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To cite this article: Karina Mross (2019) First Peace, then Democracy? Evaluating Strategies of International Support at Critical Junctures after Civil War, *International Peacekeeping*, 26:2, 190-215, DOI: [10.1080/13533312.2018.1557052](https://doi.org/10.1080/13533312.2018.1557052)

To link to this article: <https://doi.org/10.1080/13533312.2018.1557052>



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Published online: 18 Dec 2018.



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First Peace, then Democracy? Evaluating Strategies of International Support at Critical Junctures after Civil War

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ABSTRACT

Existing research suggests that democratization can run counter to building peace in post-conflict contexts. This article analyses the effect of two competing strategies that external actors use to address the conflict of objective between democracy and peace: prioritization and gradualism. The prioritization approach advises sequencing, which means postponing support for democratization and concentrating first on peace in terms of the absence of violent conflict. The gradualist approach promotes peace and democracy simultaneously. This article offers a systematic analysis of these two prominent donor strategies. To this end, it focuses on two critical junctures in two similar post-conflict settings (Burundi and Nepal). Drawing upon extensive field research, the analysis shows that a gradualist approach is not more risk-prone than a prioritization strategy. To the contrary, the analysis suggests that even in most fragile contexts, gradualism can help to foster peace. Prioritization, in turn, may also contribute to the instability it aimed to prevent. Two factors condition the effect of the selected strategy on peace: which dimensions of democracy are affected and to what degree, and whether the institutional context reinforces or counteracts this trend.

KEYWORDS Critical juncture; democratization; peace; gradualism; prioritization strategy

Introduction

The high rate of civil war recurrences reflects that renewed instability poses a constant threat to peace processes. Since we know that peace and democratization do not necessarily go hand in hand, support for democratization is often postponed until circumstances appear to be more favourable. Indeed,

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various studies suggest that prioritizing peace over democracy increases the effectiveness of international support in fragile contexts. However, this *prioritization* strategy, also referred to as ‘sequencing’¹, has been challenged by a *gradualist* approach, in which efforts to foster peace and democracy are pursued in parallel through small iterative steps.² Drawing upon comprehensive empirical data, I investigate the effectiveness of these two competing strategies in terms of fostering peace after civil war at specific moments during a peace process.

This article focuses on critical junctures in a country’s political trajectory to systematically explore the effect of the two strategies. At critical junctures, the political process can take alternative, yet similarly conceivable pathways. The outcome determines the future trajectory of political development and can only be reversed with great difficulty.³ The plausibility of each strategy is analyzed through cross- and within-country comparisons: Potential alternative explanatory factors are kept constant by focusing on critical junctures in two countries that are similar in relevant background conditions: Burundi and Nepal. The selected critical junctures – elections and constitution drafting processes in each country – vary with regard to the donor strategy used when facing conflicting objectives.

Burundi and Nepal have both engaged in building democracy alongside peace after their civil wars ended. International donors provided substantial support for both processes. At various instances, they faced trade-offs in their support for the two goals, fearing for example that electoral competition could reignite warfare, or that demobilization could be hampered by power-struggles in the drafting of a new constitution.

Drawing on rich and original qualitative empirical data, the analysis indicates that supporting peace and democracy in parallel is *not* more risk prone than a prioritization strategy. To the contrary, a gradualist approach bears considerable potential for strengthening peace. The prioritization strategy, in turn, also contains the risk of failure and can even be counterproductive. The analysis suggests that the institutional context and the effect of the chosen strategy on democracy influence whether a strategy contributes to peace.

An in-depth analysis of international support strategies in the context of domestic decision-making processes, my study complements previous research on the complex and sometimes conflicting relationship of democracy and peace after conflict. Its novelty lies in systematically comparing the two recommended donor approaches at specific moments during a peace process. Identifying if and under which circumstances international support has positively influenced the outcome of a critical juncture allows tracing the impact of the selected strategy on peace. The findings help to refine existing theories and inform practitioners when addressing this important concern in their efforts to foster peace.

¹Mansfield and Snyder, “Electing to Fight,” “Democratic Transitions.”

²Carothers, “How Democracies Emerge.”

³Mahoney, “Legacies.”

The next section situates this article in the academic debate on the destabilizing effects of democratization and derives propositions on the effectiveness of external strategies that are then empirically investigated. The subsequent section details the methodological approach including the selection of cases. Thereafter, the empirical evidence is presented, before drawing a conclusion.

Challenges in Supporting Processes of Peace and Democratization: Conflicting Objectives

Early enthusiasm with the peace-enhancing effects of democratization was frustrated by meagre or even counterproductive results – as in Haiti (2004) or Liberia (1999). Awareness rose that democratization and peacebuilding might not necessarily go hand in hand. While considerable potential for peaceful conflict resolution rests in a democratic system, the process of democratization can destabilize and clash with re-establishing peace.

This paper follows Galtung's definition of negative peace as 'the absence of violence, absence of war'.⁴ An encompassing definition of peace comprises the absence of structural, as well as direct violence.⁵ Such a model situation would observe many principles of an ideal-typical democracy, highlighting the interrelatedness of the two concepts. Yet, it remains a distant goal in post-conflict societies, where renewed violence often endangers even small achievements in this regard. To analyse conflicting objectives that occur when societies aim at simultaneously building a peaceful and democratic order after civil war, this paper uses a narrow definition of peace, focusing on the absence of direct violence. Likewise, using Dahl's minimal definition, democracy is understood as rule by the people based on the principles of public participation and contestation, accompanied by a sufficient level of civil and political rights to allow meaningful competition.⁶ This type of regime can be described as electoral democracy with constitutionally codified rights and principles, such as freedom of speech and association. Democratization implies moving towards a closer representation of this concept in one or both dimensions: enhanced competition and/or better adherence to institutional constraints in form of rights and principles.

Strong theoretical arguments exist for the positive impact democracy can have on peace: First, through conflict moderation by transforming the manner in which conflict is processed; and, second, through conflict alleviation by reducing sources of conflict. A democratic system provides peaceful, transparent and open mechanisms for succession and distribution of power, enabling diverse social groups to gain access to the government, to participate in decision-making, and to influence policy outcomes.⁷ Responding to societal

⁴Galtung, "Editorial," 2.

⁵Ibid.

⁶Dahl, "Polyarchy."

⁷E.g. Höglund, Jarstad, and Söderberg Kovacs, "Predicament of Elections."

conflicts ‘by accommodation rather than repression’, a functioning democracy can work as a system of conflict management.⁸ In consequence, support for democratization has been integral to international peacebuilding efforts since 1990.⁹ Next to socio-economic support and security-related activities such as peacekeeping or the demobilization and reintegration of former combatants, democracy support constitutes a main pillar of external engagement after civil war.¹⁰

Most scholars agree that ‘liberal democracy is a powerful means of enhancing a country’s political stability’ in the long-term.¹¹ Yet, these democratic virtues only apply to consolidated democracies. Mansfield and Snyder’s seminal works suggest that transitions towards democracy contain considerable destabilizing potential.¹² Various scholars support their findings, demonstrating that countries are particularly susceptible to civil conflict during transitions, while both full democracies and full autocracies are the most stable.¹³

Explanations why countries in transition are particularly prone to renewed violence centre on three features: first, the *competitive nature* of liberal democracy exacerbating tensions and antagonism¹⁴; second, the *post-conflict context* characterized by mistrust, polarization, and a culture of violence¹⁵; and third, *weak institutions* unable to deal with societal conflict inherent to such processes.¹⁶ Emerging from civil war, democratizing states are ill-equipped to deal with the uncertainties and power struggles introduced by the changes of political rule.¹⁷

Democracy support can effectively reduce the likelihood of civil conflict during democratization.¹⁸ Yet, in post-conflict situations, donors have to deal with conflicting objectives if they seek to simultaneously support peace (through efforts to contain violence and/or consolidate the situation to prevent a renewed outbreak of violence) and promote democracy (understood as support for ‘establishing, strengthening, or defending democracy in a given country’).¹⁹ Conflicting objectives are defined as ‘the clash of two competing

⁸Reilly, “Post-War Elections,” 164.

⁹Jarstad and Sisk, “From War to Democracy.”

¹⁰Barnett et al., “Peacebuilding.”

¹¹Goldstone and Ulfelder, “Stable Democracies,” 19; Hegre et al., “Democratic Civil Peace”; Skaaning and Bartushevicius, “Revisiting.”

¹²Mansfield and Snyder, “Democratic Transitions,” “Democratization and Civil War.”

¹³See note 11. These findings have been challenged on methodological accounts, e.g. Narang and Nelson, “Belligerent Democratizers?”; Vreeland, “Effect of Political Regime.” A study by Cederman, Hug, and Krebs, “Democratization,” reconfirms the original findings using a more valid measurement of regime change.

¹⁴Paris, “At War’s End”; Jarstad and Sisk, “From War to Democracy”; Reilly, “Post-War Elections.”

¹⁵Walter, “Does Conflict Beget Conflict?”; Flores and Nooruddin, “Effect of Elections.”

¹⁶Gleditsch and Hegre, “Peace and Democracy”; Mansfield and Snyder, “Democratic Transitions”; Ottaway, “Rebuilding State Institutions.”

¹⁷Chesterman, Ignatieff, and Thakur, “Making States Work”; Fukuyama, “Imperative of State-Building,”; Paris, “At War’s End.”

¹⁸Savun and Tirone, “Foreign Aid.”

¹⁹Azpuru et al., “What is the United States,” 151.

goals, whereby the achievement of one goal is impaired by the achievement of the other goal'.²⁰

Research demonstrates that the '[p]ursuit of democracy can undermine efforts to secure peace, and efforts to secure peace can undermine the meaning and quality of democracy. Thus, in practice, the promotion of democracy and the pursuit of peace can work at cross purposes'.²¹ For instance, elections are often central to peace processes, aimed at establishing a peaceful and legitimate post-war order. Yet, electoral competition requires emphasizing differences and can reinforce cleavages; it might thus directly contradict the need for reconciliation and broad societal support for a post-war order. Similarly, a new constitution serves to codify democratic principles that can address grievances such as exclusion and discrimination. However, adversaries' power-struggles to institutionalize their dominance during a constitution-drafting process might provoke instability, or disrupt other processes aimed at advancing peace such as demobilization efforts. Yet, what follows from these insights for international support in the nexus between peace and democracy?

Theoretical Propositions: Effective Strategies to deal with the Conflicting Objectives

To deal with the conflicting objectives of peace and democratization, scholars have suggested to 'prioritize' stability or to pursue a 'gradualist approach' that integrates democratization. Advocates of the prioritization strategy emphasize the primacy of preventing renewed violence. The peace- and state-building literature holds that 'stability is a necessary, but not sufficient condition for democratization'.²² Increased democratic competition (and institutional guarantees thereof) can run counter to establishing peace in a war-torn society. Allowing new actors to enter the political scene challenges incumbent elites. These might choose to defend their power and privileges violently, or use destructive mobilization strategies that draw upon (and reinforce) war-time divisions.²³ Therefore, the prioritization strategy stipulates that democratization shall be postponed until state capacity has been sufficiently strengthened so as to maintain peace and order; that is, until an adequate institutional framework is in place.²⁴ Students of the democratization literature agree that '[t]here is a threshold of conflict-reduction that societies must cross if they are to have any chance of building democracy. [Moreover, c]hoices may have to be addressed between requisites for peace and

²⁰Grimm and Leininger, "Not All Good Things," 397.

²¹Sisk, "Peacebuilding," 239; Leininger, Grimm, and Freyburg, "Conflicting Objectives"; Young, "Democratic Institution-building."

²²Zürcher et al., "Costly Democracy," 35.

²³Reilly, "Post-War Elections," 161.

²⁴See note 17.

conditions for democracy'.²⁵ These findings resonate with the policy community. Sisk observes that 'it is a common mantra among policymakers that democratization is unlikely to proceed until peace is achieved'.²⁶ In sum, according to the prioritization approach, external actors should be primarily concerned with providing a stable environment in a post-conflict situation to avoid that power-struggles inherent to democratic competition trigger renewed violence:

P1: During post-conflict transitions, external support must prioritize peace over democracy to effectively prevent the recurrence of conflict.

Rejecting this view, Carothers claims that the potential entailed in a democratic system is not confined to consolidated democracies alone.²⁷ According to him, even if emerging democracies struggle with strengthening state institutions and the rule of law, they are better equipped to respond to these challenges than their autocratic counterparts. Therefore, 'the development of fair and open processes of political competition and choice', the core element of democratization, should be aimed at immediately, albeit in iterative and cumulative ways adapted to the specific context.²⁸ Gradualism entails taking 'incremental but definite steps toward open political competition while *simultaneously* pursuing state-building'.²⁹ Goldstone and Ulfelder argue that instead of debating whether countries are ready for democracy, emphasis should be placed on reducing the risk of instability in democratizing countries.³⁰ According to the gradualist approach, external actors should provide simultaneous support for peace and democratization in a post-conflict situation, as stated in proposition two:

P2: During post-conflict transitions, external support must support both peace and democracy in parallel, without prioritizing peace over democracy, to effectively prevent the recurrence of conflict.

Tracing the Effects of Dominant Donor Strategies at Critical Junctures

Critical junctures constitute the unit of analysis to systematically explore the effectiveness of the two strategies. Critical junctures are 'choice points that put countries (or other units) onto paths of development that track certain outcomes – as opposed to others – and that cannot be easily broken or reversed'.³¹

Historical institutionalism stipulates that path dependency and self-reproducing institutional settings usually allow only for gradual change. However,

²⁵ Burnell, "Democratic Peace-Building," 4; see also Diamond, "Promoting Democracy."

²⁶ Sisk, "Peacebuilding," 240; Call, "Why Peace Fails."

²⁷ Carothers, "'Sequencing' Fallacy," 25.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Ibid., 21.

³⁰ Goldstone and Ulfelder, "Stable Democracies," 19.

³¹ Mahoney, "Legacies," 7.

these may be relaxed during periods of contingency, enabling agency to influence the political trajectory more than usual. While some scholars metaphorically refer to critical junctures as ‘moments’, the term is generally employed for periods that can take place over several years. During times of fundamental change – such as peace processes – critical junctures significantly determine the future development of a country by creating new, or reinforcing old, path dependencies.³²

Critical junctures can serve as an analytical tool to approximate impact and draw causal inferences within a political process due to the strong counterfactual logic inherent in the concept. Critical junctures can have a positive outcome (e.g. free, fair and undisputed elections) or negative (e.g. failure of an important reform project) – *yet, a significantly different outcome must have been plausible at the time*. By definition, a *critical juncture* has a powerful impact on the larger political process. Consequently, if external engagement significantly influenced the outcome of a critical juncture, the effect of such engagement can be attributed to the overall political process. While the outcome of one critical juncture shapes the context in which subsequent critical junctures emerge, their outcome is again uncertain and does not depend on the outcome of the previous critical juncture.

Defining peace as the ‘absence of violence’, a critical juncture contributes to peace if its outcome constitutes an improvement relative to the previous situation. The effect can be immediate, by containing major violence or preventing a renewed outbreak or indirect, by reducing sources of conflict. It negatively affects peace if its outcome contributes to a renewed outbreak of violence, the rearmament of groups and/or creating new sources of conflict. International support is considered to have been effective in promoting peace if it has been instrumental in bringing about an outcome of the critical juncture that enhanced peace. It must feature as one of the key explanatory factors without which the process would arguably have been significantly different.

The focus on critical junctures is based on the premise that peace and democratization processes are primarily domestically driven.³³ They are decided upon and executed but also constrained by local actors and institutions. The ability of external actors to influence these processes is limited.³⁴ Yet, existing studies indicate that external actors can have an impact by supporting domestic institutions and actors in their efforts to stimulate democratic change and foster peace.³⁵ It should be noted that a critical debate exists regarding the practice of ‘liberal peacebuilding’, even

³²Capoccia and Kelemen, “Critical Junctures”; Mahoney, “Legacies.”

³³Leininger, “Bringing the Outside in.”

³⁴E.g., Fortna and Howard, “Pitfalls and Prospects”; Zürcher et al., “Costly Democracy.”

³⁵Fiedler, “On the Effects”; Finkel, Pérez-Liñán and Seligson, “US Foreign Assistance”; Kalyvitis and Vlachaki, “Democratic Aid,” Papagianni, “Political Transitions”; Scott and Steele, “Sponsoring Democracy.”

though it is outside the scope of this paper to intensively engage with this discussion.³⁶

Conceptualization of Donor Strategies as Independent Variables

This article studies the effectiveness of the two major donor strategies recommended to deal with conflicting objectives between democracy and peace: prioritization and gradualism. The analysis focuses on engagement by multilateral organizations and bilateral donors belonging to the Organisation of Economic Cooperation and Development as well as regional actors. It comprises development assistance in the form of financial and technical support, capacity building and empowerment measures, but also diplomatic engagement including mediation and political pressure. Each of these instruments can be used in either strategy, depending on how it is implemented, weighted or *not* used.

A gradualist approach aims at fostering both peace and democracy simultaneously. Even if power-struggles entailed in a democracy-related process – such as competitive elements of elections, constitution-drafting, or empowerment measures – pose a risk to the peace process, both are pursued in parallel. To this aim, efforts are directed towards both goals relative to the resources available and ideally needed to achieve the respective objectives.

Implementing a prioritization strategy, in turn, means subordinating democracy to the goal of peace. This can entail accepting significant infringements of democratic quality, such as overlooking electoral fraud, as long as it does not disturb the peace. Efforts are significantly more focused on the process directly linked to peace (rather than democracy) – for example using political conditionalities to further one but not the other process.³⁷

Both strategies aim to foster peace, but impinge on one of the two goals. The gradualist approach accepts potential negative consequences for peace caused by promoting democracy. The prioritization strategy refrains from fostering democracy in order to avoid such detrimental effects, accepting in turn detrimental effects on political competition, institutional guarantees, or both.

Research Design and Case Selection

To establish the causal relationship between donor strategies dealing with conflicting objectives and peace, this article uses a double comparative design, combining cross- and within-country analyses. Although a strict application of the method of paired comparison is inevitably curtailed by empirical diversity, the double comparative setup – two critical junctures in two countries – helps to generate insights beyond the specificity of individual cases and allows drawing tentative inferences.³⁸

³⁶Joshi, Lee and Mac Ginty, "How Liberal"; Richmond and Mac Ginty, "Critique."

³⁷Supporting elections does not by itself preclude a prioritization strategy.

³⁸Tarrow, "Paired Comparison"; Landman, "Issues and Methods."

Donor strategies at critical junctures are analyzed in two countries sharing relevant background conditions. These are derived from previous literature on the risk of civil war recurrence and aid effectiveness. Factors known to increase the risk of recurrence regard characteristics of the previous conflict, namely civil-war duration, its type, severity and ending as well as socio-political conditions such as the level of socio-economic development, state fragility and the presence of peacekeeping troops. Moreover, during post-conflict democratization, pre-war democratic experience appears to reduce the risk of renewed violence.³⁹ Factors influencing aid effectiveness are: geostrategic significance, influential neighbours and aid fragmentation.⁴⁰

Burundi and Nepal are similar with regard to these factors. Both exhibit low levels of socio-economic development and emerged out of conflict with comparable configurations of state fragility.⁴¹ They experienced about a decade of civil war with a similar level of battle-related casualties.⁴² Peace agreements ended both wars and stipulated a more inclusive, democratic system, ensuring the representation of marginalized groups.⁴³ Yet, in Burundi two rebel groups continued fighting for several years. Another difference regards the role of ethnicity.⁴⁴ Socio-political exclusion connected to ethnic identities constituted the root cause of both wars. Yet, ethnicity played a more prominent role in Burundi than in Nepal, where a revolutionary ideology was at the forefront. Since the literature is inconclusive on the effect of ethnic identity conflicts on the risk of recurrence, however, this should not compromise the comparative design unduly.⁴⁵ Both countries had pre-war experience with democratic institutions and present similar conditions regarding aid effectiveness: geostrategically insignificant, under strong influence of regional actors and sharing a similar degree of aid fragmentation.⁴⁶ Peacekeeping missions have been deployed in both countries. Though differing in mandate, both missions should have a positive effect on peace according to the literature.⁴⁷ However, continued warfare and the strong role of ethnicity indicate that Burundi might have a slightly

³⁹Binningsbø, "Power Sharing," Doyle and Sambanis, "International Peacebuilding"; Mason et al., "When Civil Wars Recur"; Fortna, "Peacekeeping." Contradictory evidence exists on the effect of the number of fighting factions, see Doyle and Sambanis, "International Peacebuilding"; Fortna, "Peacekeeping"; Flores and Nooruddin, "Effect of Elections"; Hartzell, Hoddie and Rothchild, "Stabilizing Peace."

⁴⁰Acharya, Fuzzo de Lima and Moore, "Proliferation and Fragmentation"; Bearce and Tirone, "Foreign Aid"; Levitsky and Way, "International Linkage."

⁴¹Grävingshult et. al, "Disaggregating State Fragility"; OECD, "States of Fragility."

⁴²Melander, Petterson and Thémner, "Organized Violence."

⁴³Although two main rebel groups refrained from signing the Arusha Agreement it is the undisputed reference for the peace process. The two groups continued fighting, until additional peace agreements stipulated their dissolution.

⁴⁴Even though both are considered 'ethnic identity conflicts' in macro-level datasets (see Vogt et al., "Integrating Data").

⁴⁵While some stipulate a higher risk (Doyle and Sambanis, "International Peacebuilding," Mason et al., "When Civil Wars Recur") others find no significance for the relationship (e.g. Fortna, "Peacekeeping"; Findley and Rudloff, "Combatant Fragmentation").

⁴⁶OECD, "Creditor Reporting System."

⁴⁷Fortna, "Peacekeeping."

higher risk of recurrence, also reflected in the presence of the robust peacekeeping force.

Two critical junctures are selected in each context: 1) general elections held 2010 in Burundi and 2008 in Nepal, and 2) constitution-drafting processes resulting in the promulgation of a new constitution 2005 in Burundi and 2015 in Nepal. Consultation with national and international experts guided this selection. Focusing on the first decade following the main peace agreement, the universe of potential critical junctures included the demobilization of armed groups, the peaceful handover of transitional power or other electoral processes. Yet, the selected critical junctures fulfil the selection criteria best: They are processes of *crucial importance* for the political trajectory when events could have taken a *decisively different turn*. Moreover, they contained conflicting objectives and donor strategies varied. While ballots or constitutional referenda are one-day events, the larger processes leading up to, and following these, usually take month if not years. Conflicting objectives can occur throughout the entirety of such processes. Domestic interview partners confirmed that international support was very influential and affected the outcome of all four critical junctures.

Data comes from 200 semi-structured interviews conducted during field research in Burundi (2014) and Nepal (2013), complemented with primary and secondary sources.⁴⁸ Two thirds of the interviews were conducted with domestic stakeholders from civil society, media and politics to gain further insights on the dynamics shaping each critical juncture and its outcome. One third was conducted with international representatives to get detailed information on relevant activities and strategic considerations.⁴⁹ The questions were adapted to the expertise of each interviewee, addressing one or both critical junctures and internal or external factors. Each critical juncture has been discussed in-depth by previous publications.⁵⁰ Weaknesses such as fading memory or staff turnover are addressed by triangulation with evaluations, reports, and academic contributions.

Empirical Analysis

Burundi and Nepal each experienced a decade of civil war before comprehensive peace agreements reshaped the political order and initiated democratization. Since then, both countries made remarkable achievements but also struggled with renewed violence.

In Burundi, the war had pitted the two main ethnic groups in armed struggle. While the majority of the population (85%) affiliates itself as ‘Hutu’, the ‘Tutsi’ minority had monopolized political power since de-colonialization.

⁴⁸All interviews cited here took place in Bujumbura or Kathmandu, respectively.

⁴⁹See Annex 1 for the composition of interview partners.

⁵⁰Gravingholt et. al, “Struggling for Stability”; Mross, “Fragile Steps.”

Extended peace negotiations reached a milestone with the 2000 Arusha Agreement, although two main rebel groups refrained from signing and stopped fighting only in 2003 and 2008, respectively. In 2005, Burundi adopted a new constitution. Its largest rebel group CNDD-FDD (National Council for the Defense of Democracy – Forces for the Defense of Democracy) was successfully dissolved through army integration and demobilization. It became the ruling party in the peaceful elections of 2005. However, the opposition's boycott overshadowed the 2010 elections and further narrowed the limited political space. This prepared the ground for the violent upheaval triggered in the context of the 2015 elections.

In Nepal, a Maoist movement rebelled against the monarchist government that represented centuries of social exclusion based on caste and ethnicity. The Comprehensive Peace Agreement ended the civil war in 2006. In 2008, elections to a Constituent Assembly (CA) (simultaneously acting as legislative) constituted a significant step in its peace and democratization processes. Four years later, another milestone was reached with the dissolution of the Maoist army. Yet, the Constituent Assembly failed to promulgate a constitution and was dissolved in 2012. Its successor, elected in 2013, needed three more years to succeed. After its adoption in 2015, however, the new constitution has been highly contested.

Donor strategies and their effect on peace vary across the selected critical junctures, as summarized in Table 1. Neither of the propositions are confirmed as such: The gradualist approach worked; so did the prioritization strategy. Yet, in two cases this strategy did not have the intended effect. In short, the analysis indicates that even in most fragile contexts, gradualism can contribute to peace; prioritization, in turn, can have positive effects but may also fail, contributing to the instability it aimed to prevent. The following section presents the in-depth analysis of each critical juncture, tracing the effect of the two donor strategies on peace.

Constitution-drafting

Nepal's constitution-drafting process aimed to establish a peaceful post-war order by introducing a federal democratic system to address the political exclusion that had fuelled the decade-long civil war. However, the CA elected in 2008 failed to adopt a constitution despite several extensions of its mandate. Although it produced high-quality technical drafts, the body

Table 1. Comparative analysis.

Critical juncture	Country context	Donor strategy (IV)	Impact on peace (DV)
Constitution drafting	Nepal (2015)	Prioritization	Negative
Constitution drafting	Burundi (2005)	Gradualism	Positive
Elections	Burundi (2010)	Prioritization	Negative
Elections	Nepal (2008)	Prioritization	Positive

Note: IV refers to independent variable, while DV stands for dependent variable.

proved unable to solve contentious issues and was dissolved in 2012. Several factors contributed to this failure. Interviewees cited procedural issues, such as party leaders' lack of attention to the drafting process or circumvention of CA procedures. Moreover, disagreement on the specificities of the federal structure caused polarization within parties and among important societal groups in Nepal. Only in 2015 did the newly elected CA adopt a new constitution. Protests that had already contributed to the CA's dissolution in 2012 intensified and extended violent unrest ensued. Instead of reducing causes for conflict, the process contributed to creating new sources of contention that triggered immediate violence.

The international donors engaged in Nepal prioritized peace over democracy in several regards. Although all major donors implemented projects related to the constitution-drafting process,⁵¹ their main attention was placed on the demobilization process. They prioritized the facilitation of demobilization over tackling the controversial issues emerging during constitution-drafting. Second, they backed the postponement of local elections because they feared these might disturb the peace process. Thus, in this case the strategy affected both the codification of rights and principles, as well as political competition.

First, donors prioritized peace by focusing on demobilizing the Maoist combatants (thus re-establishing the state's monopoly of violence) rather than advancing democratization with a new constitution. Two main political parties made demobilization a precondition for their consent to a future constitution, fearing that otherwise the Maoists could use their army as a bargaining chip.⁵² The donor community went along with this demand, concentrating its political energy on overcoming the hurdles for demobilization. International support for the cantonments accommodating the Maoist combatants⁵³ helped to maintain peace and buy time for a protracted negotiation process.⁵⁴ Yet, the unresolved demobilization constituted a major obstacle for the constitution-making process.⁵⁵ A small circle of political leaders, who concentrated decision-making power in their hands, were barely engaged with the constitution-drafting process. The lack of attention resulted in too many highly contentious issues not tackled until very late in the drafting process, when the momentum of the peace process had waned and compromise became increasingly difficult.⁵⁶ The international partners

⁵¹E.g. Germany, Switzerland, US and the Nordic countries.

⁵²Nepalese representatives: government, 28.02.2013; NGO, 02.04.2013. International bilateral agency representative, 28.02.2013.

⁵³Provided by Germany, as well as through a multi-donor fund sponsored by the US, the EU and bilateral European donors.

⁵⁴Nepalese NGO representative, 15.03.2013.

⁵⁵INGO representatives: international, 13.03.2013 and Nepalese 18.03.2013. Nepalese politician, 03.04.2013.

⁵⁶International bilateral agency representatives: 08.03.2013, 11.03.2013, 14.03.2013, 28.02.2013.

missed the opportunity to bring the constitution into focus. They engaged in dialogue-facilitation efforts, which, however, did not reach the ultimate decision makers.⁵⁷ Their efforts not only fell short of facilitating the target – a new constitution – but also reinforced some problems of the process, such as the secretive nature of bargaining by establishing parallel dialogue mechanisms.⁵⁸

Second, donors also prioritized peace by withholding support for local elections because these might disturb the process at the central level.⁵⁹ Since the last locally elected bodies were dissolved in 2002, no local elections took place until 2017. In consequence, many interviewees stated the lack of legitimate and empowered representation of local needs and interests vis-à-vis the central level as major problem. Yet, the main political parties were not interested in holding local elections, which could undermine their power-base.

The international community recognized the lack of local accountability and promoted empowerment and capacity building, yet shied away from addressing it politically. Channelling substantial resources through a joint basket fund to the local level, leverage might have existed had the donor community concertedly supported domestic stakeholders in this regard. According to one interviewee, a window of opportunity existed when Prime Minister Nepal pushed for local elections.⁶⁰ Yet, at that time few donors supported the Prime Minister's initiative.⁶¹ The majority preferred first to solve all major issues at the national level as they worried that competitive local elections could negatively affect peace at the central level.⁶²

In their focus on preventing instability, however, they failed to recognize the positive contribution that representative and accountable local structures could have had on the bargaining process. Exclusion and neglect in remote areas had been a root cause of the civil war.⁶³ Yet, participation of the broader population in political decision-making remain limited to this day.⁶⁴ This also affected the constitution-drafting process: The repeated violent protests that accompanied the process contributed to the failure of the first CA, and call into question the success of the second. International and Nepalese interviewees agreed that the small leadership circle became

⁵⁷International representatives: bilateral agency, 14.03.2013, INGO, 18.03.2013; Nepalese politician 19.03.2013.

⁵⁸International representatives: bilateral agency, 14.03.2013 and INGO, 18.03.2013; Nepalese NGO representative, 02.04.2013.

⁵⁹Nepalese representatives: politician, 18.03.2013; INGO, 17.01.2013.

⁶⁰Nepalese bilateral agency representative: 04.04.2013.

⁶¹Bilateral agency representatives: international 08.03.2013; Nepalese: 04.04.2013.

⁶²Nepalese academic: 01.03.2013. Far West: Nepalese NGO representative: 04.04.2013; local government representative: 02.04.2013.

⁶³Lawoti, "Prolonged Transition."

⁶⁴Nepalese politician: 18.03.2013.

detached from the base and was not able to mediate when differences hardened on federalism. Demonstrating vehemently that they would not accept whatever decision their leaders took, these protests were central to the dissolution of the CA in 2012.⁶⁵ Although party leaders had struck a last-minute deal, they abandoned the agreement when major discontent by marginalized groups, but also within the parties, was expressed through strikes. Most pronouncedly, different groups had completely paralyzed the most remote of Nepal's former five districts for 32 days.⁶⁶

Prioritizing peace in the context of the Nepalese constitution-drafting process was not successful in strengthening peace. While this strategy did not cause the CA's failure, it rendered international support less effective. The failure to achieve broad societal support for a political solution on the future federal system created new sources of conflict. When the second CA finally adopted a new constitution, important societal groups felt that it perpetuated exclusion and structural discrimination. In consequence, violent upheaval and protests unsettled Nepal for months, causing over 50 deaths, deepening polarization and tensions.⁶⁷

Could a gradualist strategy by the international community have saved the constitution-drafting process? Indications exist that it might at least have had a better chance. By not only focusing on the demobilization process but also directing significant diplomatic resources towards the constitution drafting, the international community might have achieved an earlier high-level focus on the contentious issues. Moreover, a concerted push by the donors supporting key stakeholder's demands for local elections might have succeeded. This would have significantly increased the voice and inclusion of remote areas in the political debate centred in Kathmandu, in particular regarding the crucial issue of federalism. If it were not able to prevent the dissolution in 2012, it might have strengthened the second attempt to draft a constitution by facilitating a more inclusive societal debate and consequently have helped to reduce the violently expressed discontent.

In **Burundi**, a new constitution was adopted even before the last rebel group ceased fighting. The situation was stabilized sufficiently thanks to several peace agreements, peaceful handovers of power by the transitional presidents, and substantial diplomatic and peacekeeping engagement by the international community. The constitution is strongly based on ethnic power-sharing arrangements already outlined in the Arusha Agreement. Yet, both sides attempted to redefine these provisions in their favour. According to observers, these power-struggles might have provoked renewed warfare. However, the new constitution, successfully adopted by referendum in 2005,

⁶⁵International diplomat 28.02.2013, Nepalese representatives: academic, 13.03.2013; politician, 19.03.2013.

⁶⁶Nepalese representatives: think tank, 01.03.2013 and NGO 04.04.2013, local leader 04.04.2013.

⁶⁷Lawoti, "Prolonged Transition."

addressed root causes of the conflict.⁶⁸ The gradualist strategy helped both to avoid imminent violence and reduce sources of contention. It facilitated the codification of rights and principles and secured competition by preventing ethnic dominance of the Hutu majority.

External actors simultaneously pursued peace and democracy – through the demobilization of the largest rebel groups and the drafting of a new constitution – and did *not* prioritize peace. The process of army-rebel integration and demobilization contained great tension and a high risk of failure – observers judge it an ‘incredible miracle’ that it succeeded peacefully.⁶⁹ In contrast to Nepal, the international community – neighbouring heads of state, the UN and Western ambassadors – nevertheless attributed substantial political weight and diplomatic efforts not only to facilitate demobilization, but also to the goal of adopting a new constitution.

The diplomatic engagement was crucial in overcoming a political deadlock in the drafting process. Both sides attempted to change the power-sharing provisions derived from the Arusha Agreement in their favour. The high stakes of future access to power provoked heated controversy and almost caused the process to fail.⁷⁰ Significant diplomatic endeavours to convince and pressure both sides to accept the terms were crucial to the adoption of the new constitution.⁷¹ A civil society member argued that ‘At a certain moment, if not for the international community, some parties would have assumed radical positions that could have brought the country to war’.⁷² In addition, financial and technical support was important for organizing the referendum needed to approve the constitution after a unanimous vote in parliament failed.

The analysis strongly suggests that the gradualist approach contributed to the successful adoption of a new constitution in Burundi. Had the international community primarily concentrated on demobilization to avoid that power-struggles entailed in drafting a new constitution disturb this sensitive process (and thus, immediate peace), it is highly likely that the drafting process would have failed. Consequences for peace could have been severe: disrupting the careful power-sharing arrangement of the transitional government, and failing to enshrine power-sharing rules that helped soften ethnic polarization. However, the choice of strategy and its impact might have been facilitated by the strong UN peacekeeping mission that was present at the time: Interviewees did not attribute it major importance in the successful adoption of the new constitution, but agreed that it was instrumental in facilitating the preconditions.

⁶⁸Violence by the last rebel group continued until 2008. Yet, unrelated to the constitution-drafting process, it does not affect the assessment of the outcome of the critical juncture as positively affecting peace in relative terms.

⁶⁹Burundian journalist, 13.05.2014 and politician, 19.05.2014.

⁷⁰Former Burundian government representatives, 02.04.2013 and 22.05.2014.

⁷¹Burundian politicians, 09.05.2014a, b and 19.05.2014.

⁷²Burundian government representative, 08.05.2014.

Post-conflict Elections

The 2010 elections in **Burundi** had a significant but negative impact on peace. Although judged as free and fair by observers, most (former) opposition parties boycotted the national elections after a devastating defeat in communal polls and left the incumbent CNDD-FDD practically unopposed. As one diplomat stated: '[The boycott] has derailed many things. That was a major catastrophe for this country'.⁷³ Despite some incidents, no major escalation of violence occurred at the time. Yet, these dynamics contributed to the upheaval surrounding the 2015 presidential elections, provoking a return to violent means of contestation.

The international community continuously prioritized peace over democracy in the context of the 2010 elections. Although one decade had passed since the key peace agreement was signed, instability was not a remote threat: In 2008, the last rebel group had re-intensified warfare before demobilizing to join the elections. While technical and financial donor support was crucial to organize the elections, enormous diplomatic efforts failed to prevent the boycott. The prioritization of peace contributed to this outcome at three stages and facilitated the weakening of institutional guarantees and political competition.

First, the international community repeatedly failed to react in a stringent manner on infringements of democratic procedures and the authoritarian trend after the 2005 elections. In 2007, for example, when frictions within the ruling CNDD-FDD caused a deadlock in the parliament, CNDD-FDD successfully pressured the constitutional court to legitimize the replacement of its dissident parliamentarians – in contradiction to an explicit constitutional provision.⁷⁴ At this and other instances, 'international peacebuilders largely turned a blind eye to governance abuses, human rights violations, and militarism, when confronted with the messy and contested politics of transition, as long as Burundi remained generally stable'.⁷⁵ Supporting the government budget to more than 50 percent, donors thus backed the ruling party's increasing monopolization of power. They missed the opportunity to strengthen democratic checks and balances at an early stage.

In the wake of the 2010 elections, the prioritization strategy was reinforced when the militarization of party youth wings threatened peace. Violent elections in the neighbourhood nurtured international fears of instability and lowered the democratic standards applied to Burundi – in this donor representatives agree with the literature.⁷⁶ Donors hesitated to condemn and react determinedly upon repression and intimidation infesting the political

⁷³International diplomat: 15.05.2014.

⁷⁴Falch, "Power-Sharing"; Boshoff and Ellermann, "Burundi."

⁷⁵Curtis, "Peacebuilding Paradox," 75.

⁷⁶Burundian NGO representatives: 14.05.2014; international diplomat: 15.05.2014. Curtis, "Peacebuilding Paradox"; Vandeginste, "Power-Sharing."

climate in the pre-election period. The situation created a highly uneven playing field that favoured the incumbent party, which resorted to persecution and restricted campaign activities.⁷⁷

Second, in prioritizing the dissolution of the rebel group, diplomats understated the democratic principle of electoral uncertainty. They raised expectations regarding election results in their efforts to persuade the leader of the last Burundian rebel group, Agathon Rwasa, to transform into a political party. However, they overlooked potential repercussions such elevated expectations could have for the democratic process. To convince Rwasa, they not only ‘pampered him a bit’⁷⁸ but maintained the general belief that joining the elections [his party] would be a close contender to CNDD-FDD.⁷⁹ Once he agreed to join, relief was strong and Rwasa received much positive attention.⁸⁰ In the words of one diplomat, when Rwasa entered Bujumbura ‘[p]eople came to meet him in masses. Also ambassadors, not only Burundians [...] I think it was almost a religious thing coming in. So he thought he would win’.⁸¹ Against this background, his party had difficulties accepting the devastating results of the communal elections; as did other opposition parties, which had nurtured high hopes of re-entering the political arena from which they had been sidelined since 2007.⁸²

Third, the international community’s prioritization of peace was reinforced when the boycott indicated that the process risked getting out of hand.⁸³ They supported the electoral commission in declining more time to investigate allegations, to avoid delaying the electoral process. Combined with a widely criticized lack of transparency, this was not helpful for dispelling doubts of the opposition, in particular after the EU observation mission had rephrased an initially more critical assessment upon request.⁸⁴ Since all interviewees agreed that without the substantial international contributions the elections could not have been held in a similar manner, the donor community might have had enough leverage to encourage the electoral commission to take a more compromising stance.⁸⁵ Yet, apparently, the international rationale was that delaying the elections would risk destabilizing the country (as it

⁷⁷Burundian representatives: NGO, 12.05.2014 and 19.05.2014; journalist, 13.05.2014. El Abdellaoui, “Burundi”; Vandeginste, “Power-sharing.”

⁷⁸International bilateral agency representative, 15.05.2014.

⁷⁹El Abdellaoui, “Burundi.”

⁸⁰Despite the critical assessment it must be emphasized that the rebel group’s demobilization was a significant achievement.

⁸¹International bilateral agency representative, 15.05.2014.

⁸²Boshoff and Ellermann, “Burundi.”

⁸³Burundian INGO representative, 23.05.2014.

⁸⁴Burundian representatives: journalists, 12.05.2014 and 13.05.2014; local NGO, 15.05.2014; former government, 19.05.2014. El Abdellaoui, “Burundi.”

⁸⁵Acknowledging that several constraints hamper such a course of action: organizational interests, decision-making procedures or concerns about the consequences of potential aid cuts (see the discussion of the ‘responsibility trap’: Mross, “Fragile Steps,” 59–62).

happened in 1993) and proceeding as planned was preferred.⁸⁶ Moreover, while there have been huge efforts to convince the opposition to return to the process, an observer states that after the main Tutsi party acceded – ensuring that the ethnic quotas directly related to the conflict-lines could be observed – the other parties' boycott was deemed less important.⁸⁷ The resulting limited pluralism, however, had severe effects. It allowed the ruling party to extend its monopoly of power, repressing and actively dismantling opposition parties. These developments contributed to the violence in the context of the 2015 elections with a failed coup attempt, over 300,000 refugees, several hundred deaths and armed groups reforming at the border.

Had the international partners *not* prioritized peace at the various stages, they might have been able to lessen (though maybe not prevent) the negative outcome. A more assertive stance upholding and strengthening democratic norms and procedures in the years preceding the 2010 elections might have hindered the ruling party's monopolization of power. Given Burundi's strong aid dependency, donors did have a certain leverage that went unused – e.g. no formal conditions had been attached to aid allocations, despite the continuous deterioration of the situation.⁸⁸ A more measured stance both in the attempt to convince Rwasa to compete in the elections, as well as when the boycott loomed, might have stood a better chance to prevent the boycott, and could have helped to preserve checks on executive power, such as a healthy opposition.

In **Nepal**, the 2008 elections to the constitutional assembly are overwhelmingly considered a success. They constituted a vital step in the country's peace process, despite imperfections, such as incidents of electoral violence, shortcomings of electoral law and implementation. The electoral commission successfully organized polls that were generally perceived as free and fair and produced an inclusive body through ambitious quota systems. Overall, the elections proceeded peacefully and the results, although unexpected, were largely accepted. The outcome averted a renewed outbreak of violence and reduced sources of conflict by establishing this very inclusive body.

In providing their support, donors prioritized peace: Instead of aiming for clean democratic procedures, both domestic and international actors concentrated on conducting peaceful elections, aiming to 'let the elections happen on time, let the elections happen peacefully and let the elections' result be acceptable'.⁸⁹ As a consequence, the elections did not meet the highest democratic standards that might have been possible in that situation. However, this prioritization was key to the positive impact of the elections on the peace process.

⁸⁶Vandeginste, "Power-sharing."

⁸⁷Burundian INGO representative: 23.05.2014.

⁸⁸International diplomats: 07.05.2014; 16.05.2014.

⁸⁹Nepalese representatives: EC 21.03.2013; see also politician, 20.03.2013; NGO, 21.03.2013; government, 18. and 19.03.2013. International bilateral agency representative: 07.03.2013.

The international community invested substantial efforts in maintaining peace. Already in preparation of the elections, some donors diplomatically facilitated inter-party dialogue and encouraged discussions about different outcome scenarios. They strongly conveyed the message to party leaders that non-acceptance of results – provided a relatively fair election process – would have severe consequences for their international reputation. In particular, this was continuously repeated to the Maoists. These international efforts contributed to the acceptance of the results.⁹⁰ When a critical incident occurred one day before election day, mediation by a donor-funded facilitation mechanism helped to calm the situation.⁹¹ The statements and reports of the monitoring missions show that the international community accepted the price for prioritizing peace.⁹² Numerous irregularities, including election-related violence, incidents of fraud and voter intimidation, occurred.⁹³ International statements overlooked the deficiencies, conveying that the elections had been peaceful and largely free and fair. Several interviewees involved in election monitoring reported their surprise at hearing these very positive assessments.⁹⁴ While crucial in legitimizing the electoral results, the statements were also criticized for their hasty and overly positive nature.⁹⁵ National and international representatives emphasized that this occurred ‘for the sake of the peace process’.⁹⁶ At this instance, the international community’s focus on advancing the peace process with peaceful and widely accepted elections was key in rendering the event successful. Combining the strong pre-election pressure to accept the results, with the early and influential statements legitimizing the elections, the international engagement contributed to the positive effect of this critical juncture on peace.

Had the international community not prioritized peace but focused more on thorough democratic procedures, cleaner elections might have been feasible. Yet, a more critical stance acknowledging deficiencies during the electoral process, and less emphasis (and diplomatic pressure) to accept the results might have encouraged parties to reject the unanticipated vote, jeopardizing its positive outcome if not the entire peace process.

Interestingly, international dialogue facilitation and signalling played an important role in both electoral processes. They differed, however, regarding the messages that were transported, which produced diverging results. In

⁹⁰Nepalese representatives, EC 21.03.2013, election observer, 21.03.2013. Representatives of bilateral agencies: Nepalese 04.04.2013; international 07.03.2013 and 08.03.2013.

⁹¹International bilateral agency representative: 08.03.2013; Nepalese NGO representative: 02.04.2013.

⁹²Most importantly by the EU, Carter Centre and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR).

⁹³OHCHR, “Constituent Assembly Elections”; Dahal, “Elections.”

⁹⁴International representative, 13.03.2013, Nepalese EC representative 19.03.2013.

⁹⁵Nepalese representatives: EC, 18.03.2013, 19.03.2013; politicians, 20.03.2013, 19.03.2013. International representatives: INGO, 13.03.2013, multilateral agency, 07.03.2013.

⁹⁶International INGO representative: 18.03.2013; Nepalese representatives: EC, 19.03.2013 and politician, 03.04.2013.

Nepal donors prepared political leaders for the uncertainty of electoral outcomes. In Burundi they suggested the outcome was almost certain, reinforcing the frustration when this did not become true.

Comparing the two electoral processes indicates that the costs incurred (and accepted) by prioritizing peace over democracy might help to explain the impact of the prioritization strategy. In Nepal, the strategy endorsed democratic shortcomings of the electoral processes: Competition was affected, but only to a limited degree. In Burundi, competition was curtailed by substantial breaches of the principles of freedom of association and campaigning. Moreover, the incumbent's authoritarian tendencies weakened institutional constraints. In this case, the strategy not only prevented an improvement of democratic quality, but facilitated a deterioration along both dimensions.

Conclusion

In countries emerging from civil war, peace often remains elusive. This holds even when conceptualizing peace narrowly as the absence of violence. As a consequence, the dominant view in policy and academic circles is that peace should be prioritized over democracy, to avoid that political liberalization jeopardizes peace. This study suggests that even in highly unstable situations, simultaneous support for peace and democracy is *not* necessarily more risk prone. To the contrary, this gradualist approach bears potential for strengthening peace. The prioritization strategy, in turn, also contains the risk of failure and can even be counterproductive.

This paper systematically compared the alternative strategies at specific moments during peace processes in Burundi and Nepal. I find in two of three instances that the prioritization strategy was *not* effective in fostering peace. Moreover, in these cases the prioritization paradoxically even caused the opposite effect: instead of *preventing* instability, it risked *contributing* to it. Choosing to prioritize peace prevented donors from seizing opportunities to facilitate feasible democratic achievements, as in the context of the Burundi 2010 elections. Rather, they accepted setbacks to the process of democratization. Repression and monopolization of power caused infringements of civil and political rights. This created detrimental path dependencies and caused negative repercussions for peace.

Even in most fragile situations, supporting democracy and peace in a gradual but simultaneous way can strengthen peace. In countries that have already engaged in the process of democratization, this is not by itself more likely to trigger renewed violence as opponents argue. In Burundi, it helped to facilitate the adoption of a new constitution shortly after warfare had ceased.

What can we learn about the conditions under which each strategy might be effective? Two factors appear relevant: First, the effect of the chosen

strategy on democracy (which dimensions are affected and to what degree) and second, whether the institutional context reinforces or counteracts this trend. In the two cases where it had a negative impact, prioritization curtailed competitive aspects as well as institutional guarantees. When donors (successfully) prioritized stability supporting the Nepalese elections, only one dimension of democracy was curtailed: competition. Moreover, in Nepal the deficiencies jeopardized competition to a lesser degree than those that occurred in Burundi before and during the 2010 elections. The successful gradualist approach affected both dimensions positively. However, UN peacekeeping troops present at the time might have reduced the risk of violent escalation. Future research should assess the relevance of peacekeeping for a successful gradualist approach.

Next to the democratic costs of prioritizing peace, the institutional context plays a role. It appears that in political systems without a high concentration of power, prioritization can work. More inclusive institutions reduce the costs of accepting democratic deficiencies or defeat. In Nepal, the stakes of competition had been reduced by electoral laws favouring losers. In Burundi, the monopolization of power preceding the 2010 elections had the opposite effect – despite extensive power-sharing arrangements. In such highly centralized and exclusive systems the prioritization strategy contains the risk to reinforce exclusive tendencies, by further diminishing the opportunities of certain groups to gain political power. Negative effects on institutional guarantees further raise the stakes, since the loss or lack of political power might be irrevocable by peaceful means. These tentative conclusions confirm previous research stipulating that more inclusive governing coalitions are more conducive to peace, but need to be sustained – which is essentially the role of institutional guarantees.⁹⁷ Yet, they also demonstrate that a narrow focus on extensive accommodation measures can be insufficient.

This paper traced the effect of donor strategies on peace and identified contextual factors that condition the effect. The small number of cases restricts the generalizability of the results. Moreover, any comparative design is restricted by limited empirical diversity. Further research is needed to corroborate the results across a larger universe of cases – in particular, more instances of the gradualist approach. The analysis uncovered avenues for future research: Why do international actors choose one strategy over the other? Is that choice endogenous to the strategy? Do the two strategies differ with regard to short- and long-term effects? What other factors influence their effectiveness? How relevant is peacekeeping for the gradualist approach? The contribution of this article lies in demonstrating that while both prioritization and gradualist strategies can be effective in specific

⁹⁷See Call, "Why Peace Fails"; Sisk, "Peacebuilding as Democratization"; Joshi and Mason, "Civil War Settlements."

circumstances, neither strategy should be applied in a post-conflict situation without careful scrutiny.

Acknowledgements

I am grateful to Tina Freyburg, Carsten Schneider, anonymous reviewers, DIE colleagues and participants of several conferences for valuable feedback at various stages. This paper contributed greatly from colleagues in the larger research project: Julia Leininger, Jörn Grävingholt and the members of the joint research team in Nepal. I warmly thank interview partners during the field research and country experts assisting in the preparation for sharing their insights.

Disclosure Statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author.

Funding

Research towards this paper was in part funded by the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development under a research grant on Transformation and Development in Fragile States.

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Appendix. Composition of interviews

