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The Making of *An Agenda for Democratization*:
A Speechwriter's View
Caroline E. Lombardo*

In December 1996 the United Nations ("UN") published *An Agenda for Democratization*, a highly controversial position paper of its then-Secretary General, Boutros Boutros-Ghali.¹ The agenda has received little public or academic attention. Yet, although not a legal document, it remains of considerable interest to scholars and practitioners of international law. The agenda confronts the traditionally taboo question of UN support for national democratization processes in areas such as holding and monitoring elections, creating independent judicial systems, and strengthening respect for human rights and the rule of law—all of interest to international lawyers. The agenda also confronts the even more controversial question of UN support for "democratization internationally," an area, according to Boutros-Ghali, in which international law has a major role to play.

Beyond the substantive content of *An Agenda for Democratization*, the story of its creation offers an unusually revealing view into the policy-making process at the United Nations and, especially, the role of its Secretary General during a fascinating period in the organization's history. The post-Cold War acceleration of democratization within states coincided with new demands for UN action across the spectrum of its work, often in unprecedented ways or unfamiliar operational environments. In that context of opportunity, uncertainty, and change, Boutros-Ghali as Secretary General frequently put forward political statements designed to stimulate policy debate and decisions from the UN member states. In playing this political role, he applied his understanding of how international law originates and functions. He used the drafting process itself to develop his own policy positions, to clarify the questions at hand, to test his ideas, and to anticipate their reception in various quarters. Writing for Boutros-Ghali, as I did in the mid-1990s, thus required an approach simultaneously intellectual, anthropological, and tactical. In this essay, I

* The author served as a speechwriter and policy consultant to the United Nations Secretary General from 1994 through 1996.

1. Boutros Boutros-Ghali, *An Agenda For Democratization*, UN Doc A/51/761 (Dec 20, 1996).

attempt to elaborate this drafting approach and the unusual vantage point it affords into the United Nations, while providing political background and an analytical perspective on one of the most important UN documents produced in the past decade.

My role as principal drafter of *An Agenda for Democratization* developed more by happenstance than design. I joined the executive office of the Secretary General in June 1994 as a policy consultant and speechwriter. I was not an international civil servant nor formally part of the UN staff. Yet I served on the Secretary General's small speechwriting team, which doubled as the policy-planning unit, responsible for drafting most of his policy statements, position papers, and contributions to periodicals and academic journals. As the youngest and least experienced member of the team, I initially received rather minor assignments: statements marking days of international observation, messages to conferences (including a seemingly endless series of Model UN competitions), and forewords to books and other publications. But these were precisely the vehicles that the Secretary General often selected to develop and test his thoughts on a particular issue and perhaps also with a particular audience. Such was the case with his thoughts on democratization.

I could not fail to see this when Boutros-Ghali gave me his comments on the first "Secretary General's Foreword" that I had prepared, this one for the *European Parliamentary Yearbook*. Once drafted, vetted by our unit and cleared by the chief-of-staff, such texts would be sent to the Secretary General for approval. Only rarely did they return with substantive comments; an inky black signature was the norm. This text, however, returned with a thick black line alongside a single sentence on the role of parliamentarians in "promoting democratization internationally." Having modeled the sentence on one found in Boutros-Ghali's previous statements to parliamentarians, I could not understand why he would mark it. Charles Hill, the head of the speech-writing team and a senior policy advisor, provided the translation. Since his statement accepting the office of Secretary General in December 1991, Boutros-Ghali had called attention to "promoting democratization internationally" as a key international objective, yet he seldom explained the concept or its relation to democratization within states. The mark meant, "time to start spelling this out." Several drafts later the text returned with a signature. The *Yearbook* editors got their foreword. I got another assignment: drafting *An Agenda for Democratization*.

By the time I arrived at the United Nations, Boutros-Ghali had issued two major "agendas," one on peace and one on development. In January 1992, in the wake of the coalition victory in the Persian Gulf and following a remarkable expansion of UN peacekeeping activities from the late 1980s onward, an unprecedented summit of the Security Council provided the opportunity to launch the first agenda. In a statement concluding their summit, the fifteen heads of state or government "invite[d]" the Secretary General to prepare an "analysis and recommendations on ways of strengthening and making more efficient within the framework and provisions of the Charter the capacity of the United Nations for preventive diplomacy, for peacemaking

and for peacekeeping.”² Simply put, they gave him a mandate to prepare a report. Boutros-Ghali responded by expanding the scope of the request. To preventive diplomacy, peacemaking, and peacekeeping he added the “related concept of post-conflict peace-building—action to identify and support structures which will tend to strengthen and solidify peace in order to avoid a relapse into conflict.”³ He saw a close connection between peacebuilding so defined and democratization:

There is a new requirement for technical assistance which the United Nations has an obligation to develop and provide when requested: support for the transformation of deficient national structures and capabilities, and for the strengthening of new democratic institutions. . . . There is an obvious connection between democratic practices—such as the rule of law and transparency in decision-making—and the achievement of true peace and security in any new and stable political order.⁴

Moreover, Boutros-Ghali elevated the status of the entire document from a report to an “agenda.” He did so with its title, *An Agenda for Peace*, and by issuing it not only as an official document but also as a special “UN blue” booklet, published by the UN Department of Public Information, to set it apart from the many other UN documents produced under his name.⁵

The new Secretary General sought to channel the upsurge in attention to the United Nations into productive debates on its reform. This meant debates about the core substantive objectives of peace, development, and democracy. By June 1992, when Boutros-Ghali issued *An Agenda for Peace*, his staff had begun to refer to these objectives as “PDD.” While he would acknowledge in *An Agenda for Democratization* that “the relations between these three great concepts remain a matter of controversy,”⁶ he remained convinced that the three are “inextricably linked.”⁷ “Peace can be seen as essential, for without some degree of peace, neither development nor democracy is possible. Yet both development and democracy are essential if peace is to endure.”⁸

With one agenda launched, PDD was the rationale for a second agenda. Boutros-Ghali saw this logic as inseparable from a practical, political logic that he knew would appeal to the majority in the General Assembly and in which he passionately believed. A second agenda, on development, could help address the increasing imbalance in attention, authority, and resources that favored the Security

2. Statement by The President of The Security Council, UN Doc S/23500 para 17 (Jan 31, 1992).

3. *An Agenda For Peace: Preventive Diplomacy, Peacemaking and Peace Keeping*, UN Doc A/47/277-S/24111, para 21 (Jun 17, 1992).

4. *Id.* at para 59.

5. Boutros Boutros-Ghali, *An Agenda for Peace: Preventive Diplomacy, Peacemaking and Peace-keeping* (UN Dept Pub Inf 1992).

6. Boutros-Ghali, *An Agenda for Democratization* at para 118 (cited in note 1).

7. *Id.*

8. *Id.* at para 121.

Council and emergency peacekeeping over the General Assembly and long-term issues of economic and social development. On these grounds, Boutros-Ghali noted the need for "an agenda for development" in his first annual report to the Assembly issued in September 1992.⁹ The Assembly interpreted this note as an implicit request for a mandate and formally requested the Secretary General to prepare "a report on an agenda for development."¹⁰ In May 1994, he submitted this report.¹¹ He followed it in November 1994 with *An Agenda for Development: Recommendations*.¹² By year's end, the Assembly had established a working group for each of the two agendas, institutionalizing the process of reflection and reform that they had been designed to spur and to shape.

By the time Boutros-Ghali contemplated preparing a third agenda, a UN role in democratization had already taken shape on the ground, beginning with a small number of electoral involvements in the context of "second generation" UN peacekeeping, which usually took place within states (not between them) and involved a variety of functions to assist the implementation of a negotiated settlement to a conflict. In his first year at the UN, Boutros-Ghali helped to bring about a major expansion in electoral assistance to member states. In 1992 alone, over twenty states requested UN assistance, mostly in Africa and mostly outside the peacekeeping context. Over the next few years, the Security Council and General Assembly continued to depart dramatically from UN tradition in order to mandate increasing UN involvement in states' electoral processes, with an expanding array of operational activities and gradually extending beyond elections into democratization. Most of the activities, like those in the economic and social field with which they frequently overlapped, were funded by voluntary contributions from member states and not from the regular UN budget.

Through his public statements, reports, and other actions as the chief administrative officer of the UN, Boutros-Ghali had much to do with the practical development of a UN role in democratization. Nonetheless, member states had reason to be wary of giving the Secretary General any mandate to report on democracy generally. While the UN Charter clearly identifies the promotion of peace and development as fundamental purposes of the UN, nowhere does it mention the word "democracy"—let alone authorize the organization to promote it. The question of democracy concerns a nation's domestic governance, political, and social life and thus potentially contravenes what the Charter identifies as a fundamental UN

9. Boutros Boutros-Ghali, *Report on the Work of the Organization From the Forty-sixth to the Forty-seventh Session of the General Assembly, September 1992* at paras 105–9 (UN Dept Pub Inf 1992).

10. *An Agenda For Development*, UN Doc A/RES/47/181 para 1 (Dec 22, 1992); see also *An Agenda For Development*, UN Doc A/RES/48/166 (Dec 21, 1993).

11. Report of the Secretary General, *An Agenda For Development*, UN Doc A/48/935 (May 6, 1994).

12. Report of the Secretary General, *An Agenda For Development: Recommendations*, UN Doc A/49/665 (Nov 11, 1994).

principle: non-intervention in the internal affairs of its member states.¹³ To undermine that principle, as a pro-democracy mandate might, could jeopardize the very foundation of the organization, “the sovereign equality of all its members.”¹⁴

In mid-1994, Boutros-Ghali did not have a mandate to produce a third agenda and did not expect to receive one. Yet he seemed keen to press ahead regardless in an attempt to provoke a comprehensive debate on the United Nations and democratization and thereby stimulate increased and more effective political and financial commitment to an expanded UN role. At the same time, and as recounted in his UN memoirs, Boutros-Ghali knew this would be a “risky business.”¹⁵ The absence of a mandate would significantly affect the drafting of *An Agenda for Democratization*. For the moment, however, Boutros-Ghali set the mandate concern aside and put his writers to work on a text.

In 1994, the Secretary General was invited by the New York-based National Legal Center for the Public Interest to deliver the 1994 Gauer Distinguished Lecture in Law and Public Policy on a topic of his choice. Boutros-Ghali chose “The United Nations and Democracy,” knowing that this presented a chance to set out his thoughts on the subject in a systematic fashion to a sympathetic audience.

This opportunity freed his writers to work with him on building the basic framework for his agenda through a low profile and low risk drafting process. We did not ask the chief-of-staff to tap the UN bureaucracy for “inputs” to the Gauer Lecture. From the Secretary General’s annual report, to be issued that September, we had up-to-date material on operational activities. Boutros-Ghali’s numerous previous statements on democracy and the tripartite logic of PDD, including those made in his first two agendas, had to be compiled, synthesized, assessed, and refined. Given that the others working with me on the lecture had joined the staff in the early stages of PDD (one of them had taken to calling it, in mock horror, “the mantra!”), this archaeological, analytical task fell to me. I tried to approach it with fresh eyes.

Once I had prepared the outlines of a lecture, my boss and another member of our team (a confidante of the Secretary General) revised and expanded the text until we had a draft ready for review. This draft and the several that followed were returned heavily marked up by the Secretary General and accompanied by pages of his own handwritten notes and newly penned passages, sometimes in English, often in French. The Secretary General gave us oral comments on the drafts and occasionally handed us books or articles on democratization, usually having marked a single key passage. By early October, we arrived at language, logic chains, and an overall structure that seemed to satisfy Boutros-Ghali for use in the Gauer Lecture and as the basis for his *An Agenda for Democratization*.

13. United Nations Charter, Art 2 § 7 (1945).

14. *Id.* at Art 2 § 1.

15. Boutros Boutros-Ghali, *Unvanquished: A US-UN Saga* 319–320 (Random House 1999).

Three aspects of the Gauer Lecture laid the foundation for the agenda: the rationale for democracy, the levels of analysis, and the nature of policy development.¹⁶

The rationale for democracy could be normative, practical, or a combination of the two. Boutros-Ghali opened the Gauer Lecture at a normative angle, introducing democracy as an “imperative” and an “old ideal.” But he quickly shifted and then kept to the practical aspects, emphasizing the “tangible” benefits of democracy as “a process,” including the ways democracy can serve and strengthen the state.¹⁷

Within the United Nations, practical arguments almost always hold sway over normative ones. Boutros-Ghali knew this would be true especially for a concept like democracy that had featured so prominently in Cold War polemics, for which the United Nations had served as a major venue. Casting democracy as an ingredient “essential” to other UN objectives such as human rights and international law enabled him to build a case for his authority as Secretary General to report on it.¹⁸ By distilling the practical arguments from his first two agendas, each of which by then had acquired an institutional history, he strengthened the case for presenting a third.

I realized that the reasons put forth to justify why the United Nations should support and promote democracy would also serve as Boutros-Ghali’s rationale for putting forward *An Agenda for Democratization*. Later, as he angled for a mandate, his written rationale underwent countless revisions as part of his draft introduction to the agenda. We knew that if no mandate materialized the rationale would have to serve as one.

As Boutros-Ghali observed in the Gauer Lecture, the desire for democratization within states also compelled consideration of democratization in an international context. This was the second theme of the Gauer Lecture, Boutros-Ghali’s two levels of analysis: democracy at the national level, or “democracy within states,” and “democracy among states and throughout the international system.”¹⁹ Boutros-Ghali seemed to possess a Kantian sense that, unless democratic principles and processes operated at both the national and international levels, they would not be secure at either one. He had, however, a more immediately pragmatic reason for putting forward these two analytical levels.

When it came to *An Agenda for Democratization*, Boutros-Ghali worried most about the reaction of developing countries, not merely to his agenda but to the idea of democracy itself. Acting under the joint auspices of the Group of 77 (“G77”) and the Non-aligned Movement (“NAM”), these states collectively comprise a large majority of the UN membership and traditionally have been the staunchest defenders of

16. Boutros Boutros-Ghali, *The United Nations and Democracy*, The Gauer Distinguished Lecture in Law and Public Policy (Nat'l Legal Ctr in L and Pub Pol 1994).

17. *Id.* at 7–9.

18. *Id.* at 9.

19. *Id.* at 10.

sovereignty and non-intervention. For years they saw Western pro-democracy positions as a guise for intervention or for attempts to destabilize their regimes. They had answered Western calls for democracy with cries of hypocrisy, given what they regarded as hegemonic, undemocratic behavior by major Western governments in international affairs. Such suspicion and resentment remained despite the Cold War's end and the rising numbers of self-proclaimed democratizing states in the developing world seeking international—often read “Western”—support, whether political, technical, material, or financial. Aware of this, Boutros-Ghali saw a precarious situation where democracy did not have firm roots in the developing world, especially in non-Western areas. Setbacks and reversals in individual democratization processes or a wider backlash against democracy were entirely possible. This gave him another reason to stress a practical and largely state-centered rationale, designed to make democracy appear simultaneously less threatening and more appealing. But it also left him determined to stimulate greater interest in the success of democratization within states by making it seem inseparable from a process of democratization among states—a cause he knew developing countries would champion.

Introducing the international dimension could alienate some of the strongest advocates of democracy and a UN role in democratization. Western and other states could see democratization internationally as a direct threat to *their* sovereignty, implying a transfer of power and resources from them to states of the G77 and the NAM, from the North to the South. Boutros-Ghali felt that he had to take that chance. He decided to build his third and most comprehensive agenda from the two interlinked levels of analysis, democratization within states and democratization internationally—one to attract and one that might alarm both groups of states into which the UN membership often divided itself. He understood this as a risky but potentially effective formula for fueling a much needed debate, not only on democratization but on the entire post-Cold War international system and the UN's role within it.

The third theme of the Gauer Lecture was the nature of policy development. Boutros-Ghali saw a strong resemblance between the way a legal scholar participates in the making of international law and the way a UN Secretary General participates in the making of international policy. Each could be understood as the man in the middle. The legal scholar finds himself between legal doctrine and law texts, on one side, and legal practice on the other. The Secretary General finds himself between the conceptual debates surrounding the UN Charter and the material facts and conditions of UN operations on the ground. A dialectical process occurs between the two realms. Conceptual changes prompt material changes and vice versa. The man in the middle acquires leverage by casting the phenomena he observes in compelling and communicable forms: depicting a set of activities in a particular way may stimulate a new conceptual approach; re-packaging old ideas, or introducing a new one, may push activities further or even pull new types of activity into existence. In short, Boutros-

Ghali saw international lawyers and Secretaries-General as builders of conceptual “foundations”—for effecting change and consolidating it.

The Gauer Lecture itself was an exercise in building conceptual foundations. Its formulation of UN support for democracy “before, during and after elections” was based on many years of UN field activity in electoral assistance to member states begun in the late 1980s during the tenure of the previous Secretary General. Of note was Boutros-Ghali’s subtle re-characterization of the third, “post-election” phase as akin to state-building. By linking the ambiguous and controversial post-election phase to state-building, Boutros-Ghali hoped to gain acceptance for a new level of UN support for democratization:

In the post-election period, democracy must be supported by: a national constitution; an independent judiciary; State institutions with integrity; governmental accountability; the rule of law; and popular participation. The international community understands the importance of building a road or a bridge, but is hesitant to help build a free press or political party. The times require a new frame of mind for us all.²⁰

After emphasizing national democratization beyond election day, Boutros-Ghali pushed on to a largely unexplored area: “democracy at the international level.” What could democracy or democratization mean in a realm with no formal system of government akin to a national one? For Boutros-Ghali, this was related directly to the centuries-old question of how law can exist and function in the international arena. Moreover, he saw post-Cold War foundation-building for a new international system as a process akin to the Late Medieval creation of international law.²¹

Although Boutros-Ghali explicitly ruled out any definition of democratization internationally that implied the abolition of national structures or the creation of supranational ones, he built his own definition using a largely inductive method. He identified six sets of activities, to a certain extent already underway, through which the UN could promote democratization internationally. Each one dealt with extending democratic principles and processes internationally, especially participation in international decision-making. Over the coming months he would develop the list into a complex map of the UN role in this realm. The role of the member states themselves quickly became the most prominent feature. In the words of his agenda, “. . . the first and greatest step forward in democratization internationally must be increased attention to and engagement with international affairs by all States Members of the United Nations, as an application of the concept of sovereignty.”²²

But Boutros-Ghali’s conception of democratization internationally went beyond “democracy among states” and the states’ rights language that he knew would appeal to governments in the developing world. A second major dimension dealt with “new

20. *Id.* at 12.

21. See Boutros Boutros-Ghali, *A Grotian Moment*, 18 *Fordham Intl L J* 1609, 1609–1616 (1995).

22. Boutros-Ghali, *An Agenda for Democratization* at para 75 (cited in note 1).

non-State actors” such as regional bodies, non-governmental organizations, parliamentarians, local authorities, academia, business and industry, and media.²³ Boutros-Ghali pointed to the Charter’s provisions for cooperation with non-state actors and acknowledged that the United Nations had made “great strides in expanding dialogue and practical cooperation with the new actors as their influence on and importance to world affairs has grown.”²⁴ Nonetheless, despite his repeated emphasis on the state, his calls for deeper integration of non-state actors into the UN system seemed to threaten the special status of states within the United Nations and its very character as an intergovernmental organization.

No less controversial was Boutros-Ghali’s call to democratize the United Nations’ own architecture.²⁵ By this he meant reform of UN intergovernmental machinery, strengthening the roles of the General Assembly and Economic and Social Council, opening up the procedures of the Security Council, and making Security Council membership more representative of the membership at large. These aspects of democratization internationally would appeal to developing states, which openly advocated such measures. But to Boutros-Ghali, democratizing the UN architecture also meant expanding the reach of international law and jurisdiction. This led to some of the most widely controversial proposals in his agenda: increased use of the International Court of Justice and its further integration into the “peacemaking apparatus of the United Nations as a whole”; acceptance by all member states of the general jurisdiction of the Court without exception; employment of a functional approximation to “judicial review” through General Assembly referral to the Court, under Article 96 of the UN Charter, of “questions concerning the consistency of resolutions adopted by United Nations bodies with the Charter of the United Nations”; and the establishment of an international criminal court.²⁶

The drafting of the actual agenda began within a few months of Boutros-Ghali’s delivering the Gauer Lecture at the Waldorf Astoria Hotel in October 1994. In December, the General Assembly gave the Secretary General a mandate to prepare a report on ways the UN system could support “the efforts of governments to promote and consolidate new or restored democracies.”²⁷ But the request originated from outside the UN, from a group of seventy-four democratizing states who had gathered in Managua in July to discuss shared difficulties and possibilities for mutual support. The Managua Plan of Action requested a catalog of UN activities in democratization, a directory of assistance that could be provided by various parts of the organization

23. *Id.* at paras 77–103.

24. *Id.* at para 79. See also United Nations Charter, Chapter VIII on regional arrangements and Article 71 on non-governmental organizations.

25. See Boutros-Ghali, *An Agenda for Democratization* at paras 104–14 (cited in note 1).

26. *Id.* at paras 111–14.

27. *Support by the United Nations System of the Efforts of Governments to Promote and Consolidate New or Restored Democracies*, UN Doc A/RES/49/30, para 1 (Dec 22, 1994).

and the UN system.²⁸ Such assistance was already available under an often confusing mass of existing mandates for economic and social development and for human rights, some of which had been strengthened in June 1993 at the Vienna World Conference on Human Rights. Assembly approval of the Managua request thus did not give Boutros-Ghali the mandate he sought to undertake a comprehensive consideration of the democratization question and to stimulate the further strengthening and expansion of the UN role, nationally and internationally. Yet he tried to use the Managua mandate, such as it was, to launch his agenda anyway. By February 1995, lead drafting responsibility was assigned to senior advisor Rosario Green.

Drafting the agenda over the next five months was a maddening process. A nearly system-wide request for inputs on operational activities produced an irregular flow of submissions, wildly uneven in quality and often heavily laden with jargon. Some responses suggested that democratization was irrelevant to the respondent's mandated area of work. Others revealed intense rivalries among the UN entities keen to enter or already engaged in the business of democratization—and competing for the increased funding and bureaucratic advantage that such status might bring. Also frustrating Green's staff were the speeches and statements by the Secretary General on democratization, which he presented to them as material for the "conceptual" or "agenda" parts of the report. A quick read through the hefty stack could be confusing because the English translations of statements, drafted and delivered in French, could suggest extreme positions that the Secretary General was loathe to make in English or implement in practice. As a result, the Secretary General asked his speechwriters to help Green's staff "edit" the report, a task delegated to me. Shortly thereafter, he privately began to send copies of all new materials and drafts to an outside academic who commenced work on an alternative text. At first unaware of this, I too was asked to prepare an alternative text, even as I continued to work with Green's team.

Exasperating as it was, the situation did not explode until June 1995, when Boutros-Ghali decided to test the waters with his senior staff and department heads using the latest Green draft. A tidal wave of heated criticism arose and hit the Secretary General hard. No one saw healthy prospects for a marriage between the catalog of UN activities requested in the Managua Declaration to conceptual "theorizing" on the United Nations and democratization. Green herself criticized the draft as "pontificating and paternalistic" and urged Boutros-Ghali to reconsider turning the report into an agenda. While some chose to ignore the conceptual content, others seemed incensed by it. "Democracy is *not* a goal of the UN Charter." The Secretary General's case for democratization internationally is "weak and inchoate." A common refrain rang out: "The draft exceeds the mandate." This was true. But it also carried the chords of a second refrain heard in the corridors: "The

28. *Support by the United Nations System of the Efforts of Governments to Promote and Consolidate New or Restored Democracies*, UN Doc A/49/713, annex 2, para 11(h) (Nov 23, 1994).

Secretary General has no business reporting on democratization." And the refrain often came with a coda: "The United Nations has no role in democratization. It can only do what member states ask it to do. Nothing more."

Boutros-Ghali reacted swiftly and quietly to this "counterblast" of criticism.²⁹ He decided to cut all conceptual content from the Green text and submitted it with little fanfare in August 1995 as the first report of the Secretary General on "Support by the United Nations System of the Efforts of Governments to Promote and Consolidate New or Restored Democracies."³⁰ As for the agenda, he "simply ceased to mention [it] and went back to improving the draft."³¹

I gladly took the drafting process underground, having missed the freedoms that came with the "ghost" part of my ghostwriter status. There were several alternative texts to work with, and in the UN bureaucracy's responses to the June draft, we had an early glimpse at reactions that the agenda might provoke from member states. This led to several key decisions that guided subsequent drafting. The agenda would have to distinguish between democracy as a system of government and democratization as a political process—an ongoing task confronting *all* states. Democratization would be the central focus.³² While the agenda would incorporate the tripartite logic of PDD, it also had to take into account the difficulties of prioritizing among the objectives of peace, development, and democratization. It had to stress that each society should decide the nature and pace of its democratization process. Imposition of foreign models should be ruled out and warned against.³³ The agenda had to explain the practical and legal foundations for a UN role in democratization beyond the essential member-state request for assistance.³⁴ It would explain the past development of the UN role using existing reports of the Secretary General on electoral assistance as well as his first report on democratization, yet it should not rehearse the institutional record detailed in the reports.³⁵ Partly to steer clear of squabbles among the largely autonomous specialized agencies of the UN, over which the Secretary General had little influence, the scope of the agenda had to be limited to the UN organization, as opposed to the wider UN system. Finally, the material on democratization internationally, none of which appeared in the August report, needed to be strengthened and expanded.³⁵

29. Boutros-Ghali, *Unvanquished* at 320 (cited in note 15).

30. Report of the Secretary General, *Support by the United Nations System of the Efforts of Governments to Promote and Consolidate New or Restored Democracies*, UN Doc A/50/332 (Aug 7, 1995).

31. Boutros-Ghali, *Unvanquished* at 320 (cited in note 15).

32. See Boutros-Ghali, *An Agenda for Democratization* at paras 1–14 (cited in note 1).

33. See *id.*, paras 4, 10, 11; ch 2, "An Emerging Consensus," paras 15–25; and concluding paras 116–26.

34. See *id.*, paras 5–8, 12–14; and ch 3, "The Foundation for Action," paras 26–35.

35. See *id.*, ch 4, "An Evolving United Nations Role," paras 36–60.

36. See *id.*, ch 5, "Democratization at the International Level," paras 61–115.

By March 1996, we had produced a text that largely met the above requirements. Although not a full-time project, the drafting had been ongoing. Since August 1995, I had produced over twenty drafts. As I worked on each one, I kept track of the evolving structure and organization of the agenda. I built and continually revised a lexicon of key concepts, with notes on where and why each concept was deployed. As with the Gauer Lecture, I kept track of new inputs and how we decided to deal or not to deal with them in subsequent drafts—including positive commentary from various public figures and academics who were asked by Boutros-Ghali to review the text. I drew on all of those drafting tools when preparing cover notes for the drafts sent to the Secretary General. The notes not only provided background on the latest textual changes, they also pointed to changes in the political context and the ramifications for the agenda's content and the timing of its release.

One cover note in early 1995 addressed the potential to launch the agenda during a special session of the Assembly scheduled for that October to commemorate the UN's fiftieth anniversary. The impending "UN50" commemoration had re-ignited post-Cold War debates on UN reform. As a contribution to the debates, Boutros-Ghali issued an unsolicited follow-up to *An Agenda for Peace* in January 1995, calling it a "supplement" to his previous report and a "Position Paper of the Secretary General on the Occasion of the Fiftieth Anniversary of the United Nations."³⁷ While the tactic sparked some controversy, a substantive debate ensued. But Boutros-Ghali decided against issuing another major position paper on the heels of the January report. Instead, he tested member-state reaction to a third agenda by emphasizing democratization in his 1995 annual report and in his speeches and toasts at anniversary celebrations in San Francisco (June) and New York (October). The response was not discouraging. In fact, even the concept of democratization internationally seemed to have taken root among member states, albeit in a limited and tenuous way. As later noted in the agenda, nearly every state participant at the special Assembly session addressed the importance of democratizing the United Nations itself.³⁸

Within a month, however, in November 1995, the signing of the Dayton Accords on the situation in the former Yugoslavia allowed UN peace-keeping to steal the stage from other issues. Broader UN reform debates returned briefly to the forefront in early 1996, featuring a version of "democratization internationally" centered on intergovernmental reform and states' rights. The UN had entered another particularly difficult phase in its ongoing financial crisis, precipitated mainly by the United States' non-payment of its assessed contribution to the UN regular budget. Not without justification, states of the South had become convinced that the

37. *Supplement to An Agenda for Peace: Position Paper of the Secretary General on the Occasion of the Fiftieth Anniversary of the United Nations*, UN Doc A/50/60-S/1995/1 (Jan 3, 1995).

38. Boutros-Ghali, *An Agenda for Democratization* at para 6 (cited in note 1).

US (the largest assessed contributor) was deliberately withholding its dues in order to exert control over UN reform, to push the United Nations toward downsizing and to reduce UN activity in areas important to the South. In that context, they called for democratizing the organization.³⁹ A few months later, the US announced that it would use its Security Council veto to block Boutros-Ghali's election to a second term, igniting an intense reaction. Nearly all 185 member states protested the disproportionate influence being exercised by one sovereign equal on an election process that belonged to them all. Again there were calls to "democratize the United Nations."

At any other moment, the Secretary General probably would have enjoyed provoking the North and the South into a debate on national and international democratization and the post-Cold War role of the UN. But a re-election year was no time to release an unsolicited report in which there was something to alarm most member states. Boutros-Ghali was effectively voted out of office in December 1996, when the Security Council nominated and the General Assembly elected a new Secretary General, Kofi Annan. Knowing that Boutros-Ghali wanted to launch *An Agenda for Democratization* either before he left office or at the start of his second term, his writers had been prepared with the text for weeks. The only remaining question was the manner of its release. As he explained to the president of the General Assembly in a cover letter dated 20 December and attached to the text, Boutros-Ghali decided to issue the agenda as a "supplement" to the two democratization reports prepared in response to the Managua request.⁴⁰ While *An Agenda for Democratization* was being circulated as an official document of the Assembly, Boutros-Ghali also convinced his friend, Samir Sanbar, head of the UN Department of Public Information, quickly to issue the agenda in "UN blue" booklet form as well.⁴¹

At times many of us on the Secretary General's staff thought that *An Agenda for Democratization*, the most comprehensive and controversial of his three agendas, would never make it to print. But none of us could have predicted the entrance it ultimately made on the international stage. Instead of provoking a substantive, wide-ranging North-South debate with his unsolicited agenda and slipping quietly out the door, Boutros-Ghali found himself escorted to the door in full public view, while the agenda was silently swept aside.

An Agenda for Democratization never had a chance to acquire an institutional history and official standing equivalent to that of Boutros-Ghali's first two agendas. Over four years after its release it remains an obscure document. Yet the marks of its

39. See the South Centre, *For a Strong and Democratic United Nations: A South Perspective on UN Reform* (Zed Books 1997).

40. UN Doc A/51/761 (Dec 20, 1996). The second democratization report was an Assembly-requested follow-up to the first; see UN Doc A/51/512 (Dec 18, 1996).

41. Boutros Boutros-Ghali, *An Agenda for Democratization* (UN Dept Pub Inf 1996).

political import are clear. UN support for the democratization processes of its member states continues to grow as its focus has shifted decisively from election day to “post-election” assistance and long-term consolidation. The United Nations itself now helps to organize and convene the International Conference of New and Restored Democracies; it also provides institutional support for the conference’s ongoing follow-up mechanism. In UN debates and in practice, the question of support for democratization within states does seem to have become inextricably linked to democratization internationally. The latter has advanced along almost every dimension that Boutros-Ghali identified—member state participation, matters of representation in and balance among the UN political organs and reform of their working methods, the integration of non-state actors, the expansion of international law, and the establishment of an international criminal court. And while the agenda itself is rarely mentioned, the PDD logic it sets out repeatedly appears in UN reform debates on how to realign and integrate the organization’s peace and development work, as well as its short- and long-term objectives.

The life of the agenda derives not least from its lengthy drafting process, which drew upon and gave rise to many other political statements before the agenda was released and forgotten. But, as evident in this account of the drafting process, it also derives from Boutros-Ghali’s having raised in the agenda questions of immediate import in terms of enduring questions about relationships—between the domestic character of states and the international system that they comprise, between member states and their United Nations, between the different organizational components of the United Nations, and between the different components of the UN’s comprehensive mandate. Political documents and Secretaries-General may come and go, but these essential questions will remain as long as the United Nations or other forms of general international organization do so themselves.