

Helpdesk Research Report: Election-related Conflict

Date: 17/09/08

Query: Please identify literature and lessons learned on election-related conflict, including its prevention and mitigation. Countries of interest include DRC/ Kenya/ Afghanistan / Iraq/ Timor.

Enquirer: DFID Sudan

Contents

1. Overview
2. Key Documents
 - General
 - Electoral Systems
 - Country Case Studies

1. Overview

Election-related conflict can be defined as “any random or organised act or threat to intimidate, physically harm, blackmail, or abuse a political stakeholder in seeking to determine, delay, or to otherwise influence an electoral process” (see Fischer in ‘Key Documents’ section, p. 3). Such conflict or violence can occur at any stage of the electoral process – from pre-election registration, candidate nomination and campaigning to election day balloting to post-election results. Despite its prevalence, election-related conflict is an under-researched area. Most of the literature on elections relates to its linkages to democratisation, electoral assistance and the impact of elections in post-conflict or fragile contexts. Still, there is a small body of literature that addresses with more specificity election-related conflict – its potential causes and methods of prevention and mitigation. The following are key areas discussed:

Electoral system choice: there is an unsettled debate about which type of electoral system is preferable in stemming conflict. Some scholars argue that a system based on proportional representation (PR) is better than a majoritarian first-past-the-post system at preventing the renewal of violence. This is because majoritarian systems exclude “losers” from government, which may provide incentives for them to turn to violence. This threat is more pronounced in situations where patronage is prevalent as an election loss for one individual means a loss for an entire group that would have benefited from patronage ties.

PR systems on the other hand are more inclusive and encourage collaboration among different groups. Some scholars argue however that in fragile environments, a majoritarian system may be preferable since the state needs to be effective and able to act, which may be difficult if constant collaboration and negotiation is required. Mixed systems have been advocated that draw on both PR and majoritarian systems. ‘Vote pooling’, where candidates must garner a minimum level of support in different regions in order to win, can be desirable in moderating candidates’ platforms. Lessons from the electoral systems in Iraq and Afghanistan are discussed in this research report.

Electoral administration: neutral, fair and transparent election management bodies (EMBs) or electoral commissions (ECs) are considered integral to the proper functioning of elections. They prevent electoral fraud and promote confidence in the legitimacy of elections. In the absence of effective electoral administration, violence can ensue, especially in contexts where the chances of

fraud are high. In Sri Lanka, the EC in 2004 was given broad powers to increase the police and military presence for security and to intervene in media broadcasts that were problematic and divisive. This was considered a key reason why election-related violence declined compared to prior elections.

Election courts are also integral to violence prevention. Courts need the capacity to adjudicate election disputes should the EMBs or ECs fail to function properly.

Consultation: some of the literature emphasises that electoral administrative institutions are important not only to ensure the proper functioning of elections but also as a source of consultation and joint-decision making. By providing such an arena, these institutions provide incentives for parties to move away from military strategies to political strategies (as in El Salvador and Mozambique).

Local mechanisms for consultation and reliance on specific norms and traditions of harmony and inter-group relations have also been emphasised, for example in Indonesia, to prevent and mitigate election-related conflict.

Political parties: political parties based on ethnic or religious lines can be divisive and lead to violence and conflict. This has led some experts to advocate bans on such parties. In addition, lack of capacity within political parties can be an issue, as was the case in Kenya, 2007. There, it is argued that the inability of political parties to properly handle the nomination process spurred violence. As such, programmes to support capacity building of political parties can be beneficial in preventing violence.

The disarmament of armed groups and the question of whether to include them in the political process is another key issue. Some of the literature argues that it is necessary to include former armed groups/rebel groups in elections as an incentive to disarm. Others stress that unless armed groups completely disarm and transform themselves in political parties prior to elections (such as in El Salvador and Mozambique), they should be excluded from the electoral process.

As noted above, establishing and facilitating arenas for consultation can play an effective role in preventing conflict. They can bring political parties together, provide incentives for dialogue and cooperation and lead to the development of non-violence pacts and codes of conduct, as was done in Macedonia in 2002.

Civic education, media and election monitoring: civic education and non-violence training programmes can be helpful in encouraging voters to vote outside of ethnic and religious lines, to avoid vote-buying and to support non-violent tactics. In addition, some of the literature notes that security officials should be included in election and conflict prevention training. Education and training programmes should also extend to election monitoring – to train NGOs and other local organisations how to do early warning conflict assessments and to monitor electoral processes.

The media can also play a role both in spurring violence and in stemming it. Media can be effective in preventing and mitigating violence through quality and responsible reporting, through working with election monitors, and through broadcasted pleas for non-violence, as occurred in Kenya in 2007-2008.

2. Key Documents

General

Sisk, T., 2008, 'Elections in Fragile States: Between Voice and Violence', Paper presented at the annual meeting of the ISA's 49th Annual Convention, Bridging Multiple Divides, 26-29 March, San Francisco

http://www.allacademic.com/meta/p253347_index.html

This paper discusses election-related violence in 'fragile states' (war-prone or war-torn societies). It notes that the goal of such violence is "to affect the process of election processes, commonly to disable and disrupt opposing forces in order to prevail at the polls, to vitiate the elections all together by undermining the integrity of the results, or to influence voting behaviour through threat or intimidation" (p. 2). It identifies several key causes of such violence, including social structural conditions; electoral system choice and the political stakes; the neutrality and competence of electoral administration; and the nature and functioning of the security sector. The paper argues that the stakes of political competition are especially high in the case of patronage politics, where winning an office impacts not only the individual but the entire clan, faction or ethnic group. The risk of electoral violence is also high in situations where a loss can result in a group becoming a 'permanent minority'.

The paper notes that conflict-exacerbating election outcomes can be mitigated by pre-election power-sharing pacts, regulation of political parties and the facilitation of peace pledges or non-violence pacts among them, and the use of incentives and disincentives to promote cooperation and unity. Cooperation and unity can be fostered through electoral systems that require coalition-building and that require a minimum level of support from a diverse set of regions in order to win office. In addition, the paper notes that an effective electoral management body and election monitoring are also critical to legitimating elections and preventing election-related violence; as well as ongoing monitoring of political party pacts and violence assessments.

The paper stresses the importance of more research and a greater understanding of causes of violence and how international assistance and programming can engage in election-related conflict prevention. It critiques the international community for hindering positive developments at times, for example, in the Kenyan elections in 2008. Here, the international response to electoral fraud by Kibaki was to broker a power-sharing pact – thus rewarding the perpetrators of election-related violence and providing perverse incentives.

Fischer, J., 2002, 'Electoral Conflict and Violence: A Strategy for Study and Prevention', IFES White Paper, International Foundation for Election Systems, Washington, DC
<http://unpan1.un.org/intradoc/groups/public/documents/UNTC/UNPAN019255.pdf>

This paper surveys election-related conflict from 2001 and discusses how conflict or violence can occur through the breakdown of electoral processes. It identifies five stages of the electoral process during which electoral conflict or violence can occur:

- "Identity conflict can occur during the registration process when refugees or other conflict-forced migrants cannot establish or re-establish their officially recognised identities.
- Campaign conflict can occur as rivals seek to disrupt the opponents' campaigns, intimidate voters and candidates, and use threats and violence to influence participation in the voting.
- Balloting conflict can occur on Election Day when rivalries are played out at the polling station.
- Results conflict can occur with disputes over election results and the inability of judicial mechanisms to resolve disputes a fair, timely, and transparent manner.
- Representation conflict can occur when elections are organised as "zero sum" events and "losers" are left out of participation in governance" (p. 3).

The paper finds that election security has been most effective when it has involved a civil-police-military partnership of equals. In addition, it points to the importance of building the capacities of national and local institutions that can prevent and resolve election-related conflict. They include: election management bodies (EMBs), security forces, election courts and political parties. These, the paper argues have been neglected in project designs and activities – and should form part of an integrated programming initiative. Election Courts should be given technical assistance that

promotes the timely, fair and transparent adjudication of disputes and access to justice for electoral plaintiffs; and political parties with armed groups should be subject to disarmament programmes.

Schimpp, M. and McKernan, A. F., 2001, 'Elections and Conflict: An Issues Paper', Elections and Political Processes Division, USAID

http://pdf.dec.org/pdf_docs/PNACW678.pdf

This paper discusses election-related conflict and various methods to prevent or address such conflict. In order to ensure that conflict-related grievance and greed issues are not exacerbated by elections, it is important to consider the following:

- Certain types of electoral frameworks may be better or worse for managing conflict in polarized societies.
- Strong political parties have the potential to develop programmatic platforms that transcend ethnic or religious lines whereas weak ones are more likely to exploit grievances and greed.
- Favours a single party over other contenders through political party assistance can exacerbate conflict.
- Disarmament and demobilisation programmes are linked to political party development since political parties are often linked to armed political groups.
- The importance of voter education in highlighting peaceful participation and non-violence; in encouraging people to vote such that they are not excluded from the government's mandate; and in encouraging to vote outside of ethnic or religious lines.
- Election administration bodies must be considered fair or impartial in order to prevent instability. Donor assistance can be effective in capacity building and increasing the effectiveness of these institutions.
- Domestic security officials may not be impartial.
- Domestic election monitoring groups may also not be impartial; thus it is important to support a sufficient number of them to attempt to neutralise any bias and to deter fraud.
- The presence of international/regional election observers helps to encourage the losers to accept the legitimacy of elections
- The media can help or hinder conflict from spreading - responsible, quality reporting can help to prevent conflict. The media should work with election monitoring groups and report on their findings.
- A conflict monitoring network of NGOs in anticipation of elections can provide early warning and conflict assessments.
- Non-violence training sessions for conflict-prone segments of society, such as party leaders, can also help to stem violence. They teach that grievances can be addressed without violence.
- Police forces should be included in election and conflict prevention training along with the poll workers, election monitors etc. Including local police in the election security network will help them to better do their jobs.

Lyons, T., 2008, 'Peacebuilding, Democratization, and Transforming the Institutions of War'

The paper focuses on how to demilitarize politics and transform wartime institutions based on violence and insecurity into peacetime institutions (political parties, electoral authorities, consultative joint decision making bodies). It identifies El Salvador and Mozambique as successful examples: politics had been demilitarized prior to elections and voters were less fearful; military organisations had transformed into effective political parties; and strong interim institutions based on consultation and joint decision-making had been established.

Electoral administration and interim electoral commissions, the paper argues, should be seen not only as a way to administer legitimate elections but also as the basis of building consultative mechanisms and norms that increase confidence in the peace process. Combined with security sector reform programmes, there will be greater incentives from groups to move away from military strategies and to engage in the political process to protect interests.

For further information, see:

Lyons, T., 2004, 'Post-Conflict Elections and the Process of Demilitarizing Politics: The Role of Electoral Administration', *Democratization*, vol. 11, no. 3
<http://www.gsdrc.org/go/display&type=Document&id=1726>

Jarstad, A., 2006, 'Dilemmas of War-to-Democracy Transitions', Paper prepared for presentation at the conference *State, Conflict and Democracy*, 12-13 May, Lund University
<http://www.svet.lu.se/conference/papers/jarstad.pdf>

This paper explores potential dilemmas and trade-offs in trying to promote both democracy and peace. It notes that insecurity and grievances often persist after a peace settlement is signed and groups remain polarized. In such a context, democratic competition can exacerbate these divisions and increase the risk of renewed violence. The paper discusses the inclusion of rebel groups (potential spoilers) in government as part of peace deals, such as the SPLM in Sudan in 2004. While this may be necessary for warring parties to agree to terminate fighting, the author argues that their inclusion may undermine democratic legitimacy and long-term stability. Still, the alternative of excluding potential spoilers in order to promote peaceful democratisation is also dangerous. Research has shown that excluded groups are more likely to return to violent tactics. While there is no set solution, the paper stresses that it is critical to recognise and understand these various dilemmas.

Jarstad, A., 2008, 'Post-Accord Elections, Power Sharing and Conflict', Paper presented at the annual meeting of the ISA's 49th Annual Convention, *Bridging Multiple Divides*, 26-29 March, San Francisco
http://www.allacademic.com/meta/p253345_index.html

This paper attempts to fill the void in research on elections in war-torn societies and whether power sharing arrangements, often advocated in these contexts, are effective. It finds that the adoption of power sharing arrangements (guaranteed inclusion) prior to elections reduces the risk of election-related conflict (in terms of greater absence of violence, perception of 'free and fair' elections' and incidence of exclusion of rebels through electoral defeat). The paper notes that these findings seem to contradict previous studies that have found that political power sharing specified in peace agreements have no significant effect on the durability of peace. However, it stresses that most of these studies analysed the impact of peace agreements; whereas this study looked specifically at elections.

Reilly, B., 2008, 'Post-Conflict Elections: Uncertain Turning Points of Transition'
http://www.cdi.anu.edu.au/further_activities/2005-06/D_P/2006_03_Post_Conf_Elections_paper_BR.pdf

This paper addresses the key dilemmas of post-conflict elections. It emphasises that while post-conflict elections have become a core element of peace agreements, they can also contribute to more tension and violence (for example, in Angola and Sierra Leone during the 1990s); or to politically entrenching the same individuals instrumental to the prior conflict (for example, in Bosnia and Herzegovina). This has led to criticism of exposing fragile post-conflict countries to early democratisation and the competitive pressures of the electoral process. Electoral

competition can result in the mobilisation of ethnic, religious and political actors; and can also encourage 'outbidding' – the competition for votes based on increasingly extremist rhetoric and policies. The paper stresses though that electoral systems can be designed in ways that promote stability.

Most of the major transitional elections in recent years have adopted some form of proportional representation (PR) – in particular the simplest form, party-list PR (e.g. Iraq 2005). However, the author argues that these systems are usually based on the goal of expedience rather than conflict prevention. In Iraq, the alternate system favoured by experts, based around provincial boundaries to ensure greater accountability and representation of local constituencies, would have required a lengthy national census and was rejected at the time.

A mixed-system has been adopted in other cases, such as in elections for East Timor's 88-member constituent assembly in 2001, in order to draw the benefits from both proportionality and accountability. There, "most seats were elected on a nationwide basis by list PR, but there was also separate single-member electorates corresponding to each of the country's 13 districts. A similar system in Iraq may have guaranteed the Sunni minority a baseline of political representation at the provincial level, thus helping to assuage the political alienation which is at the root of Iraq's insurgency today" (p. 23).

The single non-transferable vote (SNTV) adopted in Afghanistan in the 2005 parliamentary elections was structurally majoritarian but still allowed for smaller parties to benefit. However, the system also forced candidates from the same party to compete against each other for the same pool of voters. This, the author argues, resulted in personal attributes overriding those of the party – and lead to factionalism, corruption and clientelistic politics.

In addition to the type of electoral system, the paper notes that support for electoral commissions and political party development can also impact on election-related conflict. Independent commissions run by apolitical civil servants and the development of centrist, programmatic political parties can both help to prevent the prospect of renewed violence. The paper cautions however that developing such political parties in post-conflict societies is difficult and ethnic and fractional parties often persist.

Soderberg Kovacs, M. and Ohlson, T., 2003, 'Democratisation and Armed Conflict', Swedish International Development Agency, Stockholm
<http://www.gsdrc.org/go/display&type=Document&id=1298>

This paper on democratisation and armed conflict includes a section on 'Electoral Politics, Violence and Political Change'. It notes that the holding of multiparty elections, or the prospects of elections, have contributed to the political violence in a number of countries in Africa. It advocates that in order to lessen to chances of conflict, elections in multiethnic societies should come after constitutional engineering and not the other way around. The institutionalisation of constitutional mechanisms can generate an emerging civil culture of trust, tolerance and compromise that allows for a peaceful electoral process. In addition, holding elections in contexts in which respect for rule of law and protection of civil and political rights are not yet guaranteed can contribute to political violence.

The paper also notes that the choice between a power sharing arrangement or a majoritarian system is not as important to the success or failure of peace agreements as the attitude of political actors. Only where leading actors are genuinely committed to accommodating all groups, the author argues, will power sharing work.

Merloe, P., 2003, 'Elections, Human Rights and Conflict Mitigation in the OSCE Arena', Geneva Centre for Security Policy Workshop, 10 November, Geneva

This presentation discusses democratic reform and conflict mitigation. Section 3 focuses on the risk of election-related conflict. It notes that fraudulent elections, electoral mismanagement and electoral systems that shut out opposition can contribute to violence. It outlines different tools and mechanisms at diplomatic, military and NGO levels that seek to address election-related conflict (see pp. 5-6). The presenter discusses the approach used in Macedonia in 2002 to prevent such conflict. It included the use of diplomatic envoys and international election observers. In addition, the National Democratic Institute (NDI) facilitated meetings and dialogue between political parties, which led to the establishment of a code of conduct to air grievances and see redress. NDI also worked with local non-partisan election monitors and promoted civic education programmes that trained a number of local groups to monitor the implementation of the code of conduct and other election regulations.

Electoral Systems

Norris, P., 2008, 'Chapter 5: Electoral Systems' in Driving Democracy: Do Power-Sharing Institutions Work?', Cambridge University Press

Available at: <http://www.pippanorris.com/>

This chapter looks at different electoral systems and how they may impact upon sustainable peace. It focuses on power-sharing arrangements, such as proportional representation and positive action (e.g. reserving seats for ethnic communities), and majoritarian systems. It notes that the literature is unclear as to which is a more effective mechanism in 'fragile states'. While, power-sharing arrangements have often been adopted in peace settlements, the author argues that a majoritarian system may be preferential as it allows for a government capable of decisive action without having to constantly negotiate with coalition partners. "Effective government may be the over-riding concern in societies emerging from deep-rooted internal conflict and failed states, such as Liberia, Somalia, Iraq, or Eritrea, where there are widespread doubts about the government's capacity to maintain internal security, to manage the economy, and to deliver basic public services" (p. 8). In the post-war Iraqi constitution, a proportional party list was adopted for elections for the National Assembly; whereas, Afghanistan adopted a majoritarian system for the *Wolesi Jirga*. The author stresses that it is difficult to draw lessons on electoral systems and conflict prevention/mitigation from these and other experiences, however, as there are many other factors at play, including cultural traditions, levels of development and the influence of the international community.

Reilly, B., 2006, 'Political Engineering and Party Politics in Conflict-Prone Societies', Democratization, Vol.13, No.5, pp. 811–827

<http://www.gsdrc.org/go/display&type=Document&id=2604>

This article examines approaches to preventing conflict and building sustainable democracy in ethnically-diverse societies. It looks at the 'consociational' approach: "to recognize the importance of ethnicity in the political system directly, and to make ethnic groups the building blocks of politics – through, for example, ethnic political parties – that can then be guaranteed representation in a 'grand coalition' government" (p. 814). It also looks at the alternative approach, which seeks to move the focus of politics away from ethnicity instead towards cross-cutting issues and inter-ethnic cooperation. This latter method requires institutions that de-emphasise mono-ethnic demands and promote unity. They include (see p. 816):

- 'votepooling' electoral systems that make politicians dependent on several different groups (across different regions of the country) to gain election. This encourages candidates to moderate their political rhetoric on potentially divisive issues and forces them to broaden their policy positions

- the presence of an arena of bargaining, in which political actors from different groups have an incentive to come together and cut deals on reciprocal electoral support, and hence perhaps on other more substantial issues as well; and
- the development of centrist, non-ethnic or multi-ethnic political parties or coalitions of parties that are capable of making cross-ethnic appeals and presenting a complex and diverse range of policy options to the electorate.

The paper notes that the development of such centrist, non-ethnic or multi-ethnic parties can be achieved through political party regulations that constrain the development of ethnic parties and require parties to show a broad organisational base; through electoral rules, such as vote-pooling; and through support for institutional capacity building.

Reynolds, A., 2006, 'Electoral Systems and the Protection and Participation of Minorities', Report, Minority Rights Group International, London
<http://www.gsdrc.org/go/display&type=Document&id=2726>

This report explores the ways in which minority groups are affected by electoral systems and elections. It notes that different systems can be preferable in varying contexts: where minorities have 'tipping point' leverage, a single-member system (having only one member selected from each electoral district) may be preferable. However, in the absence of such leverage, proportional systems may be preferable. In practice, the results are mixed. Majoritarian systems in India and Malaysia have promoted inter-ethnic accommodation. Instead, proportional representation (PR) was critical in South Africa to promote inclusiveness and political reconciliation. In contrast, a list PR system in Bosnia and Herzegovina has polarized politics and left no space for the evolution of moderate multi-ethnic parties, which in turn has produced continued tension. In Iraq, in January 2005, the national list system used for the Constituent Assembly meant that the Sunni minority would be under-represented if Sunnis stayed away from the polls, due to fear or boycott. This Sunni marginalisation destabilised an already precarious security situation. The system was adjusted for the December 2005 elections to a provincial based PR system that would allow Sunnis to receive a 'fair' share of the legislature regardless of turn-out in their home provinces. However, the country is still struggling to recover.

Country Case Studies

Afghanistan

Giustozzi, A., 2008 draft, 'Armed Politics and Political Competition in Afghanistan', Crisis States Research Centre, LSE, London

This paper explores the role of non-state armed groups in post-2001 Afghan politics. Despite the introduction of legislation to prevent candidates with links to armed groups from running for election, the vast majority have been undeterred. Such armed groups have engaged in intimidation tactics, such as seizing control of the whole candidate selection process and maintaining a presence of militiamen in polling stations.

The paper notes that after 2001 many powerful armed actors in Afghanistan tried to convert into political parties. The need to change the image of these groups in order to gain legitimacy resulted in a clash between actual commanders of militia groups and their more political leadership. This conflict of interest created an opportunity to provide incentives to lure those resistant to change and to promote disarmament. However, the central government missed this opportunity and attempted to weaken these groups by exploiting the divide. The organisations responded to this tactic by consolidating their relationship with their armed wings.

For further information, see:

Giustozzi, A., 2007, 'Afghanistan: Political Parties or Militia Fronts?' in From Soldiers to Politicians: Transforming Rebel Movements After Civil War, ed. J. de Zeeuw, Lynne Rienner Publishers, Boulder, Colorado, pp. 179-204

ICG, 2005, 'Afghanistan Elections: Endgame or New Beginning?', Asia Report, no. 101, International Crisis Group, Kabul/Brussels
<http://www.crisisgroup.org/home/index.cfm?id=3579&l=1>

This report discusses the election situation in Afghanistan. It notes that heightened insecurity threatens not just polling day but also electoral preparations – including voter registration, civic education and monitoring. The report advocates for a zero-tolerance policy to be adopted against officials involved in intimidating voters, candidates or electoral staff. It calls for coordination among electoral oversight bodies, government ministries and election monitors to identify such officials and to remove them from service. The report also calls for accelerated efforts to disband illegal armed groups and for greater attention to election monitoring for women voters and security for female candidates.

Kenya

Andreassen, B. et al., 2008, "I Acted Under a Lot of Pressure": The Dispute 2007 Kenyan General Election in Context', NORDEM Report 7, the Norwegian Centre for Human Rights/NORDEM
<http://www.humanrights.uio.no/forskning/publ/nr/2008/0708.pdf>

This report discusses the election-related violence in Kenya in 2007-2008 in the context of prior experiences and the political culture of the country. It distinguishes pre-election violence (a purposive attempt to influence voter behaviour) from post-election violence, which reflects dissatisfaction and frustration of some groups with the election outcomes. It notes that the ethnicisation of political unrest and divisions between ethnic groups has been a common factor in the violence that occurred around the 1992, 1997 and 2007 elections. Whilst ethnic conflict was an aspect of post-election violence, pre-election violence in 2007 was more between supporters of contending parties and candidates. Violence occurred in the nomination process, which the paper argues is indicative of the weak institutional capacity of political parties that were unprepared for this exercise. The report looks briefly at local efforts to stem post-election violence, including the role of the National Council of NGOs, national print media and television states. They urged national leaders to engage in national dialogue and for Kenyans to support peace. The report stresses the importance to research more into the nature of election violence in order to inform the introduction of mechanisms to prevent further election-related violence and impunity in Kenya.

Sri Lanka

Höglund, K., 2008 forthcoming, 'Elections and Violence in Sri Lanka: Understanding Variation across Three Parliamentary Elections' to be published in The Democratization Project: Opportunities and Challenges, ed. A. Swain, R. Amer and J. Öjendahl, Anthem Press, London

This article provides a general overview of electoral violence and then focuses on the case of Sri Lanka. It stresses that in addition to understanding how the structure and design of the political system can be conducive to electoral violence, it is also important to study the motives and actions by agents such as political parties, guerrilla/rebel/militia groups, monitoring agencies, the police and the election administration. It notes that electoral violence is especially prone to erupt

in specific situations: where election results have the potential to change existing power relations; and where a small number of votes can make a big difference in election outcomes, such as first-past-the-post systems. It highlights the importance of an independent, impartial, transparent and efficient electoral administration in building confidence and trust in elections and minimising election-related violence.

In the case of Sri Lanka, the paper finds that a winner-takes-all mentality among political parties has led in the past to ethnic political mobilisation, whereas a subsequently adopted proportional system has forced political parties to adopt a more moderate stance as it seeks to form coalitions with minority parties. The paper stresses that a key reason for the decline in election-related violence in 2004, as compared to 2000 and 2001, has been the creation of an independent Election Commission in 2001, which replaced the office of the Commissioner of Elections. This new Commission was given broad powers to employ police and military forces to uphold law and order during elections and to intervene in media and broadcasting if misused by political parties. In addition, the police in 2004 observed the electoral laws, whereas in the past it had fostered a climate of impunity by being biased toward certain parties.

For further information, see:

Höglund, K., 2008, 'Paying the Price for Patronage: Electoral Violence in Sri Lanka', Paper presented at the annual meeting of the ISA's 49th Annual Convention, Bridging Multiple Divides, 26-29 March, San Francisco

http://www.allacademic.com/meta/p253346_index.html

The Congo

ICG, 2006, 'Congo's Elections: Making or Breaking the Peace', Africa Report, no. 108, International Crisis Group, Nairobi/Brussels

<http://www.crisisgroup.org/home/index.cfm?id=4081&l=1>

This paper discusses the situation in the Congo and the risk of election-related conflict. It notes that one of the main former rebel groups, the Congolese Rally for Democracy (RCD) risks losing most of its power at the polls – and this has triggered renewed violence in the East. The absence of proper safeguards against fraud and rigged polls also threatens violence as the potential for fraud is high. However, the ministry of justice has failed to push through appropriate laws and to guarantee judicial independence. Instead the courts that would need to investigate and adjudicate election disputes remain politicized.

Authors and contributors

This query response was prepared by **Huma Haider**: huma@gsdrc.org

Contributors were:

Adhy Aman (IDEA)

Inge Amundsen (Chr. Michelsen Institute)

Sef Ashiagbor (NDI)

Antonio Giustozzi (LSE)

Kristine Höglund (Uppsala University)

Terrence Lyons (George Mason University)

Pippa Norris (Harvard University)

Thomas Ohlson (Uppsala University)

Marie Pace (USIP)

Ben Reilly (Australian National University)

Ingrid Samset (Chr. Michelsen Institute)
Timothy Sisk (University of Denver)
Arne Strand (Chr. Michelsen Institute)

Websites visited

ACE – The Electoral Knowledge Network, Clingendael, Chr. Michelsen Institute, Conciliation Resources, Centre for Research on Inequality, Human Security and Ethnicity (CRISE), Crisis States Research Centre – LSE, Danish Institute for International Studies, Google, Google Scholar, GSDRC, Harvard University, ICG, Ingenta journals, International Foundation for Election Systems (IFES), International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (IDEA), UNDP, Uppsala University, USAID, United States Institute of Peace.

About Helpdesk research reports: Helpdesk reports are based on 2 days of desk-based research. They are designed to provide a brief overview of the key issues; and a summary of some of the best literature available. Experts are contacted during the course of the research, and those able to provide input within the short time-frame are acknowledged.

Need help finding consultants?

If you need to commission more in-depth research, or need help finding and contracting consultants for additional work, please contact consultants@gsdrc.org (further details at www.gsdrc.org/go.cfm?path=/go/helpdesk/find-a-consultant&)