

DEMOCRACY, DIVERSITY, AND CONFLICT

PREFACE

The papers collected in this Occasional Paper were first presented at a conference at the Peace Research Institute of Frankfurt (PRIF) in October 2005 in Frankfurt, Germany. That conference, “Democracy, Diversity, and Conflict,” was the second annual Peace Studies/PRIF conference since the two programs re-established their cooperative relationship in 2004. Following the 2005 conference, it was decided that papers from the Cornell contributors would be published on the PRIF web site, and papers from the PRIF contributors on the Peace Studies Program’s web site. There are five papers in this Occasional Paper; each of which can be downloaded as a separate pdf document.

The five papers cover a broad geographical swath, but are united by a common interest in the conditions under which democracy can succeed. The focus is on states with considerable ethnic diversity and histories of internal conflict. Heidrun Zinecker reviews the theory of transitions to democracy, emphasizing that regime hybridity may represent a stable equilibrium, rather than merely a stage through which states pass to eventual full democracy. She suggests a set of variables that can be used to assess the democratic status of a state and the areas in which change is needed.

The other four papers are case studies of states that are struggling, with various degrees of success, to manage internal conflicts among ethnic or religious groups. Collectively, the papers address the tension between democratic values and the need to build state capacity and subdue secessionist claims. The authors consider a range of issues, from the distinctive role played by religion in shaping national policies to the effects of language policies on inter-ethnic relations; the difficult balance between the benefits of a strong and competent central authority and the arguments for empowering local government; and the role of external actors in providing material support and moral suasion, aid that may be essential to promoting peaceful development or, conversely, may exacerbate existing divides, stunt the development of local democratic institutions, or trigger a nationalist backlash. The papers make clear the need to situate any analysis of the process of democratization in an understanding of the specific historic and national context, even while invoking the general consensus on the structure and benefits of successful democracy.

We wish to thank our hosts at PRIF for a stimulating conference and the chance to share their work with our U.S.-based network. Judith Reppy edited the papers and Sandra Kisner performed the essential step of preparing them for web publication.