetalism'. According to Benjamin Reilly (2002), a blend of PR and the latter approach is preferable. Other systems – like the Single Non-Transferable Vote system used in Afghanistan – promote a 'winner take all'-solution, tend to create a zero-sum game and may result in a disproportional representation in parliament.

Proportional representation requires identifiable parties. Existing political parties may carry a legacy of past intra-state fighting, as is the case in Afghanistan. Because of this there has been widespread public resentment of political parties. This resentment needs to be addressed through civic education and the training of young political leaders. Afghanistan has currently more than 70 parties and requires political reform including greater convergence and coalition building. When a party emerges around a resistance movement, like Freitlin in East Timor or the Mujahedin in Afghanistan, it may fuel nationalism (Chesterman et al., 2004: 5–6).

Prior to the election for a constituent assembly in East Timor, 14 out of 16 existing political parties signed a 'Pact of National Unity' and committed themselves to ensuring a peaceful election and to accept the results. Rudimentary support was provided to the political parties by UNDP, but due to the shortage of time, the mature attitude of the parties and the impact of voter education were relatively limited.

In East Timor parties were allowed; in Afghanistan, political parties were excluded from the presidential and national assembly elections, mainly at the request of the executive. Where civil society is weak, political parties can serve as the link between the central government and the citizenry. Political parties are thus essential elements in the formation of a democratic polity. (See Reilly, 2002.) The absence of political parties can a make a parliament more prone to formations based on ethnicity or ad-hoc alliances instead of on substantive policy issues and broader democratic norms. Building or fostering a political culture, political maturity, enabling regulations and strengthening parliamentary capacity are necessary in order to ensure that political parties are representative and democratic, and fulfil their roles and obligations.

The UN Department of Peacekeeping seems hesitant to engage in strengthening political capacity, such as supporting the development of political party platforms. This is probably because of a concern for impartiality. However, neglecting political parties may prove detrimental to the active promotion of democratic governance.

Civic education

The UN electoral civic education programme in Afghanistan teamed up with the new Afghan Civil Society Forum, a consortium of national NGOs and civil society organisations established with the support of bilateral donors.[41] It went relatively well during the constitutional process that was implemented by a national team, but during the electoral

[41] The ACSF was contracted for only about 30% of the process for the presidential elections. It was contracted for all provinces except those in Kabul region for the parliamentary elections.

process the programme suffered from time constraints due to the 'projectisation' (see further discussion below) of the political process and lack of a clear and coherent strategy. The educational aspect was compromised mainly because of time constraints, but also due to significant security challenges, and its empowerment impact was limited. During the preparation of the elections for parliament in 2005, people often asked: 'Do I need to vote for Karzai again? I voted for him last year'.[42] Not surprisingly many people in Afghanistan, as in other first-time election countries, voted according to local consensus or personal affiliation. In Afghanistan, the number of female voters was surprisingly high, but when asked why they went to the polling station, the answer often was: 'My husband told me to'.[43] An important opportunity had thus been under-utilized – four years to provide civic education and informing the Afghan people about their democratic rights and duties and to foster local constitutional ownership. Alternatively, there could have been one coherent and comprehensive programme focused on the process and not the event as such, following a logical sequence. That might have prevented the high staff turnover, and resources would have been utilised more effectively.

In East Timor UNTAET did not manage to engage civil society adequately in the civic education programme and faced severe resentment from the national NGO forum. The tense relationship with the local NGO community also affected UNTAET's attempt to establish a national constitutional commission to hold public hearings prior to the elections to the constituent assembly, in order to ensure some kind of public participation. A proposal was finally put before the National Consultative Council but was rejected by the East Timorese members. Instead, UNTAET carried out a rapid constitutional hearing programme and encouraged local participation, in anticipation of increasing local authoritarian and undemocratic tendencies.

In both East Timor and Afghanistan, civic education was treated mostly as an event to prepare people for the ballots – as opposed to a process and way of informing and empowering people to exercise their democratic rights. There was hardly any continuation of civic education after the elections, for instance to explain the implication of the results, what citizens can expect from or engage with the local and national politicians, and how accountability should be exercised.

Sustainability of elections

Building capacity for a national electoral administration (the electoral management body in charge of preparing and facilitating an election including voter registration, ballot procedures, administrative boundaries etc.) is a cornerstone of sustainable democratisation (Reilly, 2002: 126). In East Timor and Afghanistan, the UN established joint national/international electoral management bodies and facilitated visits to electoral commissions as part of the training and capacity-building of national electoral bodies.

The entire political timetable in Afghanistan had been broken down into individual programmes, each of which had to be designed individually with an associated budget. After

[42] One of the authors monitored several civic education programmes during the different elections in Afghanistan from 2003– 2005.
[43] EU Electoral Observation surveys, Afghanistan 2005.

the 2004 presidential elections, most of the international electoral staff left and funding ceased. The national assembly election had to go through the same time-consuming process: programme design, resource mobilisation and contracting staff. Six months before election day, very little was in place and local capacity was simply not adequate to undertake such comprehensive tasks, even though this was almost four years after the start of the Bonn agreement. The UN electoral specialists made it clear to the UN leadership that meeting the deadline of the Bonn process would leave no opportunity for capacity-building. In May 2005, the Joint Electoral Management body, in collaboration with the UN and the government, initiated a working group to develop a strategy for holding future elections, but the question of how it should be implemented was handed over to the UNDP, which had been involved in the elections from the outset.

Financial resources and the danger of 'projectisation'

The budget has major implications for whether minimum or maximum approaches are chosen. The two peace operations assessed here were equipped with very different financial resources for democracy-related activities. The degree of availability of financial resources sets important parameters for the degree to which missions can plan and find synergies between democracy initiatives. In East Timor most election activities were funded through the UN assessed budget, and funding was not a constraint.[44] In Afghanistan, by contrast, UNAMA relied heavily on voluntary contributions for individual project proposals in order to finance democracy initiatives. This introduced uncertainties and made long-term planning difficult.[45] 'In Afghanistan money was always a problem. Voluntary contributions are not a way to run an election – we were always short of cash that delayed the process (such as procurement)' said a senior UN electoral officer.[46] There, the UNDP has administered the largest shares of the funds for democratisation initiatives. UN staff point to an important advantage that the UNDP has over UNSC-mandated activities. Unlike the UN secretariat, UNDP can initiate projects on the basis of commitment, due to its greater ability to achieve funding by direct resource mobilisation also at country level. This, in turn, may help to ensure a more timely initiation of projects, but the electoral experts report to the SRSG and not the UNDP. The lack of clarity of mandates, reporting lines and accountability is an obstacle to the effectiveness of the UN-provided electoral support.

Experience has shown that the international attention span for a peace operation, and thus the financial assistance, generally averages about two to four years. The risk of donor fatigue becomes an additional time-pressure factor for the political transition and especially the holding of elections.[47]

[44] Interview, May 2006.
[45] The cost of elections is normally financed by the assessed budget by the General Assembly, but when a mission depends on voluntary funding, like UNAMA, the need to demonstrate visible changes become even more urgent. said a senior UN electoral officer. The total costs of the electoral process from 2003 to 2006 – including voter registration, presidential and national assembly elections, and capacity-building, amount to approximately USD 340.6 million.
[46] NUPI interview May 2006.
[47] NUPI interview, May 2006.

The democratisation process in Afghanistan was broken down into individual and time-bound programmes for the development of a constitution and elections with separate and limited budgets in order to mobilise funds. This 'projectisation' of the political development process caused interruptions and delays due to time-consuming resource mobilisation, the unclear division of labour and roles among the various UN bodies, the breakdown of institutional memory and high turnover of staff.[48] There is a great risk that 'projectisation' will be the trend in future peace operations as the General Assembly's assessed budget contributions are declining.

Human rights and democratisation

Respect for human rights is fundamental to any viable democratisation process, and human rights have become almost a standing mandate of all contemporary peace operations. Human rights monitoring is important for the transparent vetting of recruited government officials, in order to help bring about an end to impunity. Human Rights Commissions were established in both East Timor and Afghanistan, but the main difference was that in Afghanistan the commission was national supported by a couple of international advisors.

Progress in the protection of human rights is often constrained by a very weak judiciary and lack of the rule of law. Rebuilding a judiciary and establishing the rule of law are complicated and long-term tasks that involve both the need for establishing justice (transitional justice such as truth seeking, reconciliation and possibly trials), and building a legal system. Rule of law is a long-term endeavour that involves democratic oversight mechanisms, significant institutional development and capacity-building and is closely inter-linked with security sector reform. East Timor and Afghanistan are no exceptions to this, but the judiciaries in both countries are complicated by the mosaic of legal sources, which include remnants of past regimes, international law, customary law and practices, UN regulations (in East Timor), and the dominance of Islamic law (in Afghanistan).

Achievements, challenges and lessons learned

UNTAET may from an initial assessment be perceived as applying a maximum approach given its excessive mandate, large number of staff and resources. The UNTAET was relatively successful in the broader aspects of state-building, and fundamental functions and structures were put in place. The media and public information received considerable support, and UNTAET's public information office was the first to become *Timorised.* However, democratisation was not a high priority during implementation. Achievements were limited – the main one being a gradual transition of government responsibility through a structure of co-governance, which emerged at the request of the East Timorese, who otherwise threatened to resign. (Chesterman, 2004: 140.) Elections to a constituent assembly took place almost two years into the mission, and presidential elections were held in May 2004. Preparations for these democratic processes were relatively scarce in terms of civic education, public consultations and national capacity-building. The UNTAET may be said to have applied a *minimum* approach in regard to state-building and democratisation despite the potential for a *maximum* peace operation.

[48] Interview June 2006. The UNDP has commissioned an independent electoral audit of the elections in Afghanistan. The report, titled 'UN Election Evaluation Mission 2006, Reports 1 & 2, Afghanistan Election Evaluation Mission, May 2006', forthcoming Margie Cook et al.

Parts of the national leadership, mainly associated with the national party Freitlin, reproduced authoritarian leadership tendencies. Initially UNTAET stood up against them, but as Freitlin gained power and won the majority of seats in the constituent assembly, political developments became less democratic. The constituent assembly revised initial draft constitutions in favour of a stronger parliamentary system and managed to turn the constituent assembly into a national parliament by a vote among the assembly members, even though that was in conflict with the constitution. (See Goldstone, 2005.) The importance of establishing parliamentary oversight mechanisms, including over the security apparatus, vaporised – likewise regarding check and balances in government. Despite the earlier emphasis on political pluralism, East Timor gradually became more of a one-party state.

In Afghanistan, UNAMA applied the principle of local ownership and fostered national decision-making. Its main democratisation achievements were that a basic foundation for state structures was provided (including a new constitution, the creation of commissions for acceleration of state-building and reform processes for the judicial and administrative governance, human rights protection and elections). Relative stability was achieved through inclusion and bargaining, although this also compromised democratic standards due to lack of vetting processes or transparent recruitment. A national legitimate leadership was established by democratic elections to the post of head of state and to the national assembly.

Limited international stabilisation assistance and inadequate support for building a domestic security sector in Afghanistan constrained broad political participation as well as economic and social development, particularly in the south and east of the country. Lack of reconciliation and limited time to build political trust before holding elections in combination with the exclusion of political parties left a limited legacy in terms of entrenching a broad-based democratic culture. Even though UNAMA was a 'light' peace operation, it embarked on a maximum democratisation strategy with primary focus on democracy and good governance.

In East Timor, UNTAET was centralised and hierarchical, which adversely affected attempts to build a sub-national administration. The Afghan Transitional Administration applied a principle of centralisation before delegation of fiscal and administrative authority, in an attempt to curtail the powers of the regional warlords. However, the lack of decentralisation of reconstruction assistance left limited space for the population and civic groups to have a say in the peacebuilding process. With both the decision-making process and resources centralised in the capital and operated in a top-down manner, it became difficult to show visible progress on the ground, and that has adversely affected public confidence in the new government, leaving many expectations unfulfilled.

Full use was not made of the opportunities that electoral or constitutional processes can offer. Consolidation of the initial push towards democracy may have been hampered for several reasons: Civic education usually stopped with the election event; investment in addressing root causes of conflict was not an articulated concern, and an overly tight deadline for implementing the elements of a political process for state-building was not

balanced with adequate investment and institutional development and capacity-building of the public sector including minimal good governance measures. This we have seen in the cases of both East Timor and Afghanistan.

UNTAET had all the opportunities for applying a maximum democratisation strategy but opted for a minimum strategy. From this brief examination, it is difficult to explain why. One reason may have been that East Timor was perceived as a *terra nullis*. Therefore there was no concerted ambition to accelerate the *Timorisation* process in the area of political governance, and hence no consultation on a political timetable or clear strategy. The UNTAET strategy shares some affinity with Roland Paris' suggestion of institutionalising before liberalising, but liberalisation became less democratic in the end.

An ambitious electoral timetable like that in Afghanistan is a risky path to take when the underpinning institutions and structures are not adequately developed. A legitimate government may be established in terms of process – but it is difficult to turn it into a credible government if the structures and capacity are inadequate and constrain its performance, including the provision of basic services. The Bonn process and its further elaboration did not encourage a comprehensive approach to the rapid political development process, which in turn poses questions regarding its sustainability, given the lack of check and balances, rising levels of corruption and deteriorating security. At the risk of oversimplification, we may say that the two examples show that neither institutionalisation nor liberalisation can succeed in isolation: they need to be paired and sequenced.

UN peace operation type and democratisation strategy

	Maximum	**Minimum**
Major UN role in transition administration		East Timor
Significant national ownership	Afghanistan	

7. Policy options and possible risks: Maximum and minimum democratisation

In previous chapters, we identified the ambiguity and incoherence between intentions, planning and implementation. More specifically this involved the absence of a comprehensive strategy for binding them together and the lack of practical understanding of the inter-relatedness between the various components of democratisation. Here we discuss two main options for how the UN best can promote democracy: through maximum or minimum democratisation.

The Minimum option

This is an option which, aside from working to ensure the conduct of an initial election or a formation of a new national government through a consultative process, adopts a 'hands-off policy' in relation to political processes and the development of government institutions in a host country. Within the parameters of a minimum option, a new government is perceived to be best suited for carrying out the state-building process; any external assistance would focus on providing security and domestic stability. At a later stage it may be desirable for outside actors to offer support to democratisation efforts – but structures associated with the UN secretariat will take little part in these subsequent and longer-term efforts.

The main argument for a minimum approach is that a political system and a state cannot be created by external actors but should develop from within. Stressing that states cannot be built from the outside, Chesterman et al. (2004) emphasise that the lack of a clear and consistent definition of state-building 'contributes to incoherent policy response and practical consequences of the weakening of state-institutions'. The general ambiguous end-state of UN peace operations causes confusion that affects the planning of an exit strategy. Chesterman et al. criticise the notion of local ownership for being overly vague, with more psychological than political import and therefore of limited value.

Another argument for a minimum approach is the belief that international political will to support long-term efforts at political transition is limited; further, that the lack of cohesiveness risks creating donor-dependence: hence, the 'notion of imposing liberal democracy is a pipedream'. (Zisk Marten, 2004: 146–60) At the extreme end of the 'minimalist-scale', Zisk Marten recommends that the UN and international community should engage only in 'security building'.

This strategy may be appropriate if indigenous political institutions and a legitimate national authority are in place. In such a scenario, the role of the UN would be primarily to ensure a stable environment, including the facilitation of political dialogue. However, we see several risks involved in applying a minimum strategy. These we have summarised into five headings.

Minimum risk 1: snowball effect - limited involvement triggers the need for more
Even minimal political engagement by way of ensuring the formation of a new government may still represent significant interference in domestic politics. Can the UN remain a detached bystander when it has already become involved in key post-war political processes in a country? A central risk associated with the minimum strategy is that UN involvement may require further responsive and responsible assistance. Early and quick elections may risk destabilising an existing fragile situation. An example is Liberia, with UN assistance to the elections that brought Charles Taylor to power in 1997. He quickly moved away from democratic practices and the rule of law, and plunged the country into further violent chaos. Security and elections may not be enough to trigger a political transition or peacebuilding. The UN might find itself unprepared when faced with the challenge of having to ensure that fundamental grievances are resolved and that state institutions are strong enough to offer a check on newly elected leaders.

Minimum risk 2: new centralisation and unaccountable leaders
National elections may centralise the political power, generate a capital bias, neglect the need to strengthen local government, and limit the outreach of assistance and services. This seems to have been the case in both Afghanistan and East Timor, where elections have weakened the confidence in the central government and given rise to suspicions of corruption and deliberate local neglect because of ethnicity or other reasons. There is a risk that early local elections before human rights criteria are introduced and basic political administrative structures are in place, with clear delineation of authority between central and local government, may serve to empower illegal politico-military networks and 'warlordism' (EU Electoral Observation Mission, 2005: 40). A potential lack of enforcement of human rights standards would also continue a culture of impunity typically associated with the war years. Many of these tendencies can already be identified in Afghanistan.

Minimum risk 3: inability to sustain democratisation
War-torn societies have often experienced a total institutional breakdown. In such a context, as Roland Paris notes, political liberalisation may not be self-regulating.[49] Instead the competition may generate causes for new grievances and continued violence. In a context of weak institutions, the institutional void may get filled by non-statutory local power brokers and corrupt politicians, undermining a nascent democratisation process.

Minimum risk 4: unfulfilled expectations
Elections raise voter expectations with regard to peace, prosperity and good governance. If the elected successor regimes do not manage to fulfil these expectations, credibility will quickly be weakened. Transitions may also cause uncertainty about the future, and may be complicated by opportunistic behaviour with regard to the sudden influx of aid. The combination of transitions, post-conflict reconstruction and quick elections pose a significant challenge to the political managerial skills of the new regime.

[49] Paris (2005) also argues that promotion of liberalisation of the political sphere through elections is not self-enforcing, but is a high-risk path full of pitfalls.

Minimum risk 5: perpetuating the role of civil war actors
Compressed political timetables may override the need to identify and vet local partners. Lack of information about local political and social organisations may create fear of engagement with indigenous structures because of the risk of increased factionalism. The lack of investment in local relationships and spaces for dialogue between internal and external actors may cause resentment towards the UN and hinder efficient strengthening of the democratic foundation of the country. (See WSP, 2004; Ammitzbøll et al., 2004.)

Possible risks of early and quick elections

- Holding elections too early may mean the risk of destabilising a fragile political security situation and undermining the longer-term democratisation efforts.
- Early elections imply a quiet acceptance of compromising the standard and neglect of capacity-building unclear of the national electoral administration.
- The risk of inadequate capacity-building with regard to local electoral administration has implications for sustainability. The international assistance community may be asked to repeat its efforts at the next electoral cycle.
- Relatively early elections do not allow for sufficient time to prepare the voters for democratisation through an effective civic education programme, and may raise unrealistic expectations.
- Early elections may create a new but weak government and undermine its credibility if assistance to building political managerial capacity and public sector institutions has not been matched in order to ensure the government is able to per-

Maximum option

The exit strategy used to be elections, but now it is really the capacity of new legitimate authorities... It is linked to the establishment of a credible, professional and loyal army and police, ...extension of state authority throughout the country and the capacity to develop basic services, DDR, and resettlement of refugees and IDPs

Senior DPKO Official, UNHQ January 2005, quoted from Call, 2005:10

The underlying assumption for a maximum strategy is that external assistance can create successful conflict transformation and peacebuilding. In a maximum strategy, security and elections are elements of a larger endeavour towards ensuring political transition. Elections are regarded as part of a broader process, and not as an end in itself. A broader democratisation process would entail support for the rule of law, democratic administrative governance, continued civic education to promote political diversity and pluralism, and support to the media and civil society.

Understanding the local context and bottom–up democratisation
A maximum approach implies considerable knowledge and understanding of the dynamics of local politics and social organisation. Building local partnerships and stimulating democratisation from below are important. As was the case in Sierra Leone, local elections can strengthen the tie between state and society, since local electoral issues tend to concentrate on specific development issues and service delivery directly related to the

individual or local community. Decentralisation of decision-making may ensure that resources better respond to local needs and reach the grassroots level.[50] The strengthening of local government may constitute an important building block for the overall democratisation and peacebuilding process (Risley and Sisk, 2005:14) – if authority and resource use are delegated and there is adequate local managerial capacity.

Enabling formal and informal political actors and building a political culture
A precondition for a successful democratisation is an active and political citizenry or civil society, meaning the arena between the state and the household within which assemblies are formed around ideas and beliefs. Dahl (2000: 51) argues that a sustainable democracy needs to be nourished by a supportive political culture. A strong civil society may be able to exercise pressure for political changes, as in Liberia, where civil organisations have launched a campaign for good governance. Moreover, civil society can constitute a system of checks and balances on the government and may compensate for weak accountability mechanisms by monitoring government performance, thus encouraging efficiency.

In most peace operations there has been relatively limited understanding of traditional forms of political and social organisation.[51] 'Civil society' is a broad term, but in practice in peace missions it is often associated only with formal and Western-style NGOs. This ignores traditional structures like local councils and religious institutions. There seems to be a lack of methodology for how to assess, vet and reach out to local actors and informal institutional organisations. The UN and various international organisations tend to apply a hands-off policy, for fear of losing impartiality if they get involved with local politics or interests. The vagueness of the concept may result in an overly narrow understanding of the important development of interaction between state and society, and local actors and international organisations, which can assist with building the country from within using indigenous capacity. Instead of singling out the various actors, local transformation could be analysed through a framework of interaction (see Pouligny, 1999).

Working with the media
The media can play a critical role in peacebuilding, transition and democratisation by capturing the social reality and transmitting information about progress and challenges to the people at large. The media may be instrumental in transforming disagreements into open debates and may forge consensus and reconciliation. On the other hand, the media may also be instrumental in aggravating grievances, as shown by the tragic case of Rwanda. Thus it is vital to invest in capacity-building and encourage accountable journalism. During a process of democratic transformation, communication becomes central for harmonising perceptions of democratisation and managing expectations
As well as in minimal options there are several risks associated with maximum strategies, here summarised into five clusters.

[50] In the case of Sierra Leone, there are, however, signs that the momentum from the local elections in 2003 has not been adequately followed up by a systematic plan for decentralisation, leaving most of the local communities isolated with only little financial and administrative assistance from the centre. (See ICG, 2003.)
[51] It should be stressed that UNAMA aimed to be different and tried actively to recruit staff with prior Afghanistan experience.

Maximum risk 1: unintended consequences of deep-seated UN involvement
A UN peace operation with a maximum mandate could easily move towards taking over the control of domestic affairs, overshadowing local actors and disempowering local leaders. The UN may also risks becoming hostage to certain political groupings that use the privileges generated by a peace operation to serve their interests.

Maximum risk 2: overly high demands on time, preparation and UN expertise
A maximum approach requires a comprehensive needs assessment, feasibility studies, careful analysis of local dynamics and actors, and a large and intelligent response to the different and interlinked needs at the same time. For instance, support for the decentralisation of political authority and local civil society actors may risk empowering local illegal powerbrokers or existing informal but repressive leaders. The UN system will need investment in its capacity and ability to carry out a long-term and comprehensive operation and also for establishing solid institutions.

Maximum risk 3: inconsistency between intentions versus planning skills and availability of required funds
A successful maximum approach requires consistency between intentions, resources and time-lines, sequencing and matching of distribution and prioritisation assistance to political development process, state capacity and security. Where there is not adequate political will and funding for a comprehensive strategy, the result may be an imbalanced approach with inconsistent sequencing. In order to tackle this risk, the UN system will have to do more *pro-active* strategising and co-ordinating.

Maximum risk 4: foregoing the UN's neutrality
A comprehensive and partly intrusive approach to democratisation and peacebuilding after conflict may challenge the UN's commitment to political neutrality. Moreover, the UN may at times be compelled to act decisively so as to avoid the human rights dilemma: the compromising of security standards and prevalence of culture of impunity in the state administration.

Maximum risk 5: the 'laundry list' syndrome
A comprehensive approach may risk augmenting the 'laundry list syndrome'. Major UN interventions easily trigger the 'bureaucratic logic of giving every agency, fund, programme and department a share of the pie, without exercising strategic judgement about what the genuine priorities are and ensuring they receive resources, even if other important but less urgent sectors go un-funded' (Call, 2005: 5–6). The UN Joint Needs Assessment in Liberia in 2004 for peacebuilding and democratisation singled out as many as twenty 'priority sectors' (ibid.).

There are considerable risks associated with both minimum and maximum strategies which policy-makers, planners and implementers should be aware of. It is crucial that the potential risks likely to emerge in different country contexts are taken into account when deciding on appropriate democratisation strategies for specific countries.

8. Concluding comments

This report has sought to shed light on some of the deep-seated challenges associated with democratisation. We have noted the stark contrast between the bold commitment to broad democratisation in peace operations as outlined in central UN policy documents[52] since the early 1990s, and, on the other hand, the failure to develop operational concepts, guidelines or planning procedures that can help to ensure that these commitments are followed through. There have been few attempts within the UN system at systematically gathering best practices and lessons learned on democratisation in peace operation.

Similarly, we have noted the absence of references to 'democracy' in UN Security Council mandates despite the overall rhetorical commitment in policy documents. Mandates nevertheless usually indirectly carve out a political space for doing democratisation and elections have indeed been central in most peace operations. There are typically clear instructions for conducting elections; and, increasingly throughout the 1990s, mandates have entrenched principles of human rights, strengthening local media and calling on missions to restructure or re-establish viable governing institutions in host countries. Taken together, these elements of mandates constitute a call for democratisation – whereas the absence of references to democracy and democratisation indicate ambivalence in relation to these aims within the UN system.

The case material assessed for this report revealed the extent to which peace agreements tend to serve central strategic functions in relation to UN democratisation efforts in specific post-conflict situations. Peace agreements often become organising concepts around which the UN develops democratisation initiatives in the field. This is a positive feature, because it tends to enhance local ownership. However, there also seems to be little strategic thinking in the UN on how best to capitalise on the provisions in peace agreements and ensure that they form a solid basis for entrenching democracy.

This report is not the first to identify the lack of strategic vision within the UN system – emphasising this issue adds little new to the study of UN peace operations. (See, for example, Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2004.) Nevertheless, it is worth noting that in the context of democratisation there seem to be gaps in strategic thinking on two levels in the UN system. We have noted the apparent lack of sufficient thinking at the headquarters level on how varieties of democratisation strategies can best be implemented and which actors within the UN system are most suited to take lead roles in line with their respective 'comparative advantages'. At the country level, there seem to be no strategies, templates or guidance to mission staff on how best to interact with political actors and generate systematic knowledge on formal and informal political processes.

The lack of strategy coupled with failure to develop tangible goals for democratisation efforts have important implications. It is difficult to incorporate adequate accountability

[52] Report of the panel on United Nations Peace Operations A/557305-S 2000/809, 2005 World Summit Outcome A/60/L.1.

measures when goals and strategies are left undefined. Who should be responsible for success and failures in democratisation? Existing procedures do not seem to address this issue adequately.

Democratisation is a relevant test case for the extent to which the UN manages to transform overall visions and commitments into corresponding strategies, to adjust organisational structures, and to ensure the implementation of new policies derived from novel visions. Our findings would indicate that while the rhetoric and attempted actions of UN peace operations have evolved and become increasingly sophisticated both in relation to democratisation and in relation to overall peacebuilding, there have been few changes in UN organisational structures, staffing levels, planning and doctrine development. There also seems to be a tendency to 'projectisation': individual and externally funded projects together coming to constitute an overall but perhaps poorly co-ordinated democratisation strategy.

Without an increase in resources and organisational streamlining, the goal of sustainable democratisation within UN peace operations seems difficult to obtain. Moreover, the UN might well ask itself: which of its branches has the best 'comparative advantage' to take the lead in the democratisation sphere? The Electoral Assistance Division (EAD) holds sophisticated expertise on elections-related issues and could perhaps usefully assume an expanded role where it addressed the need for development of political platforms, broader and longer-term civic education and capacity-building in host countries. There are also several relevant democratisation-related initiatives on field levels by UN agencies (UN country teams) and non-UN organisations, but there is a lack of systematic approach to linking these various programmes within an overall strategy. Co-ordination of headquarters and pre-planned initiatives ready for implementation leaves scant margin for flexibility and adjustment at the field level.

The issue of timing and long-term efforts are central challenges that deserve greater attention. What should be the role of the UNDP and other country team agencies? If there is to be integration, then at what stage of the process? and how much in regard to mandate and tasks should the UN country team contribute? If a broad-based, maximum type of democratisation strategy is to be implemented, it might be that UN country teams are best suited to take the lead – given that they will stay on in the country once the peace operation terminates.

A key purpose behind highlighting both possible constraints as well as possibilities in this report has been to encourage greater flexibility, care and coherence in the design of democracy initiatives in UN peace operations. In our view, democratisation strategies should be designed according to developments in at least three clusters of issues: the political context in the host country; the number of peace keeping troops and security conditions; and the level of financial and political commitment to long-term peace in the host country on the part of external powers. These three variables may call for different variants of either maximum or minimum democracy promotion.

This report is issued just as the new Peacebuilding Commission (PBC) is commencing its

work. The PBC has been charged with bringing 'together all relevant actors to marshal resources and to advise on and propose integrated strategies for post-conflict peacebuilding and recovery', and to 'focus attention on the reconstruction and institution-building efforts necessary for recovery from conflict and support the development of integrated strategies in order to lay the foundations for sustainable development'.[53] If the PBC is to contribute to the advancement of democracy in peace operations, it must be provided with sufficient funding as well as a substantial function and authority. Disputes over leadership and role hamper current democratisation efforts by UN actors. The PBC could usefully serve as the overall administrator to ensure coherence and clarity on how the UN is to do democratisation as part of its overall peacebuilding efforts. Our stock-taking of democratisation in UN peace operations has revealed the serious lack of strategies on how best to do democratisation. The PBC could prove to be the needed engine for finally pushing forward attempts at developing doctrines and principles for UN actions in the sphere of democratisation.[54]

This report has been intended to stimulate thinking on the various ways in which the UN could aim to make democratisation a part of peace operations. Strategic clarity, prioritisation and better sequencing of efforts will need to be improved if the UN is to achieve its ambitious peacebuilding and democracy agenda – it is to be hoped that the PBC can bring in the necessary focus, consistency and funding for this.

Democratisation: issues for consideration: policy-makers and planners

- What types of democratisation efforts work best in specific contexts?
- Should UN operations focus on core functions such as security and early elections and leave the broader aspects of democratisation to other actors such as the UN country team, Bretton Woods, bilaterals and NGOs?
- Is there a need for strategic guidelines for democratisation and for more investment put into strengthening cohesion between the various UN actors?
- What are the best ways of sequencing political liberalisation, security, state-building and non-state aspects of democratisation?
- How should funding be allocated – assessed budget versus voluntary funding, with the possible risk of either 'short-termism' or 'projectisation' of the democratic political development process?
- In what ways can local counterparts best be involved in the planning and operation of democratisation activities by UN peace operations?

[53] 2005 World Summit Outcome A/60/L.1.

[54] The 2005 report of the Special Committee on Peacekeeping Operations (A/59/19) recommended various improvements for UN peacekeeping. One recommendation was to step up efforts to develop generic peacekeeping policies, procedures and guidelines. The Secretary-General has since reported that while there have been some improvements the Secretary has so far been prevented from putting in place a 'mechanism for the elaboration, promulgation and dissemination for United Nations policies and practices in peacekeeping'. At the same time, however, the Secretary acknowledged the increasing need for this: 'the growing complexity of peacekeeping mandates is expanding the range of issues for which clear and consistent policies are required'. (A/60/640 point 14, page 5).

Annexes.

Annex 1: AREU: A Path to Peace? Post-Conflict Elections 1992–2002

	ELECTIONS	OUTCOME	PRECONDITIONS
Kosovo	2002 2001 2000	Peaceful elections deemed 'free and fair.' Kosovo effectively governed as UN protectorate with increasing resentment from elected officials and broader population.	Strong and continuing presence of UN and multi-national peacekeeping force.
East Timor	2001 2002	Peaceful elections won by Freitlin party, which had led struggle for independence.	External threat (Indonesia-based militias) removed by strong UN peacekeeping presence. UN peacekeeping forces still in country.
Liberia	1997	Charles Taylor, most powerful factional leader, elected because of widespread fear that if he lost, the country would return to civil war. Elections ratified power structures created by seven years of civil war. Continued national and regional instability and violence leading to foreign intervention in Liberia in August 2003.	Continued violence and brutality.
Bosnia-Herzegovina	1996 +	Widespread voter intimidation and ethnic engineering through electoral fraud. Replicated existing power structures. Leaders opposed to new state were strengthened.	Decision to proceed with elections so soon after Dayton Agreement (1995) highly controversial. Peace agreement allowed opposing forces to maintain armed capabilities.
El Salvador	1994	Effective political transformation under relatively strong interim regime.	Successful demobilisation supported and monitored by UN. Relative demilitarisation of politics. Peace accords held.
Mozambique	1994	Tactical voting balanced two powerful parties by choosing ruling FERMILO candidate as president but RENAMO candidates for parliament.	Relatively strong interim government restored peace and reduced fear. Demobilisation of RENAMO; transformation to political party. Peace agreement held.
South Africa	1994	Peaceful, 'substantially free and fair elections' held with widespread participation and legitimacy.	Internally-driven constitution-making process involving extensive consultation, negotiation and compromise. Strong traditions of grass-roots politics.
Cambodia	1993	Technically successful elections followed by a forced reversal of the result and then a departure of UN & international forces. A coup against the royalist FUNCINPEC party led to a return to political intimidation and authoritarian rule.	Relatively strong interim administration had reduced instability and fear. Local human rights organisations developed during this period.
Angola	1992	Failed to end the decades old civil war, when UNITA leader Jonas Savimbi refused to accept his party's defeat.	Failure to fully disarm and demobilise the warring armies prior to the election. Inadequate resources and leadership from international community.

(from AREU 2003: 8)

Annex 2: Budgeted and actual costs of elections in Afghanistan 2003–2006

2004–2005 Afghan Elections Phase I

•Voter Registration Project: 14 August 2003 – 20 August 2004
Objective: The creation of an enabling environment for eligible voters to register for the October 2004 presidential elections. Budget: $95.4m Final Costs: $92.2m

•2004 Presidential Elections: 1 May 2004 – 30 December 2004
Objective: To build on the achievements of the voter registration project by supporting the organisation of free and fair presidential elections in October 2004. Budget: $81.4m Final Costs: $71.7m

Transitional Costs: December 2004 – March 2005 Final Costs: $3.7m

2004–2005 Afghan Elections Phase II

•2005 National Assembly Elections: 28 March 2005 – 31 December 2005
Objective: To support the organisation of accepted and legitimate National Assembly elections in 2005, creating a durable foundation for national management of accepted and legitimate elections in the future.

Budget: $159m Final Costs: $172m Resources Mobilised (as of 21 February 2006): $157m

2004–2005 Afghan Elections Phase II Extended

•Transitional Support to the Independent Election Commission: 15 Nov 2005 – 20 March 2006
Objective: To address the needs of the IEC – to sustain operations and ensure budgetary independence – during the transitional period leading up to the new Afghan fiscal year 1385, with the ultimate goal of establishing a fully national, independent commission with the ability to undertake future elections.

Budget: $2.9m Resources Mobilised: **$900,000**

Total costs USD 340.6 Million: [55]

Source: UNDP Afghanistan

[55] Including mobilized resources for 'Afghan Elections Phase II Extended' of USD 900,000.

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