

Post-conflict peace-building involves a large cast of outside actors including civilian police, human rights experts, election monitors, and other specialists and advisers. It is highly likely that almost all of these actors work uncritically within their own frameworks which are based on masculinist and European norms. While the peace-building language of democratic institution building and the rule of law does not *inevitably* lead to the imposition of western political and legal forms, the hegemonic grip of the West is not easily resisted. The emphasis on elections, for example, assumes that centralized and representative forms of democracy make sense to diverse local communities.⁶² Further, Western forms of democracy and the common law system involve dualistic thinking and are essentially adversarial in form. These ways of thinking do not lend themselves to the expression of a multitude of positions and viewpoints, let alone to conciliatory styles of negotiating such differences or to consensual outcomes.

It must also be remembered that masculinist and racialized gender identities are deeply embedded in neocolonial encounters between the North and the South. The exotic and exploitable "woman" who emerges from Edward Said's deconstruction of the Orientalism of the West⁶³ is in danger of being reinvented in the peace-building process. It is all too easily overlooked that western-style democracy disproportionately empowers men; that human rights protections as currently constructed are based on masculinist, European standards; and that economic development is, in many ways, colonialism in its most recent guise.⁶⁴ There is little doubt that the elites of the global *status quo*, including post-colonial elites, stand to benefit most from the establishment of European-style governmental and legal

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⁶² Dipesh Chakrabarty, "Modernity and Ethnicity in India" in David Bennett (ed), *Multicultural States: Rethinking Difference and Identity* (1997) (*forthcoming*).