

Governance and local democracy are also critical in the post-conflict attempt to rebuild state security, because sowing the seeds of democracy at the local level may be more practical and productive in the immediate term. In a post-conflict situation, citizens no longer trust the state to protect their human rights, nor do they rely on the state to provide them with basic services. Instead, neighbours rely on each other, trusting close-knit networks of support. For this reason, local rather than national governments become very important in efforts to rebuild failed states. Reinforcing small networks and re-establishing strong local governments which can garner the support and trust of the population can be a productive step forward in achieving human security.

This is precisely the goal of one of the largest recent efforts to bolster democracy at the local level. USAID's Local Governance Program in Iraq has held 22,000 local democracy dialogues, rebuilt and strengthened hundreds of accountable and responsive local councils, spearheaded local council elections, and supported civil society participation.⁶³ The program has spent hundreds of millions of dollars in efforts to inculcate democratic values at the grassroots level, positing that if democracy is instilled in daily life (the city), it will percolate up to higher levels of government (the state) over time.

Urban democracy and peaceful change

Finally, democratic practices can help to channel urban dissent into less violent forms of political expression. Increasingly, urban environments are sites of largely peaceful mass protest against state policies (Bolivia, Thailand, Ukraine, Nepal), as globalization, the acceptance of the responsibility to protect civilians, and the spread of mass communication has made mass urban protest a viable and feasible alternative to an armed approach. In Bolivia, for example, urban protesters from the slum of El Alto flooded the capital of La Paz in late 2003, and again in mid-2005 to protest government plans to privatize and export natural gas, forcing the government to back down.⁶⁴ In 2006, urban protesters in Kathmandu and other Nepalese cities also forced Nepal's king to reintroduce democratic institutions. Many of the most active protesters were Kathmandu youth, indicating the potential value of democratic participation for disaffected youth.⁶⁵ The growth and strength of 'people power' may even have convinced Nepal's Maoist rebels to

⁶³ See "Assistance for Iraq: Local Governance," USAID, <http://www.usaid.gov/iraq/accomplishments/locgov.html>.

⁶⁴ For events in 2003, see "Bolivia: Exercise Restraint in Response to Protests," Human Rights Watch, October 15, 2003, <http://hrw.org/english/docs/2003/10/15/bolivi6460.htm>. For 2005 events, see Forero (2005), A4.

⁶⁵ Lancaster (2006), A16.