

groups have a territorial identity); power sharing arrangements; electoral systems that seek to reflect the plural character of the population; and cultural policies that promote harmonious relations¹. In all of these areas, Canada has had successful experiences it can share with other countries.

Peace treaties often reflect an attempt to create such arrangements. Power sharing arrangements, in which all groups are represented in government, have the advantage of ensuring stability and of getting the parties that would otherwise be locked in conflict to understand each other's interests and develop a system of trust in governing the country. This system works best when there are only a few groups of roughly comparable size. Such arrangements often have the additional advantage of establishing a consensus on the management of the instruments of violence as all parties may be represented in the key institutions that deal with issues of security². In fact, most agreements include provisions for some form of general disarmament which eventually must be enforced with the cooperation of all parties.

No single policy is sufficient to address the problems of peace, social order, political stability and participation in ethnically plural societies. At the same time, no ethnically plural society is likely to avoid using policies of devolution and power sharing in the long run, if it is to enjoy political stability, some level of social peace and an acceptable level of social cohesion. In all cases, such policies will have to reflect the historical experiences and the social structures of the individual society and be based on solid foundations of civil and common citizenship rights.

Power-sharing arrangements need sound electoral systems in order for people to be able to choose representatives who reflect the plural character of their society³. The reaffirmation of democratic values through democratic elections is evidently an important part of the process of re-establishing a state's legitimacy, and thus of contributing the peacebuilding process. In the past, Canada has played an important role, and will no doubt continue to do so, in providing assistance, in support of various peacebuilding processes, to electoral reform and to election monitoring. It is obvious that, without an effort to construct democratic conditions of governance, without mechanisms to negotiate social demands in a peaceful and institutionalized manner, little progress towards lasting peace can be achieved.

An Apparent Paradox

All societies need a certain level of cohesion for the maintenance of public order and governmental legitimacy. The building of democratic institutions and their capacity to combat violence requires a political change aimed at restoring the legitimacy of political institutions.

¹ BANGURA, Yusuf (1994). *The Search for identity, ethnicity, religion and political violence*, (Occasional paper no. 6; world summit for social development. Geneva: United Nations Research Institute for Social Development.

² *Idem*, p. 34

³ *Idem*, p. 38.