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POST-ARMED CONFLICT FIRST ELECTION: A MEANS OF SHAPING TRANSITION FROM VIOLENCE TO PEACE

Abstract

Election during peacetime or after the armed conflict is a competitive game where participating parties want to go into power and legitimize authority in the governance process. Holding a democratic election in the post-conflict context is further complicated due to existing divides, fragility, and scratches of armed violence. However, arranging an election is one of the crucial yardsticks of contemporary peacebuilding, persuaded by the international community for changing the status of a war-torn country into a liberal democratic one. An election is an exit strategy for the international community and a transition technique from violence to peace; holding the post-conflict first election is a cumbersome one that depends on various actors, parties, factors, and issues. Given this context, this paper considers three cases—Angola, Sierra Leone, and Nepal to explore and examine the key issues and vital factors that help hold the post-conflict first election. This paper argues that preparing a condition that enables parties to decide to go for an election is as crucial as people's engagement in an election, free from fear, intimidation and biases. Such an approach convinces the parties to bring back in normal politics and allows an all-embracing transition process beyond the stage of violence. However, their extent of acceptance could vary. In this process, the presence of international peacekeepers offers a kind of security guarantee for the parties to consider and re-consider their positions as they want to be in the governance process. Hence, demilitarization of politics is vital before holding an election. However, the roles and mandates of peacekeepers are determined by the contexts where elections occur with varying excitements and the ways parties find alternative means of accommodating their demands in the due political process. A transition from violence has no one set rule. Instead, it depends on the extent to which the context, main parties, and people on the ground are ready to go for it, influenced by various other complexities.

Keywords: Post-conflict Election, Democracy, Peacebuilding, Transition, Violence, Stability

1. Introduction

The transition from violence to peace in the post-conflict fragile phase follows a cumbersome process. Under the rubric of liberal peacebuilding, the international

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community tends to approach such a transition process of a war-torn society with the preparation and arrangement of a democratic election. An election often comes as part of the peace agreement package that the conflicting parties sign through an intense negotiation process that helps meet their interests, partially, if not entirely.¹ Peace agreements provide power to the conflicting parties and are often structured and crafted by external mediators by considering the geopolitical and contextual factors. In internal conflicts, externally mediated peace agreements cover various issues, including political, security, social and other broader aspects, thus stopping the violence.² There are exceptions, too, wherein the parties themselves agreed to the terms and conditions of peace agreements. However, a post-armed conflict society is often marred with a complex reality. It is shaped by different fragilities like bitter ethnic and political division, weak political parties and institutions, lacking trust of the parties to each other, societal divisions, sporadic violence, availability of unaccounted armed and ammunitions, etc. Parties often sign an externally mediated agreement that allows them to participate in an election only to gain legitimacy.³ The liberal peace process often fails to take the centrality of the strategy and geopolitical conditions in bringing peace.⁴

The international community, including the United Nations (UN) and donor agencies, often foresees the democratization process as a viable option to bring stability back in the conflict-affected states/societies. They advance various “forms of institutional design” for “effective and legitimate governance”. However, elites who are influential in the context can adopt strategies alternatively for serving “their goals” better.⁵ Such outcomes in governance question the objective and responsibility of the international interventions that want to establish political order through state-building and democratization.⁶ Scholars have questioned liberal peacebuilding on

¹ Barbara F. Walter, “Designing Transitions from Civil War: Demobilization, Democratization, and Commitments to Peace”, *International Security*, Vol. 24, No. 1, 1999, pp. 127–155; Joakim Kreutz, “How and When Armed Conflicts End: Introducing the UCDP Conflict Termination Dataset”, *Journal of Peace Research*, Vol. 47, No. 2, 2010, pp. 243-250.

² Stina Högladh, “Peace agreements 1975-2011 - Updating the UCDP Peace Agreement dataset”, in Pettersson Therése and Lotta Themnér (eds.), *States in Armed Conflict 2011*, Uppsala University, Sweden: Department of Peace and Conflict, 2011, pp. 39-56.

³ Muna Ndulo and Lulo Sara, “Free and Fair Elections, Violence and Conflict”, *Harvard International Law Journal Online*, Vol. 51, 2010, pp. 155-171; Larry Garber and Krishna Kumar, “What Have We Learned About Post Conflict Elections?”, *New England Journal of Public Policy*, Vol. 14, No. 1, 1998, pp. 35-43; Benjamin Reilly, “Electoral Assistance and Post-Conflict Peacebuilding-What Lessons Have Been Learned?”, available at https://researchrepository.murdoch.edu.au/id/eprint/27549/1/Electoral_Assistance_and_Post-Conflict_Peacebuilding.pdf, accessed on 08 September 2018.

⁴ Jan Selby, “The Myth of Liberal Peace-building”, *Conflict, Security & Development*, Vol. 13, No. 1, 2013, pp. 57-86.

⁵ Naazneen Barma, *The Peacebuilding Puzzle: Political Order in Post-conflict States*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017, p. 1.

⁶ *Ibid.*

various grounds, including its “hubristic and Eurocentric” nature and a universalistic assumption that ignores localized realities.⁷ No appropriate alternative, practical approach has been forwarded, except for balancing the top-down and bottom-up approaches.⁸ The hybridity that emerged as a by-product of liberal peace for which many have argued for “represents the powerful rather than the local” in the context.⁹ Whatever the way it applies, the need for a transition from violence to stability is paramount in the early stage of peacebuilding. In this process, an election is one of the ways to allow the warring parties to back in everyday politics. This is a process of setting up the institutional foundation of transition wherein the timing of holding an election after a conflict is a significant factor. Election after the war in divided societies is not a smooth and pleasant issue, though it creates one of the acceptable means for the parties to get into power, leadership, and authority.¹⁰

An election is a highly competitive and complex phenomenon—whether it takes place during peacetime or after armed violence.¹¹ Nevertheless, there has been a “debate” over holding an early election and contributing to stability, as some proffer a counter-argument on the point that it could “undermine genuine democracy and spark a renewal in fighting”.¹² Many issues come into play when a post-conflict election is to take place. Besides the international community’s priority, parties’ focus is also crucial—whether they prefer a transition or not, especially under the circumstances of sharing power during the interim period.¹³ However, one of the critical tasks of a temporary (interim) transitional government or authority is to arrange an election for the transition process to happen. The timing of an election and the sequencing of different issues are vital for a transition. More importantly, how much the parties’ needs and priorities could be met through this process and to what extent they would be ready to go

⁷ David Chandler, *Peacebuilding, The Twenty Years Crisis, 1997-2017*, Basingstoke, Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017; Oliver P Richmond, “Beyond Liberal Peace? Responses to “backsliding”, in Edward Newman, Roland Paris and Oliver P Richmond (eds.), *New Perspectives on Liberal Peacebuilding*, Tokyo and New York: United Nations University Press, 2009; Oliver P Richmond, *A post-liberal peace*, Abingdon: Routledge, 2011.

⁸ Roger Mac Ginty, “Hybrid Peace: The Interaction between Top-down and Bottom-up Peace”, *Security Dialogue*, Vol. 41, No. 4, 2010; Roger Mac Ginty and Oliver P Richmond, “The Local Turn in Peacebuilding: A Critical Agenda for Peace”, *Third World Quarterly*, Vol. 34, No. 5, 2013, pp. 769-770; Oliver P Richmond, “Failed Statebuilding versus Peace Formation”, *Cooperation and Conflict*, Vol. 48, No. 3, 2013, pp. 378-400.

⁹ Oliver P. Richmond (ed.), *A Post-Liberal Peace*, New York: Routledge, 2011, p. 17.

¹⁰ Benjamin Reilly, “Timing and Sequencing in Post-conflict Elections”, in Armin Langer and Graham K. Brown (eds.), *Building Sustainable Peace: Timing and Sequencing of Post-Conflict Reconstruction and Peacebuilding*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016, pp. 72-86.

¹¹ Jan Rosset and Marco Pfister, *What Makes for Peaceful Post-conflict Elections?*, Switzerland: Swisspeace, 2013.

¹² Edward Laws, *Donor Support for Post-conflict Elections*, Birmingham: GSDRC, University of Birmingham, 2017, p. 2.

¹³ Jan Selby, op. cit.

beyond the power-sharing arrangements to embrace democratic elections and associated serious results.

The literature on post-conflict stability, peace, and security argue that there is no simple solution to the fragility and complexities of a post-conflict state/society. Scholars have emphasized the timing of an election for halting the parties from relapsing into violence.¹⁴ Although the election is a yardstick of transition to peace, post-conflict stability could be influenced by the timing of an election and the environment in which it takes place.¹⁵ Violence recurs when there is an inadequate time gap between the end of a war and an election's onset.¹⁶ The election timing depends on the power balance between the conflicting parties (e.g., the rebels and the government, the political parties, one identity group versus another) at the end of violence.¹⁷ The wrong timing and an improper design of an election process can produce counter-productive results.¹⁸ Any of the parties could reject the outcome of an election and return to the violent path.¹⁹ An early, premature election creates further conflicts during the peacebuilding phase, mainly when addressing vital political issues.

Against this backdrop, this paper attempts to examine the key factors, problems, and aspects that are crucial to consider before holding the post-conflict first democratic election for the quest of a transition from violence to peace. A transition towards peace means setting a governance framework in the post-conflict context that allows parties to enter into a political process, which helps prevent any large-scale violence. Transition indicates a condition for parties not to engage in further violence—meaning to restore a state of negative peace. For that purpose, the paper intends to answer the following question: How do different factors and issues influence and contribute to the post-conflict first democratic elections to ensure the state of “negative peace”? To examine the characteristics and issues crucial for post-conflict elections, it has undertaken a case study approach. This paper has taken the cases of Nepal, Sierra Leon, and Angola.

Among many cases of ending the civil war and their subsequent post-conflict elections in the post-Cold War era, these three are purposefully selected as no study

¹⁴ Dawn Brancati and Jack L. Snyder, “Rushing to the Polls: The Causes of Premature Postconflict Elections”, *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, Vol. 55, No. 3, 2011, pp. 469-492.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 470.

¹⁶ Benjamin Reilly, 2016, *op. cit.*

¹⁷ Dawn Brancati and Jack L. Snyder, *op. cit.*, p. 473.

¹⁸ Benjamin Reilly, “Post-war Elections: Uncertain Turning Points of Transition”, in Anna Jarstad and Timothy D. Sisk (eds.), *War-to-Democracy Transitions: Dilemmas of Democratization and Peacebuilding in War-Torn Societies*, Cambridge: Cambridge University press, 2008, pp. 157-181.

¹⁹ Muna Ndulo and Lulo Sara, *op. cit.*

combined them. Each case was studied from various perspectives and dimensions of peacebuilding. However, limited literature studied them jointly to understand the nature of post-violence immediate transition and stability. Some common and uncommon characteristics bound them together in this paper. For instance, Sierra Leone, Angola, and Nepal experienced internal conflicts though their nature was different. Two African countries—Angola and Sierra Leone—experienced resource-based civil war, while Nepal in South Asia had a grievance-oriented political conflict. Besides the domestic actors' involvement, some external also influence in them. External actors heavily supported the peace mediation in these cases, whereas the UN, with a varying mandate, was involved in monitoring the peace process. All had the post-conflict first election within two years of ending the war, though not all equally resulted in peaceful transitions. Not all had a similar experience of embracing the electoral process and the outcomes. Nepal and Sierra Leone are considered successful transition cases, while Angola was an unsuccessful case that further experienced violence after the election. Out of such convergences and divergences, this paper intends to make a modest contribution to post-conflict immediate election and peacebuilding literature.

On the other hand, it uses examples from various post-conflict elections and transition contexts to develop an analytical framework. A literature review of other cases helps identify and analyze the factors and issues and their interplays that contribute and influence the post-conflict transition process. The Paper is divided into five sections. After the introduction, in the second section, the paper briefly introduces three cases—Angola, Sierra Leone, and Nepal. The third section provides an analytical framework that explains relevant factors and issues of post-conflict elections and the associated transition process. The fourth section examines these factors and analyzes the cases and their transition process through democratic elections. The fifth section concludes the paper.

2. Background of Conflict and Post-conflict Election in Angola, Sierra Leone and Nepal

All conflicts have their causes and consequences, although each context of war is unique in terms of the reasons and actors. The main issues of domestic armed conflict could comprise many issues, including identity, resources, power, etc. Diverse actors and parties could be substantive, if not equally, strong as they often have power asymmetry in conflict.²⁰ Due to the geographical location of any conflicting area/state, the influence of global and regional actors in domestic politics during conflict is not uncommon.²¹ The selected cases were not exceptional under such considerations.

²⁰ Joakim Kreutz, *op. cit.*

²¹ *Ibid.*

2.1 *Angola*

The conflict in Angola is well known. The country experienced a prolonged civil war that started during the Cold War period. Two main counterparts of the Angolan War were the People's Movement for the Liberation of Angola (MPLA) and the National Union for the Total Independence of Angola (UNITA). They had a significant difference in ethnicity and political orientations. MPLA was the de facto government of the country and had a communist orientation, while UNITA was anti-communist by its political ideology. Despite having a shared aim of ending colonial rule in Angola, they had engaged in a civil war that started immediately after the independence in 1975. It continued until they signed the negotiated Bicesse Agreement on 31 May 1991, which the Portuguese government mediated; thus, it ended the conflict in their multi-ethnic society.²² The treaty contained provisions related to a ceasefire, joint political-military commission, presidential election within a year, formation of the Angolan armed forces, political rights of the UNITA, amongst others.²³

Another critical aspect of this accord was setting a UN peacekeeping mission, the United Nations Angola Verification Mission II (UNAVEM II), to oversee the ceasefire and monitor the electoral process. Although a proportional representation system was mentioned in the treaty, there was no arrangement for a coalition government before the election. On the other hand, two key Cold War rivals, the United States and USSR, were placed as observers of the Bicesse Agreement.²⁴ The post-civil war first election took place on 29 and 30 September 1992, a year after signing the agreement. The MPLA gained the majority seat, whereas the UNITA rejected the election calling it a fraudulent one. As a result, conflict erupted again that killed 300,000 Angolans from 1992 to 1994.²⁵

2.2 *Sierra Leone*

Sierra Leone experienced a civil war from 1991 to 2002, although it was mostly a conflict related to control over mineral resources like diamonds. The

²² South African History Online, "The Angolan Civil War (1975-2002): A Brief History", available at <https://www.sahistory.org.za/article/angolan-civil-war-1975-2002-brief-history#>, accessed on 11 September 2020.

²³ United Nations Peacemaker, "Peace Accords for Angola (Bicesse Accords)", available at <https://peacemaker.un.org/node/143>, accessed on 11 September 2020.

²⁴ Manuek J. Paulo, "The Role of the United Nations in the Angolan Peace Process", in Guus Meijer (ed.), *Accord 15: From Military Peace to Social Justice? The Angolan peace process*, London: Conciliation Resources, 2004, p. 28.

²⁵ Paula Cristina Roque, "Angolan Legislative Elections: Analyzing the MPLA's Triumph", *Institution for Security Studies*, Situation Report, 2008, p. 3, available at <https://media.africaportal.org/documents/SITREP160908.pdf>, accessed on 11 September 2020.

Revolutionary United Front (RUF) advanced towards Freetown, Sierra Leone's capital, to oust the government led by Joseph Momoh in 1991. The RUF led by Foday Sankoh was formed and raised due to the poverty, unemployment, political incompetence, and economic misery of Sierra Leone, located on the west coast of Africa.²⁶ The grievances were intense, leading Sankoh to come out, who then took control of the diamond mining provinces—Kono and Kenema.²⁷ There were several attempts of the coup in the 1990s; to tackle these, the government took the help of different authorities. These include the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), the Executive Outcome (EO), the Economic Community of West African States Community Monitoring Group (ECOMOG), the Civil Defense Forces (CDF), etc. Finally, the UN mandated the United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL) to prevent violence.²⁸

However, once the RUF and government reached a stalemate in 1995, they showed a willingness to sit for a negotiation process, leading to the Abidjan Peace Agreement.²⁹ They did not adhere to the 1996 Accord; therefore, fighting continued between them. The Armed Forces Revolutionary Council (AFRC) joined with the RUF in 1997 to fight against the government.³⁰ Having all these actors involved in and diverse issues concerned made the conflict a complicated one. However, the government and RUF signed two consecutive agreements with the support of external mediating authorities. The Abidjan Agreement failed due to the commitment problem of the parties, while the Lomé Peace Agreement was signed in 1999. Although the regional and international community played a crucial role in ending the conflict, the Lomé Agreement set a transitional government that empowered President Ahmed Tejan Kabbah and RUF leader, Foday Sankoh. The parties could not hold any election as they never adhered to what they agreed;³¹ therefore, violence recurred in Sierra Leone. After the complete defeat of the rebel groups, an election took place in 2002.

²⁶ Abu Bakarr Bah, "The Contours of New Humanitarianism: War and Peacebuilding in Sierra Leone", *Africa Today*, Vol. 60, No. 1, 2013, pp. 14-17.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 19.

²⁸ Clifford Bernath and Nyce Sayre, *UNAMSIL—A Peacekeeping Success Lessons Learned*, Washington DC: Refugee International, 2002, p. 15.

²⁹ Lansana Gberie, "First Stages on the Road to Peace: the Abidjan Process (1995-96)", in David Lord (ed.), *Accord 9: Paying the Price: The Sierra Leone Peace process*, London: Conciliation Resources, 2000, pp. 18-25.

³⁰ Mary Kaldor and James Vincent, *Evaluation of UNDP Assistance to Conflict-affected Countries: Case Study Sierra Leone*, New York: United Nations Development Programme Evaluation Office, 2006, pp. 4-8.

³¹ Joseph J. Bangura and Marda Mustapha, "Introduction", in Joseph J. Bangura and Marda Mustapha (eds.), *Sierra Leone beyond the Lomé Peace Accord*, United States: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010, pp. 5-7.

2.3 Nepal

In 2006, the government of Nepal and the Communist Party of Nepal-Maoist (CPN-M) signed the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) that ended an armed conflict, which continued for more than a decade since its beginning in the 1990s. The CPN-M called it the “people’s war”, which emerged in response to the government’s poor governance and repression led by the Nepalese Congress (NC).³² Throughout the decade, the NC was in power—either in coalition or alone that contributed to imperfect democracy. Eventually, this led to the rise of CPN-M to fight on behalf of the people.³³ Growing poverty and group inequality were the main reasons behind their discontentment. Besides, traditionally Royal Palace had exercised significant influence over the security forces to hold its power which hindered the democratic environment of the country. Their agenda, however, revolved around nationality, democracy, and equality for all within the state.³⁴ This war went on a full scale until the dramatic turn happened in the political arena that brought all the political parties on the same side in 2005. Although the negotiation for ending the war started in 2001, it neither gained momentum nor produced any mentionable outcome at that stage due to ongoing fighting continued between the Royal Nepal Army (RNA) and CPN-M.³⁵

In 2005, both the parties reached to mutually hurting stalemate stage that paved a way to end the fighting. An attempt by King Gyanendra to revive the absolute monarchy motivated all the political parties to come under the same umbrella.³⁶ The unification of all the political parties happened as they had a similar desire about their country that inculcated a positive vibe to end the conflict. In 2005, Seven Party Alliances (SPA) and CPN-M signed the 12-point Agreement that balanced them by fulfilling their separate objectives. The SPA agreed to the CPN-M’s agenda of republican state and later decided to the former’s agenda of a multi-party democratic system.³⁷ It led to the CPA, which contained various provisions, including a ceasefire, disarmament, demobilization, military, and constitutional reform, power-sharing

³² Bishnu Pathak, “Approaches to Peacebuilding in Nepal: Experiments in Various Dimensions”, in Jorgen Johansen and John Y. Jones (eds.), *Experiments with Peace: A Book Celebrating Peace on Johan Galtung’s 80th Birthday*, Cape Town: Pambazuka Press, 2011, pp. 267-280.

³³ Sebastian Von Einsiedel and Cale Salih, “Conflict Prevention in Nepal: Background Paper for the United Nations World Bank study on Conflict Prevention”, *United Nations University Centre for Policy Research, Conflict Prevention Series*, No. 1, 2017, pp. 1-12, available at http://collections.unu.edu/eserv/UNU:6430/ConflictPreventioninNepal_-_Apr_2017.pdf, accessed on 04 April 2019.

³⁴ Shiva k. Dhungana, “Security Sector Reform and Peacebuilding in Nepal: A Critical Reflection”, *Journal of Peacebuilding & Development*, Vol. 3, No. 2, 2007, p. 71.

³⁵ Bishnu Pathak, op. cit.

³⁶ Sebastian Von Einsiedel and Cale Salih, op. cit.

³⁷ Bishnu Pathak, op. cit.

constitutional arrangement, etc.³⁸ The Agreement also mandated the political parties to draft an interim constitution, arrange an election for the assembly, and finally prepare a new constitution for Nepal.³⁹ The post-conflict first election took place on 10 April 2008; no party gained the absolute majority. All the parties got a due share in the governance through a proportional representation arrangement.⁴⁰ The conflict did not recur.

3. Post-conflict Election: Enabling Factors of Stability and Peaceful Transition

An election is always a competitive game as the primary motivation of the political parties is to hold office and take control of the governing system.⁴¹ Election after an armed conflict is a process that allows people to choose their representative to run the country. However, a post-conflict election is more challenging than an election that takes place during peacetime. Election after a war is one of the crucial factors that help to bring the political parties back into politics and engage them in the post-conflict governance process. Nevertheless, getting stability back in a conflict-affected society is a complex and challenging task as people in such context are divided into many lines, including ethnic, political, and ideology. Therefore, defining stability in such a context is difficult too. In the post-conflict first election, it means to ensure an environment conducive for preventing relapse of violence. In other words, stability indicates a power of deterring any further significant violence that could take place between the ex-conflicting parties. This absence of any sort of direct violence is defined as “negative peace”.⁴²

Given the post-conflict contextual realities, the priority is to transition from violence, a procedural process wherein an election is considered a viable means that allows all parties to go beyond the violence phase and accommodate their demands. Conflicting parties are involved in such a transition process, which is applicable for changing their status quo and the country too to move forward. Once such a transformation takes place, the state and authority could address issues of positive

³⁸ Peace Accord Matrix, Kroc Institute of International Peace Studies, available at <https://peaceaccords.nd.edu/accord/comprehensive-peace-agreement>, accessed on 11 September 2020.

³⁹ Padma Prasad Khatiwada, *The Nepalese Peace Process: Faster Changes, Slower Progress*, Berlin: Berghof Foundation, 2014, p. 6.

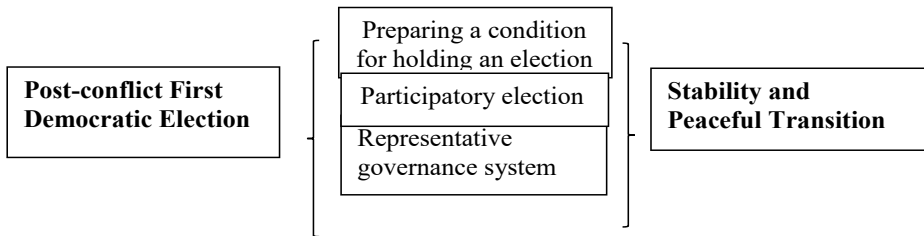
⁴⁰ The Electoral Knowledge Network, “Nepal: Constituent Assembly Election 2008”, available at <http://aceproject.org/today/feature-articles/nepal-constituent-assembly-elections-2008>, accessed on 11 September 2020.

⁴¹ Lucy Mansergh and Robert Thomson, “Election Pledges, Party Competition, and Policymaking”, *Comparative Politics*, Vol. 39, No. 3, 2007, p. 311.

⁴² Johan Galtung, “Violence, Peace, and Peace Research”, *Journal of Peace Research*, Vol. 6, No. 3, 1969, pp. 167-191.

peace. Without bringing stability back, such broader aspects of positive peace could be hard to attain. However, conflict-affected societies deal with so many other issues to bring stability back. There is no quick or simple arithmetic of holding an election after an armed conflict. The paper argues that some critical issues and aspects, once are taken into account, could help in such an election process and for a peaceful transition of post-conflict societies. The following figure depicts three broad, crucial, and interrelated issues that could help the transition process.

Figure 1: Influential Factors of Post-conflict First Election and Transition Process



Three dominant factors often are considered relevant to bring stability back in a state after violent conflict—that occurs between a sovereign government and any domestic armed group, although such a group often remains connected with their external aide. These factors include (a) preparing a condition for holding an election, (b) the participatory process of election, and (c) a representative governance system. In some cases, these factors served as the building blocks of election, stability, and transition. In other instances, an election produced mixed or counter-productive results, and conflict broke out again during the electoral process or afterward, especially when there was inadequate electoral preparation or insincere commitment of the parties to stay in the election process. These issues of convergence and divergence are explained in this framing section and in the case-specific analysis.

3.1 *Preparing a Condition for Holding an Election*

A post-conflict election system mainly depends on how a conflict ends. When a conflict terminates with a treaty between/amongst the warring parties, they set some agreed rules and conditions for maintaining stability. Despite many other concerns and limitations, this may offer an amenable position for the parties to express their opinions about their demands and interests in the decision-making process. This could include a power-sharing transitional framework or entail the process of holding an election. However, there is no universal rule for having an election, especially after armed violence, when the environment is volatile and complex. Therefore, how to prepare a ground for election in such a situation matters most. One of the commonalities of most post-conflict complex contexts is that they see the UN troops assigned to assist in the transition process.

The international community, including the UN and donors, takes various steps to overcome contexts' experiences. The fragility is often related to the security and insecurity of the parties; therefore, the demilitarization of politics is fundamental.⁴³ It entails prioritizing a security environment before holding an election and disarming the combatants and rebel groups. Without an environment that provides security, ordinary people may not go to cast votes. One notorious step of any rebel or spoiler groups could undermine the whole election, leading to violence. Despite having fair electoral law, if the international actors withdraw before the election and combatant's reintegration process, that could question an election, as happened in Iraq in 2005.⁴⁴ However, such intervention could fight for legitimacy. Having popular support from local people can legitimize their presence and execute a particular structure of governance.⁴⁵ Once they have attention to caring civilian interests, this could help to reduce any concerns and lessen any frustration locals may have.⁴⁶

Although the international community often emphasizes democratic institutions, holding an election is a vital part that must reflect the decisions of the elites and people living in post-conflict contexts. Interim institutions influence the activities of the former combatants. However, arranging an election without strengthening the existing institutions or setting up new electoral institutions is unfeasible.⁴⁷ Parties have economic interests too. Therefore, they want their interests to be served to which the international community also pays attention so that resource control issues can get priority in the institutional capacity building process. Without this, it could be challenging to bring the parties back to politics and contain the conflict—as long they fight for state power and covertly for resource control.⁴⁸

Therefore, the need for financial assistance, expertise, and security are crucial, often addressed by external supports; and such situational needs need to be handled carefully.⁴⁹ In a very fragile and vulnerable context, supports from external sources often come with conditions—a means of influencing and controlling

⁴³ Terrence Lyons, "Peacebuilding, Democratization, and Transforming the Institutions of War", in Bruce W Dayton and Louis Kriesberg (eds.), *Conflict Transformation and Peacebuilding*, London: Routledge, 2009, pp. 103-118

⁴⁴ Laura A. Dutton, "Evaluating the Criteria for Successful Elections in Post-conflict Countries: A Case Study including Iraq, Sierra Leone, and Bosnia and Herzegovina", PhD dissertation, Indiana University: Department of Political Science, 2014.

⁴⁵ Mats Berdal, "Chapter Two: Peacebuilding Operations and the Struggle for Legitimacy", *The Adelphi Papers*, Vol. 49, No. 407, 2009, pp. 97-100.

⁴⁶ Mats Berdal, *op. cit.*, p. 129.

⁴⁷ Terrence Lyons, "Post Conflict Elections: War Termination, Democratization, and Demilitarizing Politics", *Working Paper No 20*, Institute for Conflict Analysis and Resolution George Mason University, 2002, p.7.

⁴⁸ Naazneen Barma, *The Peacebuilding Puzzle: Political Order in Post-conflict States*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016, p. 23.

⁴⁹ Laura A. Dutton, *op. cit.*

conflicting parties with reward and punishment.⁵⁰ Otherwise, a conflict could relapse due to various associated reasons, including the timing of holding an election. There are examples where the post-conflict first election was held soon after the war had ended, without considering adequate preparation and creating ground for the environment. In Bosnia-Herzegovina election took place less than a year after signing the Dayton Accord, whereas in Mozambique election was held after two years of ending the civil war.⁵¹ It requires some time to fulfill these conditions based on the contextual conditions. An election, however, could bring violence back when inadequate attention is paid to improving the security condition. Hence, the Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration (DDR) of the former combatants of both parties is as vital as strengthening security governance institutions in the short and long terms. Without having control over the combatants of different groups, preparing to hold an election could be myopic since these groups with arms can influence the electoral process.⁵²

If the context and security environment are not taken care of, parties could be less willing to accept the election result, leading to electoral violence. Therefore, it is a question of whether an election process can reduce the risks of recurring violence. In many contexts, e.g., Zimbabwe, Iraq, Kenya, and Afghanistan, violence returned during the election process or after the election.⁵³ Due to the existing security dilemma, parties suffer from inadequate trust amongst them, which makes them suspicious about the move of the other parties even after the election.⁵⁴ All parties, therefore, equally remain concerned about their future security. Besides these, what is more critical for creating a condition for a post-conflict election is to prepare warring parties to allow them to give away their old paths and embrace a political process to address governance issues. Therefore, rebel groups with no political ideology have to transform into political parties with specific political objectives, as happened in Mozambique.⁵⁵ Before the 1994 election, the international community supported building up the Mozambican National Resistance (RENAMO), an armed opposition group of the Mozambique Liberation Front (FRELIMO), which had no political ideology.⁵⁶ Once they have such a transformative strategy, they feel allegiances to continue political goals in due process, other than resorting to violent means.

⁵⁰ Susan L. Woodward, "The Political Economy of Peacebuilding and International Aid", in Roger Mac Ginty (ed.), *Routledge Handbook of Peacebuilding*, Abingdon: Routledge, 2013, p. 325.

⁵¹ Dawn Brancati and Jack L. Snyder, "Time to Kill: The Impact of Election Timing on Post Conflict Stability", *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, Vol. 57, No. 5, 2013, p. 823.

⁵² Terrence Lyons, 2002, op. cit., p. 12.

⁵³ Muna Ndulo and Sara Lulo, op. cit., p. 156.

⁵⁴ Terrence Lyons, 2002, op. cit., p. 7.

⁵⁵ Marina Ottawa, "Promoting Democracy after Conflict: The Difficult Choices", *International Studies Perspectives*, Vol. 4, No. 3, 2003, pp. 314-322.

⁵⁶ Ibid.

Therefore, the argument for preparing a condition for holding an election means a comprehensive approach that considers strengthening the security environment and institutional capacity, demilitarization of politics, and building mutual trust between the parties. These allow them to engage in dialogue for addressing any incompetency of an election process. Nevertheless, these all often need supports from the international community, and their roles in the post-conflict complex transition process are vital in many fragile contexts if not all.

3.2 *Participatory Election*

An election is a process of ensuring the participation of all sections of people. This process allows all quarters and people to participate and choose their representatives. However, various socio-political, ideological, and identity issues can hinder this process in the post-conflict vortex of politics. Therefore, a kind of consensus amongst the parties for holding the post-conflict first democratic election is crucial as they use a competitive election to consolidate their power, which different actors could influence. Parties also can mobilize their people and followers divided into various lines against any possible future threats to their security.⁵⁷ Therefore, it can ignite an ethnocentric or ideo-centric electoral process, motivated by the ex-conflicting parties, like in Bosnia.⁵⁸ Some contexts even may not have any institutional setup, nor any electoral roll. These are vital for arranging and completing a participatory election.

Besides the functioning of a robust and independent election commission, a transparent and participatory election process also depends upon an established complaint system.⁵⁹ On the one hand, it helps ensure the participation of all the warring parties and sets a check and balance system in the process, on the other hand.⁶⁰ Such an approach, moreover, assists in building a sense of confidence required for keeping parties away from engaging in further violence.⁶¹ Without such strong institutions, a democratic election could become a source of violence. This is related to commitment problems of the parties and thus undermines the stability that an agreement may have established.⁶² However, a conflict-affected society lacks the essential services and infrastructures to hold an election in a conducive environment. The international community assists in setting up institutions like the National

⁵⁷ Benjamin Reilly, 2016, op. cit.

⁵⁸ Ibid.; Benjamin Reilly, 2008, op. cit.

⁵⁹ Winrich Kühne, *The Role of Elections in Emerging Democracies and Post-conflict Countries*, Berlin: International Policy Analysis for Global Policy and Development, 2010.

⁶⁰ Øyvind Stiansen, "Post-Conflict Democracy for Durable Peace", Master's Thesis, Department of Political Science: University of Oslo, 2013, pp. 11-26.

⁶¹ Winrich Kühne, op. cit.

⁶² Benjamin Reilly, 2004, op. cit.

Election Commission. In South Africa, an independent electoral commission was set up to arrange and supervise the election of 1994. The commission comprised respected local and international figures, which helped conduct the election in due process and transform South Africa into a multi-party democratic country.⁶³ However, not all contexts are the same. In the first post-conflict election, there remains the potential for conflict concerning accepting its result.⁶⁴

The risk of recurring violence is higher in contexts where neither the electoral nor the state institutions are strong enough to conduct a non-partisan and independent election.⁶⁵ Therefore, building parties' confidence in the whole election process is vital. The establishment of an election commission based on the consensus of the stakeholders is one of such confidence-building measures. Unless a free and fair electoral system is being established, stability would hardly come back. Besides strengthening or empowering domestic institutions, the international community can assist conflicting parties to convince them to participate in an election after conflict. Like the RENAMO and FRELIMO received support to prepare them to join in the post-conflict election. The international community plays an overseeing role, too, in the electoral process. Apart from peacekeepers assisting in the election arranging process, the international community sends observers to monitor and evaluate the integrity and examine the extent to which an election after the conflict is impartial, violence-free, and participatory required for a democratic transition.⁶⁶ There could be chauvinistic leaders like Charles Taylor in Liberia present in the post-conflict contexts. They want to undermine an electoral process by resorting to violence and preventing people from casting votes in the election, fearing their defeat.⁶⁷ Therefore, the strong presence of UN peacekeepers, donors' support for transforming rebel groups into political parties and monitoring mechanism of election assist parties in building their confidence to engage in the participatory electoral process. Besides the international community, some regional power could extend hands in building the capacity of ex-conflicting parties, transforming them into political entities and encouraging them to participate in the election.⁶⁸ They all, in different significant ways, also contribute to preventing potential violence in the electoral process.

⁶³ Muna Ndulo and Sara Lulo, op. cit., p. 159.

⁶⁴ Winrich Kühne, op. cit., p. 8.

⁶⁵ Edward Laws, op. cit.

⁶⁶ Richard Lappin, "Why Observe Election? Reassessing the Importance of Credible Elections to Post-conflict Peacebuilding", *Peace Research*, Vol. 41, No. 2, 2009, pp. 85-117.

⁶⁷ Terrence Lyons, 2009, op. cit.

⁶⁸ Carin Norberg, "Reconciling Winners and Losers in Post-conflict Elections in West Africa: Political and Policy Imperatives", in Crain Norberg and Cyril Obi (eds.), *Report of a Panel Debate and Discussion*, Uppsala: The Nordic African Institute, 2007. pp. 8-13.

3.3 *Representative Governance System and a Guarantee of No Return to Violence*

An election is the means to access power, leadership, and authority in a legitimate process. It constitutes a sense of competition, both in reality and perceived manner, amongst parties to get the desired position, and conflict may occur in such a situation. Besides the outcome of an election process, there has to be space for parties to discuss and negotiate to decide how inclusively they could participate in the governance process. The inclusion of all parties in the peace process is fundamental to avert the rise of any potential spoilers. In Afghanistan, the Taliban was not included in the Bonn process that had experienced challenges in the post-election governance process.⁶⁹ However, an election is a viable means of bringing all the parties back into politics and ensuring their legitimate political rights. Hence, the authority remains concerned about engaging all the warring parties in every step of the election and governance process. On the other hand, parties worry about the zero-sum outcome out of an election. They do not want to give absolute power and authority to the other party to rule over the country—as they continuously remain under insecurity due to the presence of security dilemma.⁷⁰ Therefore, any representative governance system is set by the post-conflict first election remains attractive for the parties and thus could assist in preventing violence.

The context of each post-conflict country is critical to determine such a governing system. Deeply divided societies face problems when political power goes to the opposite segment due to the election outcome. Post-election violence could be risky if such an outcome does not convince the existing power-holders and governing authority. Hence, an exceptional power-sharing formula could be a temporary solution to stop violence, although everything depends on the local context. There is no hard and fast rule of arranging power-sharing after the election: only the context can provide an answer to it. The 1993 election in Cambodia, where the UN Security Council members were closely involved, had produced a unique system of governance—a two prime ministerial system that allowed Hun Sen and Norodom Ranariddh to share power and endorsed a transition process.⁷¹

A discussion between actors engaged in post-conflict peacebuilding and the local political elites could develop a preferable formula as every segment of the

⁶⁹ Lotte Ten Hoove and Alvaro Pinto Scholtbach, “Democratization in Post-Conflict Societies: Lessons Learned”, in Joy Maul-Phillips (ed.), *Democracy and Political Party Assistance in Post-conflict Societies*, Hague: NIMD Knowledge Centre, 2008, p. 10.

⁷⁰ Marisa Traniello, “Power-Sharing: Lessons from South Africa and Rwanda”, *International Public Policy Review*, Vol. 3, No. 2, 2008, p. 40.

⁷¹ Shankari Sundararaman, “Cambodian Elections: From Pol Pot to the Polls Once Again”, *Strategic Analysis* 2, Vol. 22, No. 6, 1998, p. 927.

divided society could have a due share in an inclusive decision-making process.⁷² All parties' interests and needs are crucial to prioritize to avoid spoilers' emergence and development, which often seem to find fighting more appealing than reaching an agreement to cease violence.⁷³ Besides all the segments have to trust that they are indispensable to stabilize the country and have a due share in the governance process. Some groups may want an equal share of power, whether this power-sharing is related to any aspects of territorial, economic, military, and political formula, including the grand coalition. In contrast, some others may wish to their recognition in the political process. Apart from political formula, parties keep their interests on resource control that significantly change parties' dynamics and roles. Therefore, controlling the political governance process must be attached to the natural resource governance process that can benefit people and parties and thus reduce the pressure of recurring violence.⁷⁴

The key to this representative governance process is to meet the parties' needs and reduce the risk of spoiler violence by accommodating them through persuasion. This could appease them, and such parties would find fighting less attractive than participating in the political process. South Africa, for instance, adopted a proportional representation system to include all the political parties. Any party that got a five per cent vote was allowed to have a seat in the 27-member cabinet. It was quite attractive and innovative to get all parties positions in the governance process. It left no room for the spoilers to indulge in the post-election stability and peace. The Inkatha Freedom Party, for instance, joined the election when the constitutional mechanism accepted their demand of decentralization, and their insecurity was conceded.⁷⁵ Despite having some temporary merits of mitigating the differences of conflicting parties by proportional representation in the governance process, this must be crafted carefully during transition phases. A context-specific modification and design are vital to meet inclusive governance needs that help prevent relapsing violence after the election.

4. Post-conflict First Election in Nepal, Angola and Sierra Leone: An Analysis

The post-conflict first election is a highly complex phenomenon for any conflict-affected country that has to deal with actual political demands of the parties,

⁷² Scott Gates and Kaare Strøm, *Power-sharing, Agency and Civil Conflict*, Oslo: Center for the Study of Civil War, 2007, p. 1.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, p. 3.

⁷⁴ Michael D. Beevers, "International Intervention to Govern Diamonds and Minerals", in Michael D. Beevers (ed.), *Peacebuilding and Natural Resource Governance After Armed Conflict*, Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2019, p. 146.

⁷⁵ Marisa Traniello, *op. cit.*, p. 36

which may or may not like a projected transition process. Nonetheless, an election plays a significant role in the transition process if some specific issues and factors are taken care of to assist the process. This section discusses and explains the above issues and aspects in Angola, Sierra Leone, and Nepal contexts. In other words, these cases help to examine how the factors mentioned above assisted in holding the post-conflict first democratic election and transition process.

4.1 *Preparing Conditions for Holding the Election*

Preparing grounds for a post-conflict election is a mammoth task as it depends on contextual factors, including but not limited to improving security situation through DDR programmes, pursuing a condition of dialogue between the parties and undertaking infrastructural development, etc.

4.1.1 *Presence of the UN*

One of the key features of the 1991 treaty signed between the MPLA and UNITA was to withdraw the Cuban troops from Angola.⁷⁶ This means the purpose of the dialogue process was to create trust amongst the warring parties and reach a common point of ending hostility. Nevertheless, distrust on security ground remained active amongst those who could fight again.⁷⁷ Therefore, the international community sent a UN mission, the UNAVEM II, although with a limited mandate to work in the Angolan transition process. The UNAVEM II started to work on some agreed points, such as creating a unified armed force and disarming the warring parties. Some commissions were established to work on these matters.⁷⁸ The presence of UN troops was a source of guarantee for the parties to engage in the post-conflict transition process. In Nepal, however, the 2006 CPA created an avenue not only for ending the war but also going towards a multi-party democratic system.⁷⁹ There was mass support for such a transformation in their political system. Nevertheless, its neighbour India played a significant role in this process by creating space for all the parties to sit in the negotiation process and its traditional approach towards a robust UN mission in Nepal.⁸⁰ Despite this conventional approach, the UN set a political mission, the United Nations Mission in Nepal (UNMIN), with a limited mandate to observe and monitor the progress of the peace process.⁸¹

⁷⁶ Manuel J. Paulo, op. cit.

⁷⁷ Assis Malaquias, "The UN in Mozambique and Angola: Lessons Learned", *International Peacekeeping*, Vol. 3, No. 2, 1996, p. 94.

⁷⁸ Vladimir Krška, "Peacekeeping in Angola (UNAVEM I and II)", *International Peacekeeping*, Vol. 4, No. 1, 1997, p. 85.

⁷⁹ Bishnu Pathak, op. cit.

⁸⁰ Manjushree Thapa, "Nepal: Maoists' Lock, India's Door", *Open Democracy*, 2010, available at <https://www.opendemocracy.net/en/nepal-containing-maoists-handling-india/>, accessed on 04 April 2019.

⁸¹ Astri Suhrke, "Virtues of a Narrow Mission: The UN Peace Operation in Nepal", *Global Governance*, Vol.

On the other hand, unlike Nepal, the situation in Sierra Leone was not smooth enough. Despite signing the 1999 accord, the AFRC and RUF advanced towards Freetown, and 21 civilians were shot dead. The cruelty of parties and impacts of violence made the international community more aware than before to intervene in the peace process. As a result, the UN sent UNAMSIL in the same year to maintain peace—although its mandate was limited.⁸² The government wanted a ceasefire and total disarmament, while the RUF desired to control positions in the government. The RUF was empowered further, as it was in control of four ministries, including the Ministry of Trade, the Ministry of Land, the Ministry of Power and Energy, and the Ministry of Tourism.⁸³ Foday Sankoh was made the Chairman of the Commission for the Management of Strategic Resources, including diamond, and the National Reconstruction and Development, while Johnny Paul Koroma, the leader of the AFRC, was appointed as the Chairman of the Commission for Consolidation of Peace. However, they felt excluded from the government. They were not participants in the cabinet meetings, and their office facilities were not suitable for them. Having their ambitions, as well as dissatisfactions, the RUF resorted to violence. Despite giving what Sankoh wanted, the RUF breached the treaty in 2000,⁸⁴ which resulted in the hostage-taking of 500 UN peacekeepers.

Sankoh aimed to capture the power by fighting as he never adhered to the treaty.⁸⁵ Once the UN forces were targeted and cornered by the violence of RUF and others,⁸⁶ the troops of the United Kingdom, the former colonizer of Sierra Leone, came forward and launched Operation Palliser in 2000 to neutralize the RUF.⁸⁷ Finally, Sankoh and the RUF's position holders in the government were arrested, which indirectly ended the power-sharing arrangement that the Lomé accord established. To a considerable extent, the episodes of post-accord violence made a condition for the UN to revise its mandate and thus helped the mission to perform its duty comprehensively. The UN considered a robust assignment for the UNAMSIL, increasing its strength from 6,000 to 17,500 troops until March 2001. This strong mandate allowed them to perform conflict prevention works and create conditions for election. The UNAMSIL extended its stay for another three years after the election to tackle any residual and further violence.⁸⁸

17, No. 1, 2011, pp. 37-55; Manjushree Thapa, op. cit.

⁸² Helga Malmin Binningsbø and Kendra Dupuy, "Using Power-sharing to Win a War: The Implementation of the Lomé Agreement in Sierra Leone", *Africa Spectrum*, Vol. 44, No. 3, 2009, p. 98.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, p. 94.

⁸⁴ Abu Bakarr Bah, op. cit., p. 15.

⁸⁵ Philippe Le Billon, "Diamond Wars? Conflict Diamonds and Geographies of Resource Wars", *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*, Vol. 98, No. 2, 2008, pp. 345-372.

⁸⁶ Tunde Zack-Williams, "Sierra Leone beyond Lomé: Challenges and Failures", in Joseph J. Bangura and Marda Mustapha (eds.), *Sierra Leone Beyond the Lomé Peace Accord*, New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010, p. 22.

⁸⁷ Philippe Le Billon, op. cit.

⁸⁸ World Peace Foundation, "United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL) Brief", available at <https://>

4.1.2 *DDR and Security Improvements*

The presence of UN troops in these contexts contributed to maintaining negative peace and in processing the DDR process that, to a considerable extent, facilitated in improving the security of the concerned parties, groups and combatants. Although the UNAVEM II was primarily mandated to “verify the ceasefire arrangements and monitor neutrality of the Angolan Police” with the support of 350 unarmed military observers, it is the process that assisted in disarming some combatants of the parties. Nevertheless, it was not as productive as it was expected. Only 54 per cent of MPLA and 24 per cent of UNITA troops submitted their weapons two weeks before the election held in September 1992.⁸⁹ This last moment limited disarmament of the MPLA and UNITA forces were not adequate for holding an election but kept the security condition at the question. This half-hearted disarmament process undermined the security environment and lacked the adequate infrastructure required for a smooth election.

In the case of Nepal, the UN sent 186 personnel to monitor 100,000 combatants who were far less than usual UN missions. However, the conflicting parties agreed to keep their fighters in barracks during the election.⁹⁰ One of the key approaches that the UNMIN employed to overcome the impasses of the disarmament process was that it formed the Joint Monitoring and Coordination Committee (JMCC). The JMCC involved both the Nepalese Army and the Maoists to create a ground for them to work together.⁹¹ Reforming the army’s structure, downsizing its size, and including Maoists in the security sector were some priorities for the peace process. This path seemed difficult as the security forces were less interested to be under civilian authority. However, power was given to the civilians at the district level over the army and police chiefs; the government got the power to appoint the army commander.⁹² The forces showed their wiliness to act according to the agreed decisions. Finally, the appointment of the new chief of army staff paved the way for Maoists’ integration in the security sector.⁹³ Despite the limited role of the UNMIN, several instruments and issues like the CPA and its contents, a similar desire of the CPN-M and SPA, and the army’s willingness created an encouraging

sites.tufts.edu/wpf/files/2017/07/Sierra-Leone-brief.pdf, accessed on 01 April 2019.

⁸⁹ Gwinyayi Albert Dzinesa, “A Comparative Perspective of UN Peacekeeping in Angola and Namibia”, *International Peacekeeping*, Vol. 11, No. 4, 2004, pp. 653-655.

⁹⁰ Ian Martin, “All Peace Operations are Political: A Case for Designer Missions and the Next UN Reform”, in R. Gowan (ed.), *Review of Political Missions*, New York: Center on International Cooperation, New York University, 2010.

⁹¹ Sebastian Von Einsiedel and Cale Salih, op. cit., p. 8.

⁹² Shiva K. Dhungana, op. cit., p. 76.

⁹³ Sebastian Von Einsiedel and Cale Salih, op. cit., p. 9.

environment to improve the security situation before holding the first post-conflict election.

However, the DDR process that started back in 1998 in Sierra Leone continued till 2002. The RUF, AFRC, and CDF combatants were disarmed and demobilized under the supervision of the UN, the government and ECOWAS, and several other observers. This process was successful due to an active presence of donors and external actors in Sierra Leone, which assisted in creating the ground for election. However, disarmed and demobilized combatants were provided financial and other assistance that, to some extent, allowed them not to return to the violent path and thus improved the security situation.⁹⁴ As there were several rebel groups in operations in Sierra Leone, initiatives of enhancing the security situation, therefore, perhaps involved multiple actors at various layers. The presence and engagements of these actors to a considerable extent helped stop the RUF from engaging in more violence and embrace the path of a democratic election. As a part of the preparation, the National Election Commission, led by a former inspector general of police, Walter Nicol, acted to register voters, register political parties, and set the code of conduct of the election.⁹⁵ A total of 2,309,338 eligible voters were registered.⁹⁶ The registration period had to extend to include returnees, internally displaced people and refugees. However, many could not register due to inadequate registration papers, lack of access to registration centres, and insufficient support from some political parties to register supporters.⁹⁷ Good preparation for holding a participatory election is a vital part of the transition process.

4.2 *Participatory Election*

One of the preconditions of a post-conflict first election is to ensure an environment encouraging all stakeholders to participate in the electoral process. Without the participation of ex-warring parties, an election cannot make a transition towards peace. In Angola, the UNAVEM II was mandated to monitor the election. The international community's engagement (Portugal, the United States, and Russia) for the supervision of negotiation between the UNITA and MPLA paved the way to a ceasefire. They also committed to holding an election under the Bicesse Agreement in 1991. The MPLA

⁹⁴ Clifford Bernath and Sayre Nyce, *op. cit.*

⁹⁵ Jimmy D Kandeh, "Sierra Leone's Post-Conflict Elections of 2002", *Journal of Modern African Studies*, Vol. 41, No. 2, 2003, p. 194.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*

faced substantial international pressure to go for a political solution.⁹⁸ The anticipation of winning the election, on the other hand, gave the UNITA an incentive to participate in the election.⁹⁹ Angola had 6 million voters and 6000 polling stations against which there were only 400 UN observers.¹⁰⁰ The election that took place in 1992 was declared free and fair by the UN, European Union and powerful regional states, including South Africa and others.

However, the process of participation was not as effective as expected. Immediately after the end of the Cold War, the international community paid less attention to this country.¹⁰¹ The role of the UN only as an observer was not enough to arrange the election. Both the MPLA and UNITA members comprised the election commission and other commissions like the Truth and Reconciliation Commission did not pave the way for a relapse of the conflict. Nevertheless, the UNITA needed not to agree to form a coalition government before the election.¹⁰² Instead, it was interesting to see the result and decide how to act based on that. The MPLA won the election, which was unacceptable to the UNITA, which assumed to get election result in their favour. Therefore, the UNITA retained control over its areas and was unwilling to disarm, further clarifying its intention of not accepting the election result.¹⁰³ As there was not much financial assistance, local expertise, and local capacity influenced the electoral process. These, to a great extent, also failed to convince the UNITA to stay in the Parliament. Instead, it went back to the old path.

The election that took place on 10 April 2008 in Nepal was marked as peaceful by external observers.¹⁰⁴ Fifty-five political parties contested in this election indicating their interest.¹⁰⁵ There were not many stumbling blocks in the election process. Political parties supported by people wanted a democratic transition. Around 17.6 million people were enlisted for the vote. Amongst them, 10 million cast their votes. There were a total of 20,882 polling centres, and 9,821 polling locations in 75 districts of Nepal.¹⁰⁶ People of Nepal had an interest to see a fundamental change in their basic governance structure. The

⁹⁸ Christopher Pycroft, "Angola—the forgotten tragedy", *Journal of Southern African Studies*, Vol. 20, No. 2, 1994, p. 249.

⁹⁹ Christine Messiant, "Why did Bicesse and Lusaka Fail? A Critical Analysis", in Guus Meijer (ed.), *Accord 15: From Military Peace to Social Justice? The Angolan peace process*, London: Conciliation Resources, 2004, p. 18.

¹⁰⁰ Gwinyayi Albert Dzinesa, op. cit., pp. 650-653.

¹⁰¹ Christine Messiant, op. cit., p. 23.

¹⁰² Ibid., p. 18.

¹⁰³ Ibid., p. 19.

¹⁰⁴ Carter Center, *Observing the 2008 Nepal Constituent Assembly Election*, Atlanta: The Carter Center, 2008, p. 41.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., p. 15.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid.

voter turnout was more than 60 per cent, and the election took place in a “calm and orderly” environment in which people’s participation, including women voters, was enthusiastic, although there were incidents of violence, breach of electoral rules and codes during the period of the electoral campaign.¹⁰⁷

Besides the interests of local people, there was international assistance to expedite the process. The UN helped by giving technical assistance to national authorities and made UN arms monitors and civil affairs teams to promote a safe ambience of the election.¹⁰⁸ On the day of the election, various domestic and international observer groups actively monitored the election. The constituent assembly election of Nepal was successful despite several irregularities during the campaign time.¹⁰⁹ The priority on disarming the fighters and keeping them inside the barracks during the election time played a vital role in creating a safe condition and ensuring people’s participation.

Sierra Leone arranged its first general election after the conflict in November 2002. The UN provided logistical support and monitored the electoral process at the backdrop of a request from the National Election Commission of Sierra Leone. The UNAMSIL was active in undertaking any actions for holding the election. In the high-risk areas, it deployed 11,000 troops on the day of the election and assisted security forces by including 4,400 police personnel.¹¹⁰ Nine political parties, including the Revolutionary United Front Party (RUF) and Sierra Leone People’s Party (SLPP), participated in the election. The SLPP, led by Ahmed Tejan Kabbah, won the presidential election.¹¹¹ Nevertheless, the presence of the UN forces and their responsible role created an environment conducive to an election in Sierra Leone. Kandeh¹¹² stated, “External security arrangements contributed to the success of the electoral exercise, but so did the resolve of voters to elect their leaders through the ballot box”, although the RUF could not win any seat in the Parliament.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid., p. 3.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid., p. 15.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid.

¹¹⁰ Samuel Atuobi, “Peace Support Operations and Post-Conflict Elections: The Case of Sierra Leone”, *Kofi Annan International Peacekeeping Training Centre*, Monograph 6, 2009, pp. 22-24, available at https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/3F6488F086A9D101C12577C100331D09-Full_Report.pdf, accessed on 04 April 2019.

¹¹¹ Ibid., p. 25.

¹¹² Jimmy D Kandeh, op. cit., p. 191.

4.3 *Representative Governance System and a Guarantee of No Return to Violence*

After conflicts, a representative governance system is convenient for sustaining a transition process. To what extent parties of an election are allowed to share power in the due process determines the success. There was no space or arrangement for the UNITA to share power. The winning party set its priority in the governance process. As the UNITA lost in the election, it did not accept the result. The MPLA was not interested in sharing power in any format with the UNITA as it was not agreed upon before.¹¹³ Both parties wanted power at any cost; therefore, the winner had the scope to take all as this happens in a majoritarian democratic system. Despite having some pre-election power-sharing arrangements, they could not protect the country from further violence. Provisions in the Lusaka Agreement were not adequate to ensure the representation of all parties in the governance process and thus could not stop them from engaging in post-election violence.¹¹⁴

After a long civil war, parties in Nepal were agreed to adopt a power-sharing arrangement before and after the election. They followed a consensus-based decision-making process before the election and a proportional representation in the assembly after the election.¹¹⁵ It was based on a condition of fifty per cent plus one vote to get a seat in the Constituent Assembly (CA). It did not create any problem as no party in Nepal got a majority because they lacked this percentage. Hence, they had to form a coalition to ensure a majority. It also created space for small political parties to be involved in the governance system.¹¹⁶ As a result, this contributed to a balance between the interests and differences of the CPN-M and the seven-party alliance considerably. In terms of the formation of the cabinet, Prime Minister and President followed consensus politics. These positions were decided through consensus and mutual understanding and applying 2/3 majority votes, as included in the CPA.¹¹⁷

Another ethnic group, the Madhesi group, did not have much interest in a political power-sharing arrangement, although its appeal was to secure autonomy for their land.¹¹⁸ They also supported this model to carry on their part. The Madhesi ethnic group from southern Nepal used their political power

¹¹³ Christine Messiant, op. cit., p. 20.

¹¹⁴ Markus Kornprobst, "Explaining Success and Failure of War to Peace Transitions: Revisiting the Angolan and Mozambican experience", *Journal of Conflict Studies*, Vol. 22, No. 2, 2002, pp. 63-76.

¹¹⁵ Jason Miklian, *Post-conflict Power Sharing: The Case of Nepal*, Oslo: PRIO, 2009, pp. 3-5.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 6.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 9.

and influence to secure approximately 15 per cent of seats in the CA.¹¹⁹ None of the parties in the Assembly supported their demand for autonomy due to its potential consequences.¹²⁰ All they stood for was national unity. Immediately after the election, once a minister placed the proposal of transforming Nepal from a constitutional monarchy to a federal democratic republic, 560 members of the CA voted in its favour, while only four voted against it.¹²¹ One of the critical tasks of the CA, which worked as the Parliament in the post-election context, was to draft a permanent constitution for the country to move forward in a manner that represents the diverse interests of the Nepali people and society.

The Lomé Peace Agreement contained a pre-election power-sharing arrangement to meet RUF's interests. As part of this formula, the RUF had given the authority of four ministries before the 2002 election.¹²² Sierra Leone, however, demonstrates a mixed result of power-sharing arrangement since this formula did not sustain in the post-election phase. It means pre-election sharing of power does not guarantee a post-election coalition. Kabbah won the election, despite different alleged irregularities, and his party, Sierra Leone People's Party (SLPP), formed the government. In addition, the international community, including the UN, ECOMOG, and British authority, relied on Kabbah to bring and maintain peace, a precondition for inviting and allowing foreign investment.¹²³ There was no competition in the Parliament. The election established a fragile peace; yet, it was a means of giving legitimacy to the political system.¹²⁴

Having a landslide victory, both the SLPP and Kabbah ignored the necessity of incorporating the opposition in the governance process.¹²⁵ Instead of paying attention to local opposition, the government focussed more on tackling "potential enemies elsewhere", like neighbouring Liberia and Guinea.¹²⁶ In Sierra Leone, the rebel did not gain anything by the election, although an environment of corruption and irregularities sustained that was a concern of leading to further challenges.¹²⁷ There were no power-sharing effects in the election result; therefore, the government in power decided on

¹¹⁹ Ibid., p. 7.

¹²⁰ Ibid., p. 9.

¹²¹ Carter Center, op. cit.

¹²² Helga Malmin Binningsbø and Kendra Dupuy, op. cit., p. 95.

¹²³ David Harris, "Post-conflict Elections or Post-elections Conflict: Sierra Leone 2002 and Patterns of Voting in Sub-Saharan Africa", *Cadernos de Estudos Africanos*, Vol. 5, No. 6, 2004, pp. 39-49.

¹²⁴ Jimmy D Kandeh, op. cit., p. 190.

¹²⁵ David Harris, op. cit.

¹²⁶ Ibid., p. 43.

¹²⁷ Jimmy D Kandeh, op. cit.

issues based on the context and circumstances of the post-election environment. The UNAMSIL continued to stay in Sierra Leone till 2005 to address potential post-election violent factors and consequences.

The elucidation and analysis of these three cases (Angola, Sierra Leone, and Nepal) portray that each post-conflict situation was unique; yet, they were thriving to transition from violence to peace through the post-conflict first democratic election. UN missions with varying degrees of authority and mandate made the situation convenient for preparing the ground for election. However, power-sharing amongst conflicting parties could be a critical indicator of convincing them to prepare and participate in a democratic election. This formula can convince parties to go for an election and contribute to the complexities of holding an election. The commitment of post-election sharing of power worked well in Nepal, and its people wanted a fundamental change in the governance process. On the other hand, in Sierra Leone power-sharing formula worked to convince the parties to reach an agreement to stop the civil war, although it created complexities in the post-agreement phase leading to recurrence of violence before holding the election. Angola did not try for this formula, to which the international community had limited interests in the early post-Cold War era.

As a part of liberal peace, the international community was involved profoundly and with the responsibility that helped to end the war and prepare the grounds to hold an election. One could argue that their broader role in Sierra Leone was motivated by the interests of the concerned actors. Therefore, it experienced robust peacekeeping, whereas Nepal did not require such a powerful mission as the country was in a mode to move forward and towards a multi-party democratic state. An urgent need for any society to go for the first election after a conflict is to disarm and demobilize combatants of the parties and integrate them either in the security organizations or create avenues for them to return to everyday life. Without such demilitarization of politics, risks of returning violence sustain over the issues of an election. All parties after a conflict have the interest to save their backs—by either winning the election or going back to the old violent paths.

With the limited support of the international community, Nepal managed to move forward through the election, whereas Angola plunged into violence. The UNITA went back to the bush instead of staying in the Parliament once they lost the election. The availability of resources in Angola and Sierra Leone was an incentive for the rebel groups to sustain the conflict for a long time. This interest did not go away once an agreement was signed. However, in

Sierra Leone, activities of the RUF were reduced once it got the very less popular vote in the 2002 election and when Sankoh died in prison in 2003. It did not get support from the mass people because of its past brutality. Such an end of the RUF created a condition for Sierra Leone to move on. People and civil society in Nepal worked for a democratic transition, so the CPN-M wanted to. In Angola, various attempts to end the war were full of political and economic limitations and imperfection of the agreement execution process.

Besides the post-conflict first election, what is crucial for any post-conflict country is to improve the overall governance process. It allows all parties—political party, rebel party, and others to participate in the decision-making process as much as possible. They want to see their role in the governance process that creates an avenue for discussion to meet their needs and demands in due process. It could help prevent any possibility of plunging into further violence in which they engage mainly due to their political and security interests. Preventing such recurrence of violence after the election is one of the vital preconditions of sustaining a transition from violence to peace and stability.

5. Conclusion

Once an armed conflict ends, it shows how a country that experienced violence could thrive for going beyond violence but moving towards stability and transition. Among various means and methods, an election is one of the liberal means pursued by the international community to move forward and transition. However, critics see the first election, arranged either hastily or halfheartedly, as a quick exit strategy of the international community from a conflict theatre. An election always follows a competitive process. This competition could be fatal if adequate preparation works did not allow former conflicting parties to engage in the election process. Therefore, by focusing on three cases of the post-conflict first election in Angola, Sierra Leone, and Nepal after their respective civil wars, this paper examines and analyzes the factors that influenced their transition from violence to peace. In these contexts, the parties' waged war had grievances and well-founded interests for controlling resources like diamond and gold, which sustained rebels' movements in Angola and Sierra Leone. In contrast, mass support to the CPN-M was the strength for engaging in conflict in Nepal with political grievances.

An election is a complex but essential option for the parties that experience armed violence, although elites may take advantage of such a process. All parties may not embrace an election process unless there are

genuine demands from the mass people to elect their state leaders. Therefore, convincing the parties to go for an election is a critical issue. It depends on three broad aspects, e.g., preparing a condition for holding the post-conflict first election, including institutional capacity building and convincing parties to go for election, the nature of the participatory polls where all stakeholders can participate, and the scope of post-conflict representative governance and security of the parties. These deal with many complex but interrelated issues that the planners of a transition process must consider to avoid any deadlock and avert scopes of recurring violence.

One of the critical aspects of preparing the ground for election depends upon the state of security a post-conflict country goes through. Without seeing much improvement in the security situation, parties remain concerned about their safety and survival. Although the presence of UN peace troops to a considerable extent provides a practical sense of security for parties, the context determines the authority and mandates of such operations. Demilitarization of politics through the DDR process, strengthening existing electoral institutions, or setting up new relevant institutions is vital for preparing an election. Their role in Angola was questionable on many grounds, including the DDR process that questioned the election and its following transition process. UN troops played a vibrant role in Nepal and Sierra Leone with varying degrees of authority and mandate. Nevertheless, ex-conflicting parties' participation in an election is indispensable, although it depends upon the extent to which institutions like the election commission function and maintain a check and balance in the electoral process. In some places, external authority—both regional and international—could help parties convince them to participate in the electoral process and monitor this process. However, the risk of violence remains high in those contexts where such institutions fail to conduct a participatory and impartial election, as chauvinistic leaders can undermine the electoral process.

Neither Nepal nor Sierra Leone experienced a significant hassle in transitioning from violence to peace among the three contexts. In contrast, Angola relapsed into violence due to failed demobilization of the UNITA combatants. The 1992 election did not bring any constructive result to form the presidency, although there were clandestine voting, fear, and intimidation in this process. The post-election pattern of governance affected deciding the parties to leave the violent path but to embrace peace. Although a contextualized form of power-sharing arrangements could help go beyond the violence phase; yet, it is not a panacea. Despite having a pre-election form of power-sharing in Sierra Leone, it did not make much difference in the post-election phase as the 2002 election brought a result that allowed Kabbah to form the government. In Nepal,

the pre-election consensus decision-making process significantly contributed to holding an election, which did not get a result that allowed a single party to form the government. Therefore, a form of coalition developed that even allowed some small parties to engage in the country's inclusive governance process. In the case of Nepal, the nation stood united to transform a monarchy into a democratic republic. Finally, a transition from violence to peace through the post-conflict first democratic election has no set one rule—as not all post-conflict theatres have a scope of having UN troops, nor the conflicting parties are ready for an election. Still, it depends upon the context, demands, and interests of the conflicting parties and people's expectations on the ground. It is not a process of 'romanticization of the locals', and their agency instead is an approach of a transition from violence to peace—negative peace. Therefore, peace-makers and peacekeepers must pay attention to the context to understand the needs and demands of conflicting parties before going for a post-conflict election so that stability could sustain and any unwanted consequences could be averted in the following processes of peacebuilding.